

# Listening Session Minutes for June 27, 2021 at Bascom Church

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Start time: 1:00 pm      End time: 3:30 p.m.

Those present for the meeting:

Angie Tiell	Edgar Coleman	Phyllis Swander	Jan Hammer
Carol Siebenaller	Mary Coleman	Jerry Swander	Anthony Hammer
Sue Overmier	Mike Ardner	Phil Steyer	Michael Hammer
Helen Brickner	Rose Ann Ardner	Margaret Steyer	Greg Siebenaller
Jane Reinhart	Linda Hammer	Judy Miller	Steve Kimmet
Merle Reinhart	Diana Bouillon	Thomas Daniel	Sr Marcia Boes
Erma Reinhart	Rick Brickner	Nancy Smith	Dan Borer
Karen Kuhn	Cindy Brickner	Ed Tiell	frTim Kummerer
Ed Kuhn	Sr Carol Inkrott	Julie Tiell	
Mike Reinhart	Dennis Welly	Bob Swartziller	
Clara Welly	Sr Leonette	Alicia Swartzmiller	
Nancy Hohman	Kelly Elchert	Sue Swartzmiller	
Dcn John Walter	Steve Irving	Marilyn Stump	
Tim Galvin	Larry Lucius	Lori Orians	

Fr. Tim welcomed everyone and began with goals for the meeting. The goals included:

- Begin a conversation about the future of the chapels
  - No decisions have been made
  - No decisions will be made today
- Take a fresh look around
- Examine realities
- Consider some possibilities
- Share hopes and fears

Fr. Tim asked if there were any questions.

- Question: Does the elevator work. Answer: Yes it does.

## Building walk around

Time was given for people to walk around the church (main level, lower level and outside).

## Guideline review

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Upon everyone's return, Fr. Tim reviewed the guidelines for the conversation. The guidelines were as follows:

- Listen without interrupting
- Active listening
- Be kind
- Criticize the idea not individuals
- Commit to learn not debate
- Avoid blame, speculation, inflammatory language
- Avoid assumptions
  - Don't speak for anyone else
- Allow everyone a chance to speak

### What did you see?

Those in attendance made the following comments.

- Wanted to see inside the church one last time to say goodbye to the church Mom was married in.
- Peeling paint
- Deteriorating plaster
- Outside needs tuck pointing
- After a year, the church is still here and doesn't look much different
- Beautiful windows
  - We need to take special care of these windows as they are some of the most beautiful windows in the diocese.
  - In the second east window, the lower right diamond is upside down. This is a unique feature.
- Basement looks as good as it has over the years
  - Replaced front helped remedy the water infiltration issue in the basement
- No hot water
  - It does work, but it wasn't turned on prior to the recent funeral dinner.
- Church is not much different than when we left it a year ago.
- No bulletins and one year old Breaking Bread missals.

### Facility Study Review

Fr. Tim reviewed the information for all church locations from the RCM facilities study. The study was done to find out what it would take and cost to bring each building at each location up to code. The study took place in late 2014. The review of the study took place in 2015 with a final report in January 2016. The figures provided in the RCM study does not include non-architectural renovation costs such as repairing the organ, new carpet, etc.

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Fr. Tim reminded everyone that he was trained to assist with the pastoral, prayer, and spiritual life of parishioners. However, he is not trained for closing churches. He asked for peoples' understanding and patience. He offered a full digital copy of the report to anyone who requests it.

Fr. Tim reviewed the RCM costs for the Bascom location – church building and rectory. Total cost for the church was \$442,000 and the total cost of the rectory was \$189,000 for a total cost of \$631,000. He reminded everyone that costs have gone up since 2016, especially during the past year. The estimated year over year construction cost increases just in the past year, due to COVID-related issues, is about 35% - 40%.

The study costs are shown below.

Item	Church	Rectory
Architect	\$262,000	\$91,000
HVAC	50,000	35,000
Plumbing	13,000	18,000
Electrical	37,000	5,500
<b>Total construction cost</b>	<b>\$362,000</b>	<b>\$149,500</b>
Contingency	36,200	14,950
Soft Cost	43,800	24,550
<b>Total estimated cost</b>	<b>\$442,000</b>	<b>\$189,000</b>
<b>Total cost both buildings</b>	<b>\$631,000</b>	

Question: What about spending \$15,000 on the rectory renovation instead of spending it on the church repairs.

- Fr. Tim pointed out that the renovation took place prior to the COVID related closing of the Bascom church, the rectory was vacant and needed to be occupied to prevent it from further deterioration and we had people who needed a place to live. The amount spent was to cover what was necessary for the rectory to be functional and not empty.

Comment: The septic systems for the church and the rectory are separated but the well is common to both buildings.

Fr. Tim began going through the costs for the other buildings including beginning with Liberty. The consensus was there was no need to go over the Liberty costs since the building was gone. Fr. Tim asked about the other buildings. There was no desire to review those costs.

Question: Are there any funds remaining specifically for the maintenance of the Bascom site (St. Patrick's building). Fr. Tim stated that there were funds bequeathed by the Ley sisters for the maintenance of the Bascom site. Steve Kimmet estimated about \$32,000 remaining.

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*Question:* What happened to the \$1 million Don Kromer left to the parish? Fr. Tim assured everyone that Mr. Kromer did not leave any money to the parish but did give funds to the Diocese of Toledo. Fr. Tim suggested that anyone can verify this information with the executors of Mr. Kromer's estate.

### Results of the January 2016 Parish Assembly

Fr. Tim reviewed the eight options (prepared by RCM) offered for consideration by those in attendance at the January 2016 parish assembly held at the Hopewell Loudon School. The options, voting results and related costs are shown in the table below.

Option	Description	Cost	Yes	Maybe	No
1	Do Nothing	\$0	1	3	6
2	Renovate all	\$4,800,000	7	1	46
3	Renovate Bascom/New Riegel only	\$3,500,000	16	13	2
4	Renovate Bascom/New Riegel only and new fellowship hall	\$7,100,000	6	23	0
5	Renovate Bascom/New Riegel. Build new parish hall in central location	\$9,300,000	0	2	13
6	Renovate New Riegel only. Build new fellowship hall	\$6,900,000	3	20	0
7	Renovate New Riegel only. Build new parish hall	\$8,800,000	44	12	4
8	New central campus	\$18,000,000	11	20	26

Fr. Tim pointed out that the most popular option from the assembly was option 7. He emphasized that against the consensus of the assembly, the Finance Council and the Pastoral Council, that he did not feel we were ready to go down to one site. He did what he felt was right as he thought it was too soon to be at one site. He emphasized the feeling of the Finance Council that we had better uses of our funds than spending on the empty buildings. From this, we petitioned to Bishop Thomas for a combined parish operating at two sites.

### Realities that exist

Fr. Tim reviewed a list of "realities that exist" that included the following:

- Combined costs to renovate all 5 sites (\$4,800,000) is beyond our reach.
- We desire to maintain a Catholic rural presence
- We need a sustainable pastoral plan that is reasonable for one priest
  - Fr. Tim explained Bishop Thomas' commitment for the foreseeable future to have a Catholic presence in this portion of Seneca County. He has been faithful to his promise. Fr. Tim explained the priest number realities as well as the Bishop's relationship with resources in India to help with the number of priests in this diocese.
- Parishes reached consensus to concentrate our efforts and our resources at only one site (New Riegel)

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- Fr. Tim made the independent decision to use two sites, New Riegel and Bascom, despite consensus of Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and parish assembly
- Bishop Thomas approves petition to unify parish and limit sacramental life to Bascom and New Riegel sites.
- Parish Council and Finance Council recommended urgency in using only one site by July 2020.
  - Fr. Tim sought to move deadline to July 1, 2021 due to the 2020 deadline not giving sufficient time to talk this through with the parishioners at the Bascom location. This plan could not be carried out due to COVID.

### More Realities

- Church attendance nationwide declining
- Christian churches in Bascom declining
  - One of the churches has moved to one Sunday service.
  - All are experiencing financial difficulties
- Catholic Church impacted by abuse crisis
- All churches impacted by COVID
- Bascom struggled to sustain ministries at the 8:00 AM Mass
  - Comment: We had trouble getting servers, and other ministers, when there was a 5:00 PM Mass.

### Still More Realities

- Vacant churches cost about \$10,000 to \$15,000 each annually in utility costs alone.
  - Fr. Tim pointed out that the County Auditor is pressuring the parish about classifying the empty non-used sites as religious sites and keeping their tax exempt status.
- Vacant churches are an insurance liability
  - Insurance companies do not want to insure due to the risk.
- Vacant buildings deteriorate quickly and lose value quickly

### **Consider the Possibilities**

Fr. Tim walked through some of the possibilities for the Bascom site and buildings. Other possibilities may exist. The possibilities discussed are as follows:

- Do nothing
- Sell properties “as is”
- Demolish buildings / sell properties
- Demolish buildings – don’t sell – create a “memorial”
  - A low cost way to memorialize the St. Patrick’s parish being located at this site.
- Demolish buildings – sell site – create a “memorial” at cemeteries
  - Create the low cost way to memorialize the parish, but at the St. Patrick cemetery.
  - Discussed perpetual fund required for the parish cemetery maintenance
- Renovate/repurpose to further parish mission

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- Find way for the building to further the mission of the All Saints Parish. For example a food pantry, shelter, furniture pantry, community center, etc.
- Renovate/repurpose for local use

### Question, Answer, Conversation Time

The following are the comments, questions and related answers and general conversation of those in attendance.

- Why was Liberty down sooner than Frenchtown or Alvada when it closed after them?
  - Fr. Tim reviewed the process used to get the consensus of the Liberty community. He acknowledged that all parishioners did not make their feelings known, but the guidance from all those who attended the meeting was clear. They did not want the building to remain and deteriorate. They desired the demolition of the building. With there being a buyer willing to take down the building, the parish proceeded with working with the buyer and the diocese to complete the sale and eventual demolition of the building. This ended up saving the parish at least \$90,000.
- If we turn it into something else, wouldn't we still have to spend the same dollar amount to refurbish the buildings?
  - The answer would be yes or let someone else foot the cost for the renovations if they are using the facilities.
  - A parishioner pointed out that the Diocese of Toledo has very strict guidelines for the use of the buildings by anyone who buys the properties after relegation.
- There are other new local churches that bought up buildings from other churches and are doing fine.
- These churches are ahead of us in technology.
- The same number of dollars would need to be spent if we do this as a church or is repurposed.
- With COVID gone now, why not go back to having a Mass at Bascom and see how it goes?
  - Fr. Tim re-emphasized the struggles we had with ministries and with attendance by those who were previous members of St. Patrick and St. Andrew.
- Where would we be if we didn't have the pandemic?
  - Fr. Tim re-iterated the previous statement that both the Pastoral Council and Finance Council had recommended the urgency of going to one site by July 1, 2020 and his request to move that deadline to July 1, 2021. COVID delayed that process.
  - Was there anyone on the councils from St. Patrick and St. Andrew?
    - Yes. There were members from the parish on both councils.
- The reality of the attendance numbers at the 8:00 AM Mass were more than 50/50 from New Riegel. There is always going to be hard feelings when churches merge. Keep in mind that the buildings are not the Church, we the people are the Church, whether a straw hut in Africa or within our area. We cannot sustain these buildings. We are one parish now, All Saints.
- My faith is important to me and it isn't in the buildings. It's more than buildings. I don't want to see the buildings torn down. The Church is us.

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- What was the attendance at the 10:00 AM MASS?
  - Fr. Tim stated the Mass changes took place prior to him getting here. He reiterated that the multiple locations is not sustainable for one pastor.
- I became Catholic in this church. No matter where you go to Church, if you're going to take the bitterness with you and you don't actively get involved in the new parish, you're never going to heal. It is a choice you need to make for yourself. It is not Father's.
- I am from here. My family has been here in this area since the 1830's. I grew up here I made all my sacraments here in this building. I also got mad at a priest and left this parish. I nearly left the Catholic Faith altogether. This is not easy and I understand the hard feelings we all may be harboring because I've been there done that. Ten years ago when we all got together at St Andrew's to talk about being officially twinned with St Patrick's, the overwhelming comment was that most of those in attendance wanted to stay in a rural faith community. I implore all those gathered here today to do just that. Please return to your rural faith community!

Since the beginning of the pandemic, my wife and I have opened our hearts to serving our church community. The opportunities to serve are many within the All Saints community and I feel very fulfilled doing so. Many of the people I have met with and explored my faith with in the larger family of All Saints have gone through exactly the same thing. We are essentially going from six buildings to one. While I know it is difficult to leave those buildings behind we need to understand that this is not a rural Seneca County issue. Many parishes and diocese across the country are experiencing the exact same thing. This is not personal, this is not a vengeful act as some have said and many may feel.

The church mission must continue. It would be irresponsible for us as parishioners to put a strain on the diocese financially and from a staffing standpoint that detracts from the work of the church as a whole. If we don't put aside our feelings for a building our entire rural Seneca County parish may be at risk. I urge you to voice your feelings, pray for reconciliation in your heart, and return to your rural faith community in full. Say yes to service. Find a way to serve within the parish or join one of the many groups within the All Saints family.

- If you go to Findlay, Tiffin, Fremont, Carey or Fostoria, we defeat the goal of having a rural Catholic presence in this part of the county.
- Will the Cub Scouts be able to continue to use the building? We need to know for chartering purposes. The parish is the chartering group for our packs.
  - Fr. Tim said we consider the Cub Scouts to be part of the parish mission as are the 55 Club and the funeral dinners. Parish groups can still use the basement.
- People have told me that they do not feel comfortable at New Riegel. My feeling is if you don't go on a regular basis, you are not going to get to know people and get comfortable. Go and set next to someone from New Riegel and start talking with them and getting to know them. Need to put yourself out there to get to know people. We all one.

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### Greatest Fears / Greatest Hopes

Greatest Fears	Greatest Hopes
Local people going to the larger / city churches	We all come together and work and worship together
Catholic Church continues to decline	Property becomes an asset to the community
50% or so coming here were from New Riegel	Still be a Church with more than one site if possible
Lack of trust in the Diocese	Different Mass times to all those in this area to get to sporting events
No reasonable alternatives to priest shortages	Rip off the band aid and get it over with so we can move on.
Church has to continue to share Sunday with other activities	Excellent communication is the key, including pastoral council minutes made available
Priests set up to fail	Wherever people land, I hope they have a sense of belonging.
Too late to pull together	Keeping the rural parish community
How could we repurpose? Where could we get the funds	

Fr. Tim stated that we will compose minutes for the meeting and make them available on the parish website. We will also make the video available. We need to communicate, communicate and communicate.

- Comment: we need to get this out beyond the website, in hard copy, so that folks can get it at church.
- Question: Could we have a communion service here once a month since we have Deacon John and soon will have Greg Siebenaller?
  - It is not a question of Fr. Tim being too busy, but the wisdom of maintaining this site for even a once a month communion service.

The meeting ended with prayer.