

The following is the transcript from a September 12-13, 2020 pulpit talk given by Finance Council Chair, Jimmy Becker to the Parish of St. Luke the Evangelist.

Good Morning!

As Father mentioned, I am Jimmy Becker and serve as a member of our finance council.

My wife, Julia, and I joined St. Luke's shortly after the doors opened in 2015. We have four little boys and usually attend 10:30 mass.

To start, I'd like to share a story about a friend...His name was Father Bob Hoefler.

Father Bob was the pastor at St. Francis of Assisi in WDM and died a little over seven years ago.

Father Bob had an enormous heart...he was a beloved pastor...a great teacher...and he loved to play the piano. Shortly before he died, I recall a conversation with him at the Hospice Center where he teared up as he was sharing with me his intentions to give his piano away to a small, farm-town Church... 3 years later, I recall walking by the piano, here at St. Luke's, and noticing a plaque with Fr. Bob's name on it. *He had gifted his piano, one of his most cherished possessions, to a small, farm-town Church...our parish...*

Everything here at St Luke's has a story...the land, the Church, the school, the parish, the pews, the stain glass window, the altar, the crucifix, the people. And the greatest story, His-story, is still being written and we each play a pivotal role. God ordained us to be here at this time and place for a specific purpose to accomplish a specific mission. Now is an exciting time. With the end in mind, the sanctity of each member of our parish...let's start from our beginning.

St. Luke's started small and has grown substantially. We established quickly as many generous hearts gathered together and, like the early Church, assembled resources to make disciples.

- It was almost 10 years ago in December of 2010 that St. Luke's was established.
 - The Fern Ringgenberg family bequeathed 35 acres of land.
 - Don and Charlene Lamberti contributed generous seed money to help build the school.
 - A month after the parish was established...we had 40 families registered. And from there...families made significant sacrifices to provide all of what we have and enjoy today...
- Just over 7 years ago – St. Luke's broke ground on Phase I.
- ...AND, in June of 2015 the doors to our parish and school opened and the altar was dedicated.
 - When the doors opened, we had 125 families registered and 45 children enrolled in the school.
 - Today, we are blessed as a parish family to have over 700 families, 240 kids enrolled in the school, and over 300 kids involved in RE ...and we are still growing...Now is an exciting time!

It is amazing to see all of what has occurred in a relatively short period of time.

Our story is more than brick, mortar and numbers. *This sacred space has held and will forever hold memories of people encountering Jesus Christ...*

What a gift to welcome so many new members to our family every day...

As you all know and have probably experienced in your own homes, intentionality is key.

- And, that is why I am here today...because intentionality is key...St. Luke's parish family wants to invest in you and your family, build a lasting friendship in Christ with you and your family, and we invite you and your family to invest in us...

Last year, amazing things happened...

- 90 babies were baptized...71 children received their first communion and attend their first reconciliation...
- 23 young adults were confirmed...4 adults were brought into full communion with the Church...
- And 10 couples celebrated the sacrament of Holy Matrimony at St. Luke's

In addition,

We welcomed Fr. James, as a part-time Associate Pastor to assist Father Ken with the growing needs at our parish...And most recently we welcomed David Reising who will play a vital role in working to build smaller communities within our larger parish family.

Also, worth noting... together, we weathered the storm through the pandemonium of 2020...

- When St. Luke's closed Her doors, it was hard to know what would happen...
 - At a time, where there was a lot of uncertainty (and still is), our families stepped up, personally and financially...
 - Thank you to all of those who helped St. Luke's maintain and keep running...

Moving forward, God is inviting our parish to not only to maintain, but to build...to transition from maintenance into mission...and this will require an all-in effort!

To achieve this all-in approach, Father and the councils have put together a plan. That plan, from a financial perspective, breaks down into our three focuses for the next year...

- Phase II
- Debt Reduction
- Tithing

PHASE II:

- Phase II has been a long-time coming, to say the least.
- On behalf of the parish, I want to thank all of you for your patience and total entrustment to God and to Father Ken, Misty, and all involved in helping to move Phase II forward.
 - I am happy to share that we have the Bishop's approval to proceed.
 - The plans will be unveiled in the next couple weeks and we will be breaking ground next month.
 - Time is of the essence with breaking ground, as we have run out of space and have a short fuse left on the dispensation from the city of Ankeny for the portable classrooms.
 - The new space will include...Meeting room space, storage space, event space, a loop on the south side, additional parking, a storm shelter, classroom space for our growing school and RE programs and space to bring back Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

DEBT REDUCTION:

- As exciting as it is to grow and to build...we also need to satisfy our outstanding obligations...an appropriate topic considering today's Gospel.
 - Phase I construction (our current space) required us to secure tax-exempt bond financing...a fancy way of saying a loan.
 - Thankfully, our prior capital campaigns and tithing contributions have slowly chipped away at the debt...
 - We still have a ways to go and want to decrease our interest payments to improve the health of our parish....
- I am happy to share that Father is doing everything possible to avoid incurring any more debt in the near term...
 - This; however, will require us to step up as a parish and fill the remaining gap...

TITHING:

- If you are anything like me, you associate the word tithe with tax...it does not help when you also hear the word collection...
 - If that holds true for you, then like me...you (and I) need a new perspective!
 - Your contribution...Your sacrifice...Your sharing of God's abundant love...is a gift.
 - And it is a gift that God has given to you first...
 - Moving forward, let's shift our focus...away from any negative connotations with the word tithe and call it what it is...a sacrificial gift.
- Last year, our parish stepped up big...the finance council had budgeted for \$500,000.
 - And, thanks be to God and your generosity, we received over \$515,000...
- Considering where we are at, how we're hoping to grow and accounting for the 100 new families that joined since last year, our goal is to increase our monthly support by 10% this next year and raise \$540,000.
 - So for all the new families here, please register if you have not already and prayerfully consider contributing your time, talent and treasure to help us grow.

CONCLUSION:

In sum, our overall goal is to raise \$840k in the next 12 months...And, we would like to accomplish this without having to create another capital campaign.

- Our goal amount breaks down in the following way...
 - \$300,000 covers the gap to complete Phase II construction without incurring any more debt...
 - \$500,000 will pay down principal on our loan to alleviate the heavy burden of interest payments...
 - \$40,000 is the minimum amount that we hope to increase in the form of monthly, recurring gifts...
- This will require all hands-on deck...those that are already contributing, those that have never contributed and everyone in between...
 - It is my understanding from talking to Father Ken that approximately 50% of our 700 families contribute financially to our parish... Imagine what amazing things we would accomplish if 70% or 80% or, God-willing, 100% of our families...
- Father once shared...that young moms and dads fill churches and schools and grandparents build them...
 - Together, with God's help, let's prove our YOUNG parish to be an exception...let's fill and BUILD GOD'S Church and School!
 - Yes, this is an awkward time... Yes, there's a lot of unknowns and uncertainties...

- Believe me, Father and our councils are not oblivious to these realities... We are all feeling it!
- BUT WE CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT LET THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF OUR TIME DIMINISH OR HINDER GOD'S PLAN!
 - Our God is a God of abundance...let us live that reality and preach the truth through our actions.
- In order to accomplish the desires He has placed on our hearts...we must continue to fall to our knees in praise, thanksgiving, and adoration...and never cease in asking for God's help!
 - Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins did not land on the moon haphazardly...nor should we build our community haphazardly...
- Within the next 3-5 years, St. Luke's will likely double in size.
 - It is imperative that...
 - As we grow, we grow together with our heads and our hearts...THOUGHTFULLY and INTENTIONALLY...
 - REMEMBER: You are more than a number and we are more than a parish...
 - We are a family and we need to work together...
 - LET'S GO ALL-IN FOR OUR PARISH!

I conclude...not with a financial ask, but with a question...

What does a written blank check and giving your all to God look like for you and your family?

May this be a question you take with you to prayer this week. I look forward to your response. Thank you and God bless.