



St. John Neumann Catholic Church

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July 26, 2023

Dear Parishioners of St. John Neumann,

Since the parish Town Hall Meeting in January, we haven't reported very much about our effort to build a new church; however, much has been happening behind the scenes. I'd like to catch you up on these happenings and to answer some of the questions that you may have about the project going forward.

What is happening with the project to build the new church?

Since the start of the project, SJN has contracted with Boudreaux Architects for design services. The Steering Committee for the project has been engaging the architects in the phase known as "Design Development." This involves the determination of the many details for the new church that were not yet elaborated in the conceptual phase of design.

You may recall that our plan has been to keep construction costs to \$10M with money raised through fundraising. Our budget for the "soft costs" of the project (architectural fees, furnishings, artwork, consultants, etc.) is set for \$1.5M to be paid for by the sale of the current church.

Working with Boudreaux, we have continued to keep the estimated costs in line with our budget. Because we are determined to keep our construction budget to \$10M and because inflation has caused construction costs to increase, we have had to reduce the square footage of the church building. This has had an impact on the amount of expected seating in the church, reducing it from the previous concept's 900 seats to approximately 700 now. Although we have also pared down the auxiliary rooms (eg. sacristies, storage), we have ensured that the functionality we need for the auxiliary spaces is retained. The size of the hall has not been reduced.

The architects are putting in the details for floors, ceilings, interior and exterior walls, windows, mechanical and electrical systems, roof, etc. At the same time, the Art and Furnishings Committee is developing the plan for artwork and sacred furnishings in the new church.

When will we see the latest drawings for the church? The plans for sacred art?

After the Design Development phase has been completed (expected soon after school starts), we will share the floor plan and elevations. Look for this in the early fall. As soon as the art program is sufficiently developed, we will share the plan with the parish and seek feedback. We are looking at the possibility of bringing our liturgical consultant, Ken Griesemer, back to visit and to facilitate the presentation and discussion. Tentative plans will be around the feast day of St. John Neumann, January 5, 2024.

Have we raised enough money to start construction?

Yes and No.

No—We do not have the full \$10M we need from fundraising raised yet. To fully pay off the new church, we will need to continue fundraising beyond the end of the current campaign. The Building Church Together Campaign has a redemption period that will extend to June of 2025. By then, we should have approximately \$7 to 7.5M of the \$10M needed.

Yes—the Diocese of Charleston is willing to work with us to start construction and to fund the deficit with a loan that goes beyond what has been received and pledged. Fundraising that goes beyond the current BCT Campaign will enable us to pay back the loan. We will ask for extensions of pledges as well as seek new donations from households that have not yet made a pledge. This should bring us closer to the full \$10M we will need.

What this means is that fundraising will get us where we need to be, and the Diocese is supporting us. We should be able to work out a financial plan with the help of the Diocese to permit the start of construction next year.

When do we plan to start the construction?

As soon as school is out at the end of May next year, 2024. Construction should take between 14 and 18 months—late fall of 2025 will be our target for completion.

Marketing of the current church will begin before the new church is completed. We may need to be prepared for a period of worship in the school gym if the right buyer comes to us before completion of the church. Regardless of how soon the sale takes place, we will ensure that the church will be properly de-consecrated according to church law and all sacred furnishings and objects removed before turning over the property.

Between now and the start of construction, what will be happening?

Watch for the following:

1. Fall 2023: The architects will be engaged to create the construction documents.
2. Late Summer/early Fall 2023: SJN will discern a contractor for the construction; we will engage the contractor to do “value engineering” in preparation for the start of construction to help keep costs within the budget.
3. Fall 2023: Presentation of the Designs for the Church which will contain a lot more detail than the conceptual plans we have shown before.
4. Early January 2024: Presentation of the “Art Program” with a verbal description of how we intend to place sacred images within the church and provide the sacred furnishings needed for the liturgy.
5. January 2024: Parish Town Hall Meeting at which the state of the parish will be presented, feedback solicited, goals for parish ministries proposed, and new Pastoral Council members sought.
6. Winter/Spring 2024: Solicitation of new or extended pledges for the church.
7. May/June 2024: Ceremonial groundbreaking followed by start of construction.

The bottom line: We are less than a year from seeing the construction of our new church start!

Thank you! Thank you for your generosity which is making this long-deferred dream come true. I firmly believe that the life and spirit of our community will be transformed when we have a combined campus and begin utilizing our new church and hall.

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Sandy McDonald