



Questions and Answers

WITH FR. KAIM, S.T.L

SCHOOL AND PARISH OFFICES

1 What improvements are being proposed to the school?

There are a number of maintenance items that are long overdue. First, the boiler is original to the school, which is 1962. It's highly inefficient and the repair bills have cost us quite a bit. The bathrooms are very old and they need upgrading. The skylights in the gym leak and we have had to alter our sports schedule because of it. We also need a new air conditioning system in the gym and school cafeteria. Those are some of the priorities and how much we are able to do depends on how much we raise, but we are putting these repairs as a top priority.

2 Will anything be done to the school recess play area?

The area just to the west of the church is where the preponderance of the kids play. The previous plan called for locating fellowship hall here, but that idea has been scrapped. This area will continue to be the main recess area. This is the area filled with wood chips and is affectionately called, "the gerbil pit."

We have looked at different options there because the chips do tend to clog the sewer lines. We have considered a "Sport Court" but that was (insanely!) expensive. We have also toyed with seeding it with grass, but there are downsides to that as well. We have decided for now that the best alternative is to create some small outlets in the wood chip area for the water to drain. Currently, we often get standing water when there's a hard rain. We are hoping this will solve some of the problems. The kids do seem to like the wood chip area so if we can make some improvements to the drainage that will take care of a lot of the problems.

3 Will new offices be built for the staff? I didn't see them in the new plans and I thought I remember new offices being proposed under the old plan from two years ago.

Your memory is correct that it was proposed under the old plan, but that was cut out. I believe we can still get good use out of the current offices (the old convent) for a number of years. We will have to pay for some maintenance items such as a new air conditioning system, but I don't believe, and the strategic planning committee agrees with me, that we need to build new offices. That saves us \$1.2 million and a fair amount of green space.

FELLOWSHIP HALL

1 Are we really at capacity with our meeting space such that we need a new fellowship hall?

Pretty close! There are days that are a real challenge and most of those are weekday evenings. Keep in mind that just since my arrival last year the following new groups have been formed: That Man is You!, St. Vincent DePaul Society, three singles groups, expanded choices for Bible and book studies and divorce and cancer support groups. That's on top of long-time clubs like Women's Guild and Knights of Columbus. There are other clubs as well that meet not specific to Holy Family, such as the Courage Apostolate, which I run for those with same sex attraction that also use Holy Family space.

So if we are at or near capacity, it will be hard to start new organizations. Our mindset should be to grow this church—that's the Great Commission Jesus gives us—and so I don't want to say "yes" to a new club, only to find them struggling to get meeting space.

Keep in mind, as I mentioned in my homily that kicked off the feasibility study, that we cannot have the attitude, “build it (the fellowship hall) and they will come. We must and we will, engage in a process of evangelization to expand the reach of this parish and bring in new folks. There are no guarantees, of course, of how successful we will be in bringing in new parishioners, but we have to make the effort.

Finally, keep in mind, the fellowship hall is most useful to us, not as additional meeting space on the weekdays, but to build community on Sundays. The Lord does not expect us to just come to Mass, put in our one hour a week and think that we are done with the requirements of our faith. If we don't know the name or anything about the person who sits next to us every Sunday, that's not a good sign! We should be getting to know our brothers and sisters in the Catholic faith. We can learn so much from them about our faith and it may challenge us to take the next step in our faith journey—whatever that next step is. A new fellowship hall will help facilitate that.

2 If we built this fellowship hall, does this mean the basement won't get used?

It's a good concern to have because we don't want to have all kinds of excess capacity, but the answer is absolutely not. We are at capacity now! That's a good problem to have, but it's becoming increasingly difficult to accommodate the ministries we have. When I spoke at all the Masses about youth ministry in March 2017, by way of summary, I mentioned all the organizations that started here just since my arrival eight months prior. Besides those mentioned above, we need space for “Time Travelers,” which is our children's Liturgy of the Word at the 11:00 a.m. Mass, adult classes for RE parents, and space for re-starting Light of the World retreats. There are other organizations we have had for many years. My hope is to add more programs. I'd like to get another type of retreat to supplement Light of the World, so that we can get more and more people to fall in love with Jesus!

3 When could we break ground on a new fellowship hall?

The diocese requires that we have a minimum of 75% cash on hand before we can request permission to solicit bids for construction. That requirement has changed over the years, but that is what is required as of now and so we will operate under that assumption unless told otherwise.

4 How many bathrooms will there be and where will they be located?

The main bathrooms will be to the right as you walk in the church with several stalls. But we will have a smaller family bathroom for those on the left side of the narthex so that those in the hospitality room won't have to walk across the narthex. And of course, we will still have the bathrooms downstairs.

5 What will the kitchen look like? Will it be a full-service kitchen?

This is a good question and one much debated by our committee. It's one we will seek your input on as well. The proposal does NOT include a full kitchen. The current proposal would be a kitchen like what we have downstairs now. We looked at the costs and benefits and determined a “full kitchen” would not be worth the added cost. Most of our functions involve warming food (such as our funeral luncheons) and not actually doing the cooking. Of course, our Knights of Columbus do pancake breakfasts, but use plug in appliances that only need counter top space.

Would we consider a full kitchen? Yes, it's possible. “All things are possible with God,” but we need to hear a greater justification for it than six fish fry's a year and perhaps another event or two. We want to be cost effective. You'll have an opportunity to offer your feedback through the survey.

6 What will the hospitality room look like?

This is one of the things that surprised me at our Spring Town hall meetings in 2017. I had no idea how much displeasure there was of this room for those who use it. But when they explained their reasoning, it made perfect sense. Many don't like it because they don't feel like they are going to Mass. They are sitting in comfy sofas watching Mass on TV. They don't feel a part of the experience.

We are significantly changing the hospitality room by cutting a whole in the wall and replacing it with glass so that you can see Mass going on. We will also replace the couches with chairs in rows. In other words, we will make it more like the hospitality rooms in most parishes. One of the reasons I think this is important to do this is so the toddlers have a closer experience to what Mass is all about. If they are in a room watching a TV the experience won't seem that different than being in their living room. The jump to the church when the child gets older may be made more difficult because they really haven't been experiencing Mass like everyone else.

7 I see, besides fellowship hall, the plans call for a multi-purpose room. What would that be used for?

First, so everyone is on the same page, this is located to the left of the narthex as you walk in. The fellowship hall is to the right. The multi-purpose room could be used by groups when the fellowship hall is already booked. There may be nights when only one group needs an upstairs room and so instead of heating the fellowship hall, this room could be used. It could also be used for wake services. We can put in more comfortable furniture in here too for retreat type settings or for support groups.

8 If we build fellowship hall in front of the church, won't we lose a lot of parking?

I'm glad you asked that, because that has come up in many of my discussions. The answer is absolutely not. In fact, we hope to increase the amount of parking! But we certainly won't lose any parking. In the front north lot we have 73 stalls. With the new fellowship hall, we plan to have 82 to 86 stalls. We will lose six stalls in the parking lot closer to St. Anne's as we realign the driveway to get into our lot. A lot of our parishioners are unaware that we actually own some of those parking stalls. We own up to the flag pole at St. Anne's.

The reason we are not losing parking and may actually increase the amount of parking is because we will use the grassy area by the office for new parking. That means the parking is also close parking. It's not as though we created a bunch of stalls far away from the church, but rather close by. Be sure to take a look at the architectural renderings in the church. We will also be publishing them in the bulletin so you have a chance to digest it all.

Finally, keep in mind that if fix the retaining walls by the gym, we will gain about five more additional stalls. Those stalls of course would not be close to the church, but on busy Sundays as well as school days, those stalls will very much be utilized.

PARKING LOT

1 Why do we need to spend so much on the parking lot?

This is a good question and one I have asked about five times! I keep asking it hoping I will get a different answer so we can spend the money on other areas, but unfortunately, I keep hearing the same thing. Here is how it has been explained to me:

Asphalt pavements typically have a design life of 20 years. Our parking lots are all older than 20 years and suffer from sever cracking along joint lines due to seasonal freeze thaw cycles. When the pavement is cracked, like alligator skin, it cannot be repaired. New hot mix asphalt is required to provide structural support and a level driving surface for delivery trucks, emergency equipment and passenger cars. The stone base on which the asphalt is supported is in fair condition and will be reused. Prior to repaving, the stone base will be recompact, leveled and supplemented in areas where settlement has occurred. Our campus also has problems with adequate surface drainage. The rehabilitation of our parking lots will be a great time to add storm sewer to help carry storm water to the nearby drainage systems. Our main church parking lot will drain the stormwater detention basin south of the parking lot near St. Anne's.

Holy Family has a sizeable parking lot and driveway system. We have approximately 330 parking spaces and driveways which total over 17,000 square yards of pavement. Reconstruction of the parking lots includes the pavement, stone base repairs, storm sewers, curb and gutter repair, utility adjustments, interior landscaping, and restriping. These elements result in a unit cost of \$60/ square yard or \$1 million in pavement reinvestment.

2 Would the owners of St. Anne's be willing to share the cost if we were to tear up the parking lot?

It's now possible, which was not the case as recently as 2017. St. Anne's was purchased by a new set of owners who are open to working with us when we make repairs. That's great news, because the cooperation has not been there in the past, so I'm told.

I think most people are unaware of how much of the parking lot we actually own. It is not at the midpoint where the road comes in. We actually own much more of the parking lot than that. We own to the flagpole by the front door of St. Anne's Building. It's a very strange delineation, I must say, because there is nothing in the parking lot to distinguish between the two. You just have to sort of eye ball it from the flag pole at St. Ann's and draw an imaginary line in your mind to see the cut off.

WORSHIP SPACE

1 Are changes necessary inside the church?

This is a good question because if one walks in the church for the first time, one might think there are no changes needed. And certainly nothing is falling apart inside the church as it is outside the church, such as the school boiler or the sky lights in the gym. But at the townhall meetings, one of the common themes was to brighten the church and so some of the improvements do address this. How much is done really depends on available funds. Those maintenance items with the greatest need will get the first dollars.

If there is an area of improvement that borders on necessity inside the church it is replacing the carpet. And if the carpet is going to be changed, replacing the pews would be a logical change to make. The pews are not falling apart, but before long they will need to be replaced and if we are going to change the carpet, this would be the time to do it.

One consideration if we were to replace them is to get padded pews. Some are against this because it would be more difficult to maintain. But others are for it because it does make for a more comfortable experience in church. Protestant churches more commonly have them--probably because of the length of their sermons. If we do get them, I promise not to take this as a license to preach longer! In looking around at churches who have replaced their pews recently, what I do find is that most seem to have padded pews. St. Mary's in Huntley, St. Bridget's here in Rockford, are a couple of examples. The pastors I have spoken with said they have not had major problems maintaining them. Ultimately, this is a decision we can punt on. We'll revisit this down the road based on availability of funds and parishioner feedback.

2 You mentioned moving the crucifix over to the middle in one of your homilies. What is that about?

If we have available funds, a good improvement in the church would be to put a greater focus on the altar. One way to do that is to suspend our large crucifix over the altar or the tabernacle. Another way to create that focus is to bring up the tabernacle closer to the altar so that more people could see it from the pews. Also, an upgrade in the tabernacle might be in order--one that stands out and creates an even greater sense of reverence on the Real Presence of Our Lord. All these are possibilities that we would look at, based on available funds.

OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1 Will the bishop eventually launch his own capital campaign?

The short answer is we don't know. First a little background. The diocese imposed a moratorium last Fall on capital campaigns in the parishes as the bishop conducted his own feasibility study. He "grandfathered" those parish campaigns that had already begun. His feasibility study showed good support for a campaign to strengthen the school system and provide extra resources to Catholic Charities. However, the support was not strong enough to proceed. The biggest hesitation was that within the diocese there are ongoing discussions among several of the parishes with schools, including three here in Rockford, to restructure the schools. Holy Family School is not a party to such discussions. But since a "game plan" to restructure these schools was not completed at the time of the feasibility study, there was a reluctance by those interviewed to whole-heartedly support such a capital campaign. Thus, in May of this past year, the bishop lifted the restrictions on parishes from doing their own capital campaigns. I took that opportunity to form our Holy Family Strategic Planning Committee, which led to the survey we are now conducting and you should have received in the mail, as well as the plans that you see in church.

Will the bishop launch his campaign once this re-structuring of schools is complete in a year or so? We don't know and the bishop, quite frankly, doesn't know. He will have to assess the climate at that time. If he does re-boot his diocesan building campaign, we can expect that he will once again impose a moratorium on parishes from starting their own capital campaigns. So if we don't launch our own campaign in this window we have before us, we could face the prospect of several years before we can begin our own. This is why I thought it important to place before all of you parishioners this proposal so that you at least have the option of proceeding before that window of time were to potentially close again in a year or so.

2 What does the schedule for the capital campaign look like?

Most pledge drives in church capital campaigns ask for donations be given over the course of three years. Some go even longer—as long as five years. In our case, we will ask for it over three years so that there is not "fundraising fatigue," which can happen when it goes on too long.