

# BUILDING CHURCH

*—while building a church—*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Why do we need a new church?** There are a number of important reasons we need a new church:

- *Create worship space that invites participation:* After Vatican II, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops took a hard look at the architecture of Catholic churches and created guidelines to help parishes that are building or remodeling. The bishops called on parishes to create space that promotes “full, conscious and active participation of the faithful.” This is why churches today are built in a way that minimizes the distance between the altar and the congregation.

- *More space for now and for the future:* In recent years, Masses are often full beyond capacity. Packing people into the choir loft or in folding chairs is not only uncomfortable, it’s unsafe and unwelcoming. As Columbia continues to grow and the priest shortage becomes more severe, we’ll need to accommodate more people at fewer Masses. There is no practical way to do this at our current site.

- *Accessibility for all:* We need to make it much easier for those with limited mobility to access parish facilities and participate fully in parish life.

- *Gathering space to build community:* Right now, our main entrance perches on the edge of Columbia’s busy main street. There is no space for chatting with fellow parishioners, no room for organizations to offer services or information. This situation does not help nurture a sense of community. Our new building will feature interior and exterior gathering space where we can build the relationships that help us grow as a welcoming, thriving community of faith.

**How many seats will the new church have?** This is not yet finalized, but our goal is to have around 1,000 seats. (For comparison, our current church seats about 375.) We are also planning a chapel for weekday Masses or small weddings or funerals. It will seat about 50.

Some have voiced concerns about a larger worship space. The radial design of the new building—in which seating

surrounds the altar like spokes from a wheel—provides a more intimate feel than one might expect. Our current church has 24 rows, whereas the new one will have only 14. This helps bring us all closer to the altar. As an added plus, there will be no view-obstructing pillars in the new building.

**Will there be a rectory at the new site?** The trend among Catholic parishes is off-site rectories. This allows the priests more privacy and gives the parishes long-term flexibility in providing housing for their pastors. (Father Carl views this trend positively.) Some parishes buy or rent a nearby condominium, apartment or home for their priest. In our situation, once our church offices are moved to the new site, our current rectory may serve our purposes for some time.

**When does the fund-raising campaign begin?** The campaign will start this fall. For now, please prayerfully consider the financial commitment you may be able to make to this important effort.



**When will we start on the school?** In some ways, work on the school has already begun! We've created a site plan that includes a beautiful new school, and our School Action Team has already begun identifying future needs. More specifically, however, we'll begin work on the school once we've completed the church and can gear up for another fund-raising campaign.

**Is there going to be a basement under the church?** Yes, the new building will have a lower level. Because of the natural slope of the site, much of the lower level will not be below grade, and so can include windows for natural light. The parish offices, meeting rooms and quilting room will be in this area, easily accessible from lower-level parking. The remaining space can be used for a parish hall and desperately needed storage.

**Will there be a cry room in the new church?** In modern Catholic church architecture, the goal is to include all the faithful, making sure no one is isolated or separated. We hope that all parishioners can be accepting of the occasional fussiness of the smallest members of our community.

If a crying child cannot be consoled within a few minutes, the parent may wish to take him or her to our planned "parent's alcove"—a space in the back of church for comforting an unhappy child. It will have a window into the worship area so that the parent can still

observe Mass. The parent and child can then easily return to their pew when the child has settled down.

**Will there be a quilting room?** We've planned to include a quilting room on the fully accessible lower level near the parish offices and restrooms. We value our quilters and are tremendously proud of this special ministry.

**Will we take some of our treasures—such as stained glass and statues—to the new church?** As we move forward, we'll be considering—with the help of our architects and liturgical design experts—which elements from our current church could be integrated into the new building. Many of us feel a special connection to these historical treasures. The architects have assured us that in some cases, elements from old churches are integrated beautifully into new facilities. And we've also been cautioned to keep a few things in mind:

- Not all century-old elements may look appropriate in a new church. Some may be more appropriate in the gathering space, new school or parish hall.
- In the case of stained glass windows, there is considerable cost and risk in trying to move them. (We recognize, though, that some of these windows are our most valuable treasures, and we will look seriously at preserving them.)
- What will we do about

the holes left in the old church—which will still probably be used for school Masses for a period of years? We will need to maintain the sanctity of the old church until the new school is complete.

We'll seek your input as we consider these important issues.

**What will happen to our old church?** This will be determined at a future date. Even after we've built our new church, however, our parish school will remain on the current site until we can afford to build a new school. And so, we will continue to use the current church for school liturgies for some time.

**What will the diocese do with its part of the property?** The Diocese of Belleville purchased 15 acres adjoining our property. While there are no definite plans yet, the diocese may build a senior-citizen housing complex, which could include apartments, an assisted-living facility and possibly a nursing home. We feel fortunate to have the diocese as a neighbor; their use of the property will be complementary to ours.

**When will we break ground?** The diocese requires that we have at least one-third of the money in hand, plus an additional one-third in pledges, before we begin construction. (The other third will likely be a long-term loan from the diocese.) The sooner we reach our goal in fund raising, the sooner we can begin construction. ♦

