

Dear Families and Friends of St. Luke's,

I'd like to take this opportunity to share some exciting news with you.

At a meeting of parish leadership on January 4th, the combined members of the **School Board**, the **Finance Council**, and the **Parish Council** reviewed the results of the recent feasibility study. Some of the fruits of our discussion are included below, but the last thing to happen at the meeting was certainly the most invigorating. At the end of an in-depth discussion, a motion was made that we, as parish leadership representing St. Luke's Parish, move forward with a Phase II Capital Campaign with the goal of expanding our facilities to better fulfill The Mission of St. Luke's: We Worship. We Teach. We Care. The motion was seconded and all present said "aye".

The results of the feasibility study conducted in the parish, along with the parish survey we sent out earlier in the year, gave us ideas as to how we can better meet the immediate needs of St. Luke's Parish and address some lingering concerns present in the hearts of our people.

Below are four major topics of concern that surfaced.

Sound in the Church and School

As part of a multi-tiered approach to addressing the echo in the church and school, we have installed new carpet in our facilities. We had a sound study done in the church to determine if sound panels would help the acoustics in the church, and we are working with the installers of our HVAC system to see if there is a way we can get the HVAC to turn on and off, because we discovered the "always on" feature adds 15 decibels of sound during our Masses. We've also begun investigating a sound system which would enable people to use an earpiece to hear directly what is being said into the microphones. The carpet is the first step of several steps we will be taking to help create an environment where everyone can get the most out of Mass.

General Communication with the Parish

In recent months, there have been parish leadership meetings where all members of the Parish Council, School Board, and Finance Council were invited to participate in fellowship and discussion to improve communication and to exchange ideas so that we are all working towards a common goal: Increasing the mission effectiveness of St. Luke's Parish. St. Luke's is developing more efficient ways of disseminating information to the whole parish, and these initiatives will be implemented in coming months.

Parish Debt

We owe approximately \$5.7 million on our existing facilities. Currently, we have enough of a reserve from the original "Together We Build" campaign to continue paying the principal of our building loan for about 5 years. We will continue to pay the interest from our general operating budget (tithing). This gives us the flexibility to expand our facilities over the next 3 years and still pay down our debt while expanding. At the end of the 3-year campaign, our debt is projected to be just over \$5 million.

We are developing a strategy to pay down our debt significantly in the coming years. The first part of that strategy includes the tithing and debt reduction campaigns we ran in December 2017, which engaged 29 new families in the "Together We Build" project and will enable us to pay down our debt by an additional \$50,000 once all pledges have been fulfilled.

Church and School Budget Needs

One final concern is that our parish school is, or will become, a financial drain on parish resources. Both the School Board and Finance Council have produced projections that anticipate that our parish school will become increasingly self-sufficient over the next 5-6 years. Right now, about 25% of our parish budget is allocated for the school operating expenses. This is a much lower percentage of a parish budget than many other parishes with schools. To lower this percentage even more, we must increase enrollment, and this means filling our existing classrooms and expanding our facilities. An investment in the future of our school now could provide a Catholic education to hundreds of students in the Ankeny area, and prove to be the most financially responsible choice we can make at this point of our growth. Ankeny is growing; our town has a lot of young families moving into it every day, and we are the only Catholic elementary school on the north side of Des Moines. If we connect with those families now, which means having space for their children, we will greatly expand the mission effectiveness of St. Luke's for years (and decades) to come.

More information will be coming out in the future months, and now we ask that you prayerfully consider volunteering to make sure the Phase II capital campaign is a resounding success.

Blessings,

Fr. Adam Westphal