

Saint Joseph Legacy Wall

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Why are we doing another appeal?

We currently cannot afford to maintain all the ministries of the parish with our current revenue stream. When this problem was addressed with the Finance Council, the Parish Council and the School Advisory Board, they agreed with Father Pastorius that we should be transparent with the parish community about our finances and our hopes for the future and let you be a part of the decision.

Q2. How did we get to this point?

In the simplest terms, we are spending more than we are taking in. We continue to manage our debt for the Parish Center, maintain our buildings and support all the current ministries, but over the years we have seen a decrease in the size of our parish and we have not yet been able to turn the tide on increasing our school enrollment. This has led us to the point that our parish savings will no longer support the resulting parish deficits.

Q3. Was there any misappropriated of funds?

It is important to be clear that no funds have been stolen from the parish. The parish was audited by the Archdiocese when Fr. Pastorius took over with no significant findings. In addition, we have many safeguards in place including an active Parish Finance Council and a Parish Audit Committee. More recently the Archdiocese did a full financial review when we applied for a loan for the new HVAC system. The loan was approved; however, due to your generosity, was never used.

Q4. What is happening with the Gold Envelope Fund (Debt Reduction) and the Lily and Hammer Club?

These were set up as restricted fund accounts, designed to provide for specific purposes. We use the money donated in the gold envelopes for additional reduction of our Archdiocesan debt for the Parish Center and the money raised from the Lily and Hammer Club is set aside to be used on future maintenance projects.

Q5. What else is the parish doing to improve our financial stability?

In October the Finance Council met and, based on our current cash position and budget, determined that the sale of one of the houses was necessary to get through this fiscal year. It has since been determined that Resurrection House will be placed on the market and sold. This house was chosen for its marketability, and it can be sold without any additional expense for repairs or remodeling. In addition, we have developed a financial plan (including the Legacy Wall Appeal) for maintaining our current ministries next year. This plan includes reductions in expenses throughout parish operations and the preparation of a balanced/surplus budget.

Q6. What happens if we don't raise the required amount?

Without the additional funds, we will be operating at a deficit budget again next year. We no longer have enough savings to offset a deficit, so we would not be able to offer contracts to our teachers and subsequently would need to close the K-8 school after this current school year.

Q7. Are there other alternatives for operating our school? Can we combine with a neighboring parish?

We are exploring alternative options. It has been difficult to get our neighboring parishes to actively collaborate, but we are making progress. Unfortunately, we would not be able to have a new model implemented before the 20/21 school year. If the appeal is successful this year, we will continue to work with our neighboring parishes to determine if a regional or collaborative model would serve our children and our parish well.

Q8. Will this appeal become a yearly ask?

If you're asking if we will do this forever to keep our school alive, the answer is "no." This appeal is part of a larger plan, and there are other parts of this plan that still need to happen. We need to reduce our parish operating budget, continue our stewardship efforts to increase our Sunday offertory, ensure that we build school enrollment, increase our current tuition in the school, build on the profitability of our Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC), and continue to improve our Sunday experience and parish life, thereby making St. Joseph the parish of choice in the West County Deanery. As we move forward, our financial picture should look stronger. We are three years from having the parish center debt paid off, at which time that \$150,000 per year can be redirected towards operating expenses, and we will continue to review and reduce parish expenses and be good stewards of your gifts. So, while we can see an end for needing this appeal to help cover normal operating expenses, we do feel it is a good way to address other possible fundraising needs.

Q9. Can the K-8 school ever be viable again?

Yes, but for this to happen, we need to increase our enrollment. In establishing the ECLC, we can now look at both programs as parts of our educational model. This allows us to share resources between programs so that we can be viable and sustainable. We need to actively market our school and ECLC, and we need to intentionally foster the young families entering the programs to become fully engaged in our parish life. If we can consistently feed the K-8 school thru the ECLC we can begin to shift the enrollment trend. Our largest class is graduating this year. We have a strong belief that our current PreK class will be enrolling a larger than usual number into Kindergarten next year. Next year's 7th and 8th grades are our smallest classes (only 7 in each) so we are confident that we can begin to increase numbers as they graduate. Though we can never know, it would be our hope that within three years the two programs together will be viable.

Q10. Why not close the school? Would that not save money?

It is not possible to answer this with a simple yes or no. All the ministries we have at the parish, including our school, are interconnected and tied to so many other parts of parish life. The only thing we know for certain is that if the school closes, some of those families will leave the parish. With them will go their gifts of time, talent and treasure. So everything we do, from Sausage Supper to Sunday Liturgies will be affected in some way.

Q11. Does our school matter?

We don't see this fundraiser as being just about saving our full-time school. This is about maintaining the vitality of our parish. But to answer the question, "does it matter?" the answer is "yes." Though it may be the best kept secret around, we have one of the best schools in the area. With an amazing faculty including a learning consultant, children who always are accepted at the high school of their choice, with service and community projects that help them become better citizens, the school certainly matters.

Q12. Will the ECLC still exist if we are not able to raise the money for the K-8 school?

It is our intent to continue moving forward and growing the ECLC program whether we can maintain the K-8 program or not.

Q13. When will a decision be made about the future of the school?

Currently we are not in a financial position to offer contracts to our teachers. If all 600 squares are *adopted* by February 29th, we will then be able to offer contracts to our teachers for next year and sustain our school for another year. Our plans also depend on a commitment of at least 112 students for the 2020-2021 school year. Therefore, we are asking parents to demonstrate their trust in us and give us a written commitment for next year's enrollment. If we have the enrollment numbers and raise the money, we will be able to commit to another school year as early as March 5th.

Q14. What happens to meetings currently held in Resurrection House? What about the St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry?

We will be resetting the areas in the Notre Dame House, moving the St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry to the basement of that house. The meeting space currently in that basement will be moved upstairs. We are also creating private living quarters for Father Ricardo in the basement of his rectory (this is already built-out as a living suite for a priest) and will use the rest of that house as meeting space for the parish. We are working hard to accommodate all groups with a space similar to or better than what they currently have.

Q15. Who are the members of the Finance Council and School Advisory Board?

Finance Council: David Allen – Chair, Greg DeLargy, Catherine Dobrynski, Jim Dolan, Bob Hoffman, John Kaestner, Dave Zaegel, Jim Weiskopf (staff) and Fr. Pastorius.

School Advisory Board: Rachael Day – President, Tim Barrett – Vice President, Lawana Wichmann – Secretary, Bob Bellamy, Emily Wilmes, Tara Smyser, Denny Genovese, Amanda Herman, Rich Thompson, Greg Sturgill (Principal), Cathy Noyes (Director of ECLC).