



Saint Agnes Catholic Church

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JMJ

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Agnes,

As the new year settles in and I get used to writing '2024' on things, I want to take advantage of the relative quiet before the Lenten Season begins to provide updates from the Master Planning Committee (MPC).

To begin with a bit of good news, our diocesan loan taken to help finance the parking lot several years back will officially be paid off next month! It will be a nice 'pay raise' to not have the monthly note for now. Speaking of notes — our church is notably quieter these days with our beloved Casavant organ having been dismantled and shipped up to Quebec for restoration. Reinstallation will begin in October, taking some six weeks or so to complete. The organ should be ready to play by Christmas. Our Glorias are sure to be sung with even greater fervor as the pipes sound once again.

In my letter of July 2023 I noted three proposals made by the MPC in response to parishioner input:

- 1) for the Building Committee to look into church restroom renovation
- 2) to relocate the parish office to the PSR building
- 3) for the Building Committee to proceed on architectural plans for a renovated cafeteria

The second proposal has seen the most movement because it was not hindered by red tape and difficulty in communicating with outside entities. In September, the office relocated to the former PSR Building, now the Office & Catechism Building (OCB), and the parish staff and I couldn't be happier. We have a more spacious, functional, enjoyable atmosphere in which to work, and we have used the opportunity to make some upgrades and tweaks to office life along the way as well. Thank you to all who supported the move financially or with 'sweat equity' resulting in a beautiful and practical parish office for St. Agnes.

In recent months several church restroom renovation options have been considered by the MPC. This being one of the highest priorities to our parishioners, it was agreed to move forward on the project. The next steps are to finalize the plans, pass them by the diocesan building committee, and set timelines with a contractor to do the work. I am reluctant to give a target date for anything as it always seems to be pushed back, but our hope is that we can complete at least one of the restrooms before the end of fall. More details will be forthcoming as things progress.

The cafeteria project is still slowly coming along. As noted in the February 4th bulletin, we received compensation funds from our Builders Risk Insurance and General Liability Insurance claims, which help to relieve some of the financial concern on the project. We are still unsure how much insurance will cover in the end, but are working with Kern Architects to do our best to cut costs where we can. At the same time, we want a building that will serve us well, so we are proceeding with restoring the previously unused bathrooms, relocating the Adoration Chapel, and making a handful of other upgrades. We hope to have plans in hand ready to bid around Easter and to start construction by early fall.

As for the financials, there is still much that is yet to be determined about the two latter projects. We have a fair sum in the Building Fund for the cafeteria project, we expect another \$250,000-300,000 in insurance disbursements as the cafeteria project proceeds, and we have a \$10,000 donation dedicated for the church restroom project. It is possible that we may have to take out a loan from the diocese later this year, but the Finance Council, Building Committee, and MPC are all in agreement—together with all of us, I'm sure—that these projects need to be done so we can move on. One aspect of our parish life that gives me great hope in the midst of these financial burdens is

the Fundraising Committee established last summer. With little time to prepare and a steep learning curve, the members rallied St. Agnes parishioners and friends to raise \$50,000. With more knowledge and twice the time to set up our events, we are shooting to double that number for the coming year. The Lord has been good to us as a parish community, and that goodness is so often manifest through you.

One project not officially noted in that MPC docket but that we are hoping to get underway again in the coming months is the refinishing of the pews in church. This work was begun before my arrival and stopped on account of the many pandemic restrictions and changes. There are companies that charge a hefty price to remove the pews and refinish them, but because we have a number of woodworkers and handymen in our parish, it is our hope to take care of the whole project in-house and so save some money. Craig Toups, our assistant facilities manager, will oversee this work and has posted a sign-up sheet online for those willing and able to offer assistance. Craig will be there to make sure you are familiar and comfortable with the tools and the work. To volunteer, go to the parish website homepage under announcements, or contact Craig at facilities@stagnesbr.com, or call the parish office.

I look forward to this year with great expectation and hope. Projects are finally moving, our facilities are getting closer to being useable spaces once more, the number of registered parishioners continues to grow, and blessings are coming at us from all sides. The evil one isn't happy with this and wants to do whatever he can to cause trouble, so please keep praying for one another, for our community, for these projects, and for me to be the Pastor that this incredible parish deserves. And know of my daily prayers for each of you.

Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to help us! St. Joseph, pray for us! St. Agnes, pray for us!

in Corde Jesu, per Mariam

Fr. Brent Maher
Pastor

February 5, 2024
Feast of St. Agatha