Preparing for Our Future

BY FR. LOYOLA AMALRAJ, PASTOR

After months of serious consideration, I am delighted parish leaders have chosen to move forward with a capital campaign to retire our debt. Since coming to St. Boniface four years ago, I have seen this parish make important strides in leadership, staffing, financial management, and long-term planning. While we still have work to do, I am excited about the future, and bringing conclusion to the past building projects will be a tremendous step for us.

With better stability in our daily work, I challenged leaders to examine parish life – past, present, and the future. I believe there is an intrinsic connection in them. In order to move forward we have to examine our past plans, visions, and organizations – when and where we experienced growth, particularly in the 80s and 90s.

It is exciting to know how our parish doubled itself during those times and how growth precipitated the expansion of our physical plant. While the past expansion met the most critical needs at the time, those first two phases were actually part of a larger plan. Future phases envisioned a larger church, a rectory, office space for staff, and additional parking and gathering spaces. While Sippel Hall has served the parish well, it was always envisioned as a temporary place of worship.

Like many of you, I look forward to a future in which we can gather regularly as a community to celebrate Mass in a new and expansive church. However, our remaining loan prevents us from looking seriously at those additional projects for the time being.

We have every expectation that the Germantown area’s growth, stalled temporarily following the economic crisis, will continue in the years to come. We are beginning to see signs of that with the increase in building and home sales in the area. It is important that we remove barriers now so that we are well prepared when the moment arrives to revisit further investment.

Continued on page 3…

Dearest lord, teach me to be generous; teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost.

— St. Ignatius of Loyola
On Saturday, Jan. 9, 2016, members of the various parish commissions came together to begin the process of developing our overall Strategic Plan. This planning is being led by Jerry Weidmann and Jason Paul. It will help guide our parish to determine its needs over the next five years.

Pastoral and Finance Councils, School Commission, Prayer & Worship, Human Concerns, Buildings and Grounds, Faith Formation and Stewardship all participated in this first planning meeting. The initial step in the process was to execute team SWOT analyses (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Each group brainstormed these topics and all of the information has been consolidated and rechecked with the teams. On March 12 & 13, the Strategic Plan team will seek the same input from all parish members wishing to contribute their thoughts.

From this initial step, we will move into defining our Mission and Core Beliefs, then into establishing Goals & Objectives, leading us into developing Action Plans and Budget Preparation. When these sequential steps are completed, we will adopt the new Strategic Plan for St. Boniface in late fall of 2016. Decisions to be made in our planning process include new ministries needed, current ministries to be expanded and strengthened, facility needs, outreach initiatives, marketing plans, and evangelization efforts.

While the capital campaign is separate from our strategic planning, these two efforts complement one another. The campaign will drive down our parish building debt in an accelerated manner in order to free resources for the kinds of future parish needs and initiatives being identified in our plan.

Confident in the faith and commitment of the St. Boniface community, we know our capital campaign can and will be a great success. Help us hit the ground running when the results of the campaign are finalized and please don’t hesitate to share any and all of your valuable input. Remember, we are all in this together!

Confident in the faith and commitment of the St. Boniface community, we know our capital campaign can and will be a great success.
A few weeks ago I was asked to become an honorary chairperson of this fundraising campaign. I accepted that request with pleasure. I have always been proud of all the parish accomplished during the fifteen years I was pastor. St. Boniface doubled in size during those years and so did the physical plant. With all of this work came a sizable debt. In spite of the recession that followed, your dedication allowed the parish to continue meeting its monthly obligation, even in more challenging times than any of us could have imagined.

The present parish leadership has determined now is an appropriate time to hold a campaign to reduce that remaining debt. After reviewing the feedback the parish provided during last year’s feasibility study, I concur with that decision and I am excited about the work ahead.

St. Boniface Catholic Parish has ministered well to its members and the community at large. I share the hope that this campaign will finally retire our debt and allow us to invest in our ministries in new ways. This will benefit not only our parish members but people in the community as well.

For those reasons, I am proud to stand with you in this campaign, not only with my time and energy but also with my own financial support. I hope you will join me in this important undertaking.

We are preparing for a future in which St. Boniface is a distinct parish community for generations to come. I fear this is an area of significant misunderstanding for many parishioners. While we are part of a parish cluster with St. Gabriel’s, that does not mean that we will be merged into a single combined parish. Nearly nine in ten Archdiocesan parishes are in the same position as us, and mergers would occur only in the rare cases where parishes voluntarily or actively petition the Archdiocese to combine. This would not be imposed on us or anyone else, and Archdiocesan leaders continue to reiterate that the size, distinctiveness, and expected growth of the Germantown and Hubertus areas mean that these two communities could not be adequately served by a single parish, no matter how large it was.

Together, let us dream and build our future. I am so proud of all this parish has already accomplished, and I hope you will join me in embracing the opportunity to further strengthen our parish community. Finally completing this work will take the generous help of all of us, but together I am confident it is within our reach.

“I am proud to stand with you in this campaign, not only with my time and energy but also with my own financial support.”
I currently contribute to both the stewardship campaign and via the green Building Fund envelopes. How is a capital campaign different than either of those?

The fall stewardship campaign and our weekly collections are the most important support for parish life and sustain our daily ministries. Over half of supporting families also contribute regularly to the Building Fund through the green envelopes (421 households in 2015). This generous support fully pays our monthly loan payments without this debt being part of our regular parish budget and has enabled us to pay down over $900,000 in principal over the past five years.

A capital campaign asks members to consider a special gift over a limited period of time to help our parish achieve significant long-term goals. Over the next three years, gifts and pledges to the Building Our Future Together campaign will take the place of ongoing Building Fund donations. We expect that this concentrated, parish-wide effort to retire our remaining loan ahead of schedule will be supported by a wider group within our parish. We hope that many of those already supporting the Building Fund might commit to a short-term increase in their giving for this important purpose.

What does it mean for St. Boniface to be part of a cluster with St. Gabriel?

Almost every parish in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee is part of a cluster with one or more other parishes. The few exceptions to that are parishes staffed by religious orders and a handful serving over 7,000 members. The purpose of those clusters is to prepare for an expected future in which there are more parishes than available diocesan priests. At some point, each cluster would be served by a single pastor, though that does not necessarily mean that there would be only one priest per cluster.

St. Boniface and St. Gabriel have reviewed a variety of available cluster models and agreed that we will maintain separate structures and identities for our parishes and schools, though we will actively look for opportunities for collaboration. Our short term goal is to look for opportunities for sharing staff in our school and parish. The recently held “Encounter Jesus” that was held at both parishes is a good example of working together. We need to look at our facilities, but most importantly, our two parishes need to have an open dialogue. That is why our Pastoral Councils will be meeting this March and several times during the year. These are informal meetings where we get the opportunity to get to know each other.

Is it viable to sustain two parishes in the Germantown/Hubertus area for the long-term? What are the chances that the two parishes merge at some point?

The Archdiocese has assured us that two distinct parishes are needed to adequately serve these communities. St. Boniface and St. Gabriel are among the larger parishes in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, with each in the top third for average weekly attendance and total giving. This area of the Archdiocese is also expected to experience significant net migration and growth over the next 35 years. While declining vocations might mean that a single pastor might jointly serve both parishes at some future point, there is no expectation that our two parishes would actually merge. We expect St. Boniface to be serving our community at this location far into the foreseeable future.