

Update: Where We Stand With New Plans for New Church

A lot has happened in the last six months, since the Holy Spirit Capital Campaign to raise money for a new church and school ended. The Core Committee, the group of parishioners working to lead the development of a new church and school, wanted to bring you all up to speed on the status of the project.

As you may know, last summer our architect produced a master plan for a new church, school, social hall and parish offices. The estimated cost of the church alone in this plan is about \$10 million. We then entered into a capital campaign, in which we asked parishioners to pledge to support the new facilities, knowing that we would likely have to build in phases. The first phase would be the new church building, which would unite Holy Spirit in one place of worship, and the related infrastructure (roads, sewer, water, etc.) that would eventually serve all of the new facilities, including a school.

The capital campaign raised about what our consultant suggested it might: currently we have pledges of about \$1.8 million. Parishioners are faithfully making monthly payments on those pledges, and we have received about \$250,000 so far. The parish also has other potential sources of income to help with Phase 1: we sold property we owned on Bench Road, and used part of the proceeds to purchase 181 acres of land for the new church and school, with the intent of re-selling about 100 acres at a potential profit; the St. Paul's property in Chubbuck, which is about to be appraised, will be sold; and eventually, the St. Anthony's property, including the school, will be sold.

Diocesan real estate officials believe the recent announcement by the Hoku company that it intends to build its silicon plant near our Gathe Road property will significantly increase the value of the excess land the parish owns there. We have been approached by land developers in the area about potentially selling our property. In addition, we are hopeful we can work together with the city, Hoku and the developer on infrastructure improvements, hopefully sharing the costs.

The Core Committee met in mid-April and determined to focus solely on moving forward with the new church construction. The committee will get together with our architects to try to re-design the church facility so that it remains highly functional over the long-term, but reduces the cost from the original \$10 million range. It is still the committee's goal to break ground on the new church and begin infrastructure work by the spring of 2008.

The parish finance committee, meanwhile, has been studying the parish's financial situation and does not recommend taking out a loan in order to begin construction. The parish's budget is simply too tight right now to allow for monthly loan payments. That means the pending appraisal and possible sale of St. Paul's property, and the potential for selling the excess Gathe Road land will be key developments in making groundbreaking possible.

The Parish Council also met in mid-April and voted to accept a recommendation from the campaign fundraising committee to: 1) Ask each parish organization to sponsor one fundraiser a year to raise money to contribute to the capital campaign, and 2) Require all organizations within

the parish to work with the newly-established calendar committee to avoid conflicts among fundraisers. The goals of the recommendations are to 1) unite the parish in working together to contribute to the capital campaign; 2) keep the fundraising momentum moving forward and 3) avoid scheduling conflicts among different organizations which can negatively impact each organization's fundraising efforts.

A "town hall meeting" is scheduled April 30 to update parishioners on the status of building efforts, as well as to get input on the parish's mission and vision statements. It will be held at 7 p.m. at St. Paul's Chapel. Everyone has been encouraged to attend.

Just as a reminder, here is why the Parish Council supports moving forward with a new church:

1. We know that it is highly likely we will have only one priest in the near future. It will be impossible for that one priest to maintain the current Mass schedule, so there will be fewer Masses and the need for a church building that will accommodate more people than the current chapels.
2. The diocese would like us to help assist in addressing the priest shortage by reconfiguring our facilities so that it can more equitably assign priests across the diocese.
3. The current chapels are all aging facilities that require a high level of maintenance. Building a new, high-quality facility will reduce maintenance costs.
4. Holy Spirit is a united parish that brings together all of the Pocatello/Chubbuck Catholic Community. Having one church building that can accommodate the entire community will further that sense of unity.
5. We need to begin a long-term plan to accommodate future generations and potential growth within the parish.