

Backgrounder in preparation for STACM Town Hall January 13, 2015

In May 2014, Parishioners attended a Town Hall meeting to discuss the rationale for moving to a single physical site with great facilities rather than two sites with financially and physically challenging facilities. We have established a Transition Committee and are moving forward with a process that will lead to an informed decision about our future as a Parish.

In advance of our Town Hall on Tuesday January 13, 2015 at 7 pm at the Canadian Martyrs gym, we have put together some information to start you thinking about our future. The information is divided into the following sections:

- What are we going to at the Town Hall?
- The schedule going forward
- Some stats about us and our area
- Current programming at STACM
- A few articles to think about
- Some pictures from Parish Centres
- Some links to explore

What are we going to do at the Town Hall?

We are going to spend time together as a Parish talking about what our Parish values, develop a vision of what we want our church and parish centre to be and do and to talk about what works and what doesn't work right now.

This is our opportunity to consider all we can and want to be without the limits of our current facilities. We aren't making any decisions at this meeting and nothing is off the table.

We are going to consider each of the sites under the following functional headings:

- Worship
- Community
- Program spaces
- Ministries

In small groups, we will endeavour to answer the following questions:

- How do you want to feel in your church spaces?
- What do you value in the current church spaces? What do you want to keep?
- What bugs you about the current church spaces? What doesn't work well? What do you want that we don't have?
- In a perfect world, what will happen in our church and parish centre in 5 years?

The Schedule going forward

So what comes next? Following are the high level steps we are undertaking. As required, we will engage professionals to assist in the various steps to ensure that we are working with the best information and advice.

- Following the Town Hall on January 13, we will summarize the results to develop a Statement of the Physical and Spiritual Elements of our Future Redesign
- The Statement of our Redesign will be used as input to a Comprehensive Report on space requirements and functional relationships
- **Third Town Hall to present the Report**
- A comprehensive review of the facilities and their condition on both sites will be undertaken
- An estimate of financial value of each of the two sites will be undertaken
- Options including concept drawings will be developed for each of the sites
- Disposition opportunities will be developed for each of the sites
- The Committee will develop a recommendation to the Parish
- **Fourth Town Hall to present and discuss the recommendation**

Some stats about us and our area

Approximately 600 parishioners attend Mass at STACM (both churches) every weekend.

Answering the question ‘How many people could we have?’ is more difficult. Although it is certainly possible that parishioners could come from outside the south end of Halifax, it is likely that the majority of parishioners will be from the south end. In 2012, the voting age population of the South End (District 7) was 21,126. For simplicity, we are using 21,000 as the base catchment area¹. According to the last census data published on the Statistics Canada website (2001), 36% of Nova Scotians identify as Roman Catholic. Therefore, there could be approximately 7,500 self-identifying Catholics in South End Halifax.

Canadian Martyrs Church was opened in 1953 and is 62 years old. St Thomas Aquinas Church was opened in 1958 and is 57 years old.

¹ Some parts of other districts might be included in the catchment area (north of Quinpool Road and west of Oxford Street) and people in some parts of District 7 might reasonably associate with another Parish (St. Patrick’s or St Mary’s Cathedral Basilica).

Current programming at STACM

There are lots of programs and ministries that take place at STACM. Here's a list of our current programs to give you a sense of what we do right now:

Altar Society (CM)
Altar Society (STA)
Brunswick Street Breakfast
Bursary Committee
Catholic Women's League
Development and Peace
Divine Mercy Devotion
Eucharistic Adoration
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist (CM)
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist (STA)
Family and Adult Faith Formation
Finance Committee
First Friday ALL Night Prayer Vigil & First Saturday
Mass
Gardening Ministry (CM)
Hope Cottage outreach
Justice and Charity Coordination Committee
Lectors
Liturgy Committees
Metro Turning Point
Ministers of Hospitality/Ushers (CM)
Ministers of Hospitality/Ushers (STA)
Music Ministry
Nicaragua Committee
Parish Life
Profile Ministry
RCIA
Sacristans (CM)
Sacristans (STA)
Social Action Committee
St Vincent de Paul Society
Sunday Coffee Social (CM)
Sunday Suppers
Weekly Food Collection (CM)
Weekly Food Collection (STA)
Youth Edge Program and Confirmation Program

A few articles to think about

The following articles and excerpts are a sample of the many thoughts and perspectives available related to building or rebuilding a church and parish centre.

Church Design Zebras



In medical school, they call them zebras. Most things a doctor sees are just plain old horse. Colds, flu, plantar warts. And so the saying "When you hear hoofbeats behind you, don't expect to see a zebra". Yet it's well-known that new med students are prone to diagnose common symptoms as rare diseases. Mostly because once you think about a zebra, it sticks in your mind.

Our church has spent a year and a half in the design process. We started with a series of meetings to discuss the history and meaning of church architecture, then moved on to simple bubble diagrams of what type of spaces we needed. Once we had design concepts and preliminary floor plans from our architects, we had a series of all-Sunday afternoon sessions in which we laboriously listed every function of the church and how it would work in the new space.

And always, always, there has been concern about the zebras.

"What if we need to do a two-casket funeral?"

"We simply must have a bride's room!"

"I want to be able to completely curtain the stage for a musical performance."

"What if we have 800 people for Christmas?"

Once someone fixates on a zebra, it can be hard to move them off of it. And zebras require special care, because they are often tied to cherished events like holidays and weddings, or to a congregant's particular ministry focus like the music program or Vacation Bible School.

It helps to gently remind people that they didn't build their own house to anticipate every possible eventuality. And we can't build the church to, either.

They didn't build their house to hold, year-round, the 35 relatives that fill it at Christmas time, or to anticipate their daughter's wedding dreams. Those are zebras.

The 80/20 rule works well here. We've worked hard to ensure that the design is amazing for 80% of the church's functions. And that it is flexible enough to *accommodate* the other 20%...some of which we can't even anticipate.

Zebras are rare. So we've made sure that we can set up extra chairs, shift classrooms, meet outside, and hang the odd theatrical component from the ceiling for their occasional visits. But it wouldn't be a good use of the Lord's funds to build the church for the zebras.

<http://goodchurchdesign.blogspot.ca/2012/03/church-design-zebras.html>

On Elder-Friendly Design



I was talking with a friend this week, who had spent some time serving in an inner-city church. Once the largest, most vibrant church in the community, changing demographics had left them with a large property that a committed but increasingly smaller group of elder church members struggled to maintain. I knew it, I even knew some of them (my great-uncle was a long-time member) and sympathized. But I didn't really understand.

What I learned as he shared his experiences was how hurt these dear people felt at their near total marginalization by the modern (American) church. Their experience, their wisdom, wasn't wanted. Their preferences, for music or service style meant nothing. Everyone wanted the twenties and thirties. No one wanted them. They had a siege mentality, huddling together against the forces of rejection in the place that, of all places, they should have been most welcome. All the happening churches in town would rather have a 25 year old with a guitar and a smile than someone that had served and loved and grown in grace for half a century.

I was always uncomfortable with the trendy, self-consciously hip approaches prevalent in 'emerging' churches. But now I'm just plain angry.

I checked the websites of the supposedly 'innovative' churches below. On only one could I find any reference to a ministry for older adults. Though their sites are heavy with pictures (some obviously stock photos of models, patently not real parishioners), few depicted anyone older than 50. When they did, it was often a minister. Funny that the ministers will soon be too old to attend their own church. I wonder where they'll go then? These churches made special spaces for kids, and youth, and young adults, and a coffeeshop so their fashionable attendees can get through a service without being deprived of their precious java. But no special place, no welcoming provision, for their seniors.

How do you welcome the elders to your church?

Disability requirements for new construction probably mean the basics for accessible loos and walkways are in place. But is the light in the auditorium kept too low for dim eyes to read the Scripture passage? (elders usually still bring their own Bibles. Old-fashioned, that) Are there ushers available to help a slow-moving elder through a sea of young people to the front door and then to their seat? Have you considered how daunting a long hallway, a vast vestibule, is to an elder? Is there hearing-impaired provision, even special seating for elders in the sanctuary? Do you pursue elders as members as much as you do young professionals? Do you seek to integrate your older adults into the life of the church, involve them with the children, honor them by valuing what they value?

What would a space to comfort and delight and minister to senior adults look like?

I don't have the answer. But I know that Jesus didn't have a target demographic, and "they don't like our music" is a total cop-out. Shame on you 'innovative' churches.

<http://goodchurchdesign.blogspot.ca/2008/03/on-elder-friendly-design.html>

Splitting the Church (Building)



Church splits are generally a bad thing. But when St. Mary's Catholic Church, in a quiet rural area near Plantersville Texas, decided that they needed to grow their solution was to cut their beloved painted sanctuary in half, and add a 30 foot extension in the middle.

"The new space, seating about 140 more parishioners will be done in such a way that it will match the wonderful hand painted bead board interior finishes, new windows will match the gothic arched leaded glass windows of the old church and even the rustic pews will be matched down to every detail. It was necessary to study and profile all the existing wood trim and to be faithful to the construction techniques and joinery of the existing interior detailing. A glass connector will join the original historic structure to a new accessible lobby, restroom block and a new reconciliation room."

They wanted to grow, but first they knew who they were and what they wanted to keep.

What a wise congregation. If you start your church project thinking 'what do we want to change' you've got the order wrong. The first question is always 'what do we want to keep'. If you don't know what you want to keep, you risk losing it while you try to change.

(By ZieglerCooper Architects of Houston, Texas. See many more pictures of the renovation, including sweet parishioners moving furniture and stenciling walls, on the St. Mary's website. The state of Texas has a lovely tradition of painted churches like St. Mary's built by 19th century Czech and German immigrants.)



Before



After

<http://goodchurchdesign.blogspot.ca/2013/07/splitting-church-building.html>

Some pictures from Parish Centres



**DJ Construction
Granger Community Church**



Derrick Companies
Mt. Zion Lutheran Church Best Renovation or Addition







Some links to explore

There are lots of ideas about church and community spaces. Here are some links that you can explore to get you thinking about what you would like to have in your church spaces.

Articles on designing church spaces:

http://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/the_church_and_the_neighborhood_past_present_and_future/

<http://americamagazine.org/issue/777/article/worship-space-today>

<http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/designing-new-churches-to-build-a-sense-of-community/>

http://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/dont_blame_vatican_ii/

http://www.ad2000.com.au/articles/2004/feb2004p6_1531.html

Pictures of church and parish centre spaces:

<http://www.nacdb.com/Photo-Gallery.html>

<http://www.designboom.com/architecture/reiulf-ramstad-architects-community-church-knarvik-12-02-2014/>

<http://www.church-designer.com/church-designs-portfolio/>

<http://goodchurchdesign.blogspot.ca/> (go to the bottom right for links to lots of interesting topics)