

June 10, 2020
Rebuilding a Church...Continuing a Mission
Committee Report

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 virus, we are on schedule to complete the design of the new church this year and begin building early next year. Here is a summary of what has been happening since our last report on March 26.

First, April interviews with representatives of the various parish ministries, and information gathered through the on-line survey available to all parishioners (as described in our March report) have been collated and assessed. This was compiled in a document called the "Needs Assessment", and shared with parishioners on our website. The surveys produced wide-ranging results, but did identify some areas where there was a clear consensus.

Secondly, the parish has engaged the services of Trophy Point Construction Services and Consulting to provide an independent cost estimate for the replacement of the church for use with the insurance adjusters. Their comprehensive assessment, along with detailed schedules of contents and other claim items, was submitted in June to the companies which insured the church. It is anticipated that representatives of the parish, the Archdiocese of Newark, Trophy Point Construction and the insurance companies will be meeting shortly to discuss the claim. The outcome of these discussions will factor into the budget of the new church building and define the need for further fundraising.

Third, the MBS Rebuilding Committee has met numerous times, virtually, with our architects, Foresight Architects and LAN Associates, in April, May and June. A great deal has been accomplished as a result of those meetings.

The architects have presented three preliminary site/layout designs to the committee, each of which includes different ideas as to the location, layout and dimensions of the church (i.e., formal worship space), the daily chapel, and community gathering space. The committee has provided feedback on the concepts provided, and is looking forward to a revised set of designs by early July.

At this point, the architects are working with the following assumptions about the new church building:

- 1) inasmuch as the new building will include both a main worship space, daily chapel and community gathering space, the structure will be significantly larger than the old church building. Tentative plans for the formal worship space itself also reflects an increase in seating and flexible overflow space for holy days and special events.
- 2) the new structure will be built closer to the traffic circle to increase our visibility to the community and accommodate the increased size of the building without diminishing the existing parking area.
- 3) with regard to the parishioner surveys, the architect's Assessment Report summary noted that "Many parishioners felt that the circular seating arrangement made the church feel more welcoming, and while there were a few minor criticisms of circular seating, there seems to be a very strong sentiment that this is an important design element to be carried over into the new church." This desire has formed the basis of the church design in all three concept sketches thus far.
- 4) the Assessment report also indicated that "Although some parishioners described the architectural

style of the old church with positive words such “unique”, “open” and “simple”, six times as many survey respondents felt that the design style negatively impacted a welcoming feeling. The split was less drastic when people were asked how the interior design impacted the sense of community, but there were still many more opposed to the “modern” design style than in favor of it”. The architects are proceeding in their work with an awareness of this preference.

5) no decision has been made about the bell tower at this point. Incorporating it (in its existing position) into a new design impacts the location of the overall structure, the layout of the interior of the building and, potentially, the external appearance of the new building. This creates significant design challenges and, potentially, financial ones as well. That said, the bell tower is an iconic church image, and something that is strongly associated with the history of the parish. At this time, nothing has been finalized, other than a determination that, whatever else may happen, the bells from the existing tower will become, in some way, an integral part of the design of the new church.

“Given the complexities of the architectural, liturgical and financial concerns inherent in a project of this magnitude, the process has been painstaking,” said Father John. “However, it is clear that that we are making steady, meaningful progress in rebuilding our church.”