

December 9, 2022

Update on St. Joseph Church, Laconia

Dear Parishioners,

May the grace and peace of the Lord be with you.

I wanted to address the recent issues raised publicly regarding St. Joseph Church, a Church of our parish, St. Andre Bessette. As many of you are aware, a variety of events have transpired over the years relating to the move of the school, the sale of the school, rectory, and parking lot, and the preservation of the Church building from that sale. At the time, there were capital improvements needed at St. Joseph Church that were estimated to cost approximately \$450,000, which led to ongoing consultations with the Diocese on the future of the Church given the repairs needed, dwindling attendance, and other concerns. Ultimately, the care and maintenance of the property is our responsibility, the parish, and our resources could not adequately address all the repairs. In addition to this, there are significant other challenges I'd like to update you on so that we are all aware of where we are now and what we are facing as a community.

The Diocese did advise me several times over the last few years, to remind you, the parishioners, and to make known the state of the St. Joseph Church edifice, and to provide an updated estimate of the costs to repair the St. Joseph Church building. To that end, I obtained an updated, thorough analysis of cost estimates from third parties. This analysis took an extended period of time, and when presented with the information, I needed some time to absorb the impact and to discern properly with our parish councils on how to move forward. This did take a while, and I regret not getting this information to you sooner and apologize for the years of delay. The following is a summary of what has taken place since this past spring and where we are currently regarding repair expenses.

We're aware that a mold problem exists in the main body of the Church. We were notified of the problem, but not to the full extent. Out of an abundance of caution for all parishioners using the Church for prayer, I closed the Church building to have this investigated. The Diocese recommended environmental testing and a consulting firm to provide an air quality survey. We paid \$1,640 to study the issue and that study concluded that active fungal growth was primarily found in the stairwell to the choir loft, as well as indications around the windows, and in the main entry way of the Church. A temporary closure of the Church building to parishioners with limited use of the Church was considered necessary.

In an effort to identify the cause of the mold and other potential repair needs, we scheduled a masonry assessment of the Church building, by LeMessurier Consultants at a cost of \$14,500. Specifically, LeMessurier studied the causes of the water leaking from the flat entry roof, through the facade of the Church, and other areas of moisture entry ways, such as the mortar joints. These have been an ongoing problem for a number of years, even after several attempts at fixing the facade and the roof. The Diocesan Offices advised us then to halt such attempts when the future sale of the property was being discussed. This study was concluded at the end of August. Additionally, a heating system assessment was completed to assess the leaks in the system that caused steam to escape creating more moisture in the Church.

The result of these assessments indicated "that there are several building elements that are in an accelerated or advanced rate of deterioration. These elements include the coated limestone trim, path

repairs to the limestone features, newer mortar joints, two sets of masonry entrance treads/landing stones to include handrails, isolated areas of the granite veneer facade, and metal exit doors. These areas are considered critical maintenance priorities and their condition needs to be addressed immediately."

Additionally, "normal aging of key elements such as the original mortar, copper solder seams within the roofing system, missing slates, interior plaster, and unpainted wood trim are not alarming but need to be addressed." Mitigation of the mold and asbestos will need to be completed. The heating system will need to be replaced and an HVAC system installed to maintain an air quality that will help to prevent future possible mold issues.

Attached is a Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) projection of costs to make these repairs as provided by LeMessurier. Costs of repairs identified in this projection are estimated at \$1,255,640, and we can assume that material costs are likely to increase due to inflation and supply shortages. These estimates do not include costs for mitigation of mold, asbestos, and replacement of carpets and other cloth fixtures that will need to be replaced due to encouragement of mold growth. These estimates will be forthcoming as we have not yet received them. St. Joseph Church is nearly 100 years old, and as with any old building, other issues may be discovered during the repairs that would add to any final costs and would increase the total amount to approximately \$1.5 million.

We are grateful for the funds raised by the St. Joseph Preservation Society and truly appreciate their advocacy, as we all love the Church. However, they request taking ownership of the Church or allowing them to purchase. The sacredness of our spaces is entrusted to us as a duty of stewardship to uphold; an incredibly important tradition. This stewardship has been left wanting. It is clear that the annual operating and maintenance expenses would also need to be paid for. The funds raised by the Preservation Society now fall short of the updated extensive costs to repair.

The Pastoral Council, the Finance Council, and I, along with the Bishop's offices have been and are looking at future means of using the St. Joseph Edifice. I hope that we can report something further to all of you in the New Year.

I share all of these facts with you to inform you of the various challenges that we face and that we should have addressed many years ago. As we move forward together, let us pray to the Holy Spirit for God's wisdom and guidance that is needed to complete this phase of the parish consolidation. We do plan to study further avenues for proper and dignified use of the Church edifice or use of the Church itself and I am confident that a resolution will present itself in accord with God's plan. I intend now to keep you updated and if you have any questions, please contact me at the office.

Blessed Advent,

  
Very Rev. Marc B. Drouin, V.F.  
Pastor



## **ROM ESTIMATE OF COSTS TO REPAIR ST. JOSEPH CHURCH**

**LIFE SAFETY** - Posing an immediate concern for life safety. Address immediately

**HIGH PRIORITY** - Posing immediate concern for property damage or overwhelmingly unacceptable façade performance. Address immediately.

**MEDIUM PRIORITY** - Affects long-term performance of the building envelope, will adversely affect tenant's comfort if not addressed, or if left unaddressed, it can worsen into a High Priority item. Address within 0-2 years.

**LOW PRIORITY** - Non-immediate concerns that are not integral to life safety or building envelope uniformity and/or 5 to 10-year performance.

### **LIFE SAFETY**

**(\$12,500 to \$14,500)**

1. Remove any loose pieces of limestone over the entire building façade. ROM Estimated Budget: \$10,000- \$12,000
2. Test existing mold samples by a qualified testing facility. ROM Estimated Budget: \$2,500

### **HIGH PRIORITY**

**(\$480,000-\$565,000)**

1. Remove all existing Thoroseal/ latex coatings on limestone.  
ROM Estimated Budget: \$55,000-\$65,000
2. Rake out and repoint all "replacement" mortar and any missing mortar joints. Mortar mixture should match the original in composition, texture, and color. As part of this priority, limestone elements in need of replacement should be installed during this work. Gable end capstones should be removed and reinstalled with through flashing under the cap. Assuming the masonry veneer bulge on the east is caused by moisture infiltration, include removal and resetting the granite veneer stone 25% larger than the estimated surface area of the bulge.  
ROM Estimated Budget: \$375,000-\$425,000
3. Remove/replace/reset all granite treads and railings at the entrances on the south building elevation. ROM Estimated Budget: \$50,000-\$75,000

### **MEDIUM PRIORITY**

**(\$99,000-\$135,000)**

1. Remove and repair damage to existing interior plaster walls, ceilings, and ornamental features. Damaged areas such as the south gable end should be entirely replaced. Coat all new plaster with mineral paint to match the existing wall color.  
ROM Estimated Budget: \$85,000-\$125,000
2. Replace copper flat seamed roof on the east building elevation at the exit door. ROM Estimated Budget: \$8,500 – \$9,500

3. Replace all damaged exit doors not mentioned in the conditions assessment. ROM Estimated Budget: \$5,500 -\$6,500 each

**LOW PRIORITY**

**(\$61,500-\$102,000)**

1. Replace/repair damaged slate shingles.  
ROM Estimated Budget: \$25,000 - \$45,000
2. Reinstall missing gutter hangers.  
ROM Estimated Budget: \$1,500-\$2,500
3. Scrape, repair, prime and paint all exterior wooden trim. ROM Estimated Budget: \$35,000-\$55,000

**HVAC system replacement ROM cost.      \$325,000.**

**Total Projected Rom Cost**

All Masonry Roof repairs	\$816,500
Contingency. (10%)	\$ 81,650
HVAC	\$325,000
Contingency (10%)	\$ 32,500

<b>Total Projects ROM Costs</b>	<b>\$1,255,650</b>
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