

Reply to questions from St Cecilia Open Forum on the New Church held November 12, 2006

1. Why do we hear different numbers given for the capacity of our present Church?

Archdiocesan guidelines require us to calculate seating capacity using 22" per person. Fire codes require calculations based on 18" per person. The current Church seats 650 at 22" and a bit over 800 at 18".

2. Will the capacity of the new Church be limited by green space issues?

To a certain extent- yes. City codes limit the amount of hard surfaces on our property to be 60% of the site. Hard surfaces include parking lots, buildings and sidewalks, etc. The green space code requirements are there to deal with storm water runoff issues and general landscaping and aesthetic concerns. The requirement will affect the design as currently we only have 4,200 square feet of space available for building. Alternatives will need to be discussed with the City and the Architect.

3. How will a larger Church capacity affect parking requirements?

Increasing church capacity does affect parking requirements. Current city codes require 1 parking stall for every 4 seats in the church. Parking will be a larger issue as we consider moving from a seating capacity of 1000 to 1200. Several parking spaces were already added for Phase 1 and more need to be added for Phase 2. These parking requirements also will affect the green space issues identified in question #2 above. We have discussed the possibility of using permanent pavement to address parking needs with out impacting green space requirements. Unfortunately this solution will not satisfy the city code requirements.

4. How can we keep major parish activities from being divisive?

There will likely never be 100% consensus on any major issue. Any time a group or association of people is assembled, there is an assortment of opinions. Some are positive, others are negative. There are no guaranteed ways of keeping parish activities from being divisive. St Cecilia parishioners are educated and research their opinions. It is hoped that a Christian community that extols the virtue of love would maintain harmony while disagreeing in their opinion. Honest communication in concert with open mindedness and patience will keep a parish activity from being divisive.

5. Can the parish coordinate messages better to the parishioners?

The Parish Council has heard that some parishioners felt they were miscommunicated to during the Phase 1 project. The importance of coordinating information will receive the utmost importance in Phase 2. It is the parishioner responsibility, however, to read regularly posted messages in the bulletin as building projects are dynamic and those in charge are constantly making new decisions.

6. Can you explore seeking secondary sources of money?

Every sound option that is worthy of consideration is on the table when it comes to Phase 2. A fund raising company will once again be hired so that there is a reasonable degree of success in raising the funds to begin Phase 2.

7. Can the parish spell out the detail in the future? Do not count on the parishioners to make conclusions?

With any major expenditure of money, the need to seek feedback of the parishioners is necessary. Sometimes the process of soliciting feedback is time consuming and laborious. This is why we have open meetings like these. The process of decision-making is done via committees which are open to the parishioners. Details are seen in the committee meetings. Conclusions are based on sound discussion from factual information and the will of the parishioner. Everyone hears the conclusions. Everyone can find the details from public meetings and minutes of those meetings.

8. How can we overcome apathy in the parish?

We can attempt to get people involved, share as much information as possible and do many other things, but ultimately, each parishioner must also make an effort to be informed. A small percentage of people actually do most of the work in every organization.

9. How can we work through disagreements?

We need to listen to both sides of an issue, but ultimately, a decision will need to be made. Most of the time the correct decision will be made. We can explain the rationale behind a decision. Eventually, people must trust the committee members and those who have been elected to the Council to be making decisions that are in the best interest of the church.

10. How should we decide on a funding and financing plan for Phase 2?

The decision on funding and a financing plan for Phase 2 will involve using a selected fundraising company that will be interviewed by a committee of parishioners from the Parish Council, Building Committee and Phase 1 project leaders and Fr Nienhaus. The Financing plan will also need to be approved by the Finance Committee, Parish Council and the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese acts as our banker and will not approve a financing plan that places the viability of the parish in jeopardy.

11. How can we excite people about major parish projects? Perhaps at Mass when most are present?

The question is very much connected to question #8. Apathy is the opposite of excitement. People are often times only concerned about themselves and fail to take into account that true and genuine happiness begins when they are concerned about others and not themselves. People who have enthusiasm and excitement are people who see the wisdom of improving the parish and putting the parish on a firm foundation for the future. The parish leadership has the responsibility of laying out a vision and if this is done successfully, this will create excitement among the parishioners.

12. How can we provide comprehensive, coordinated planning and communication (fly in formation)?

Phase 2 is going to make communication its #1 goal. Within the power of reason, Phase 2 is going to communicate clearly and precisely what is going to be achieved and what is not going to be achieved on a regular and consistent basis. Data will be present for those who wish to stay on top on the planning and the building of Phase 2.

- 13. Shouldn't we be considering construction alternatives with alternative costs?**
Yes, we should consider all alternatives that provide a quality facility that will last for a long time. This will be a part of all discussions during the design and construction of Phase 2.
- 14. How can we achieve a community support and action of mode of living versus a personal wishes mode?**
One looks at the history of St Cecilia's Parish. There appears to be community support and action mode throughout its history. Building projects have been regular and consistent. Decisions to build have been parish community inspired, no different from other parishes in the Ames community.
- 15. Can construction be phased to provide reasonable capacities over time?**
There are possibilities here that can be explored during the design phase.
- 16. Plan for expandability.**
Preliminary design of Phase 2 did consider expandability. This would be part of the final design subject to some of the constraints we have.
- 17. How can we involve members of parishes which will be closed soon in helping to fund Phase 2?**
This is an emotional issue. Parishes with the potential of being closed typically are trying to do whatever they can to stay open. Possibly the Archdiocese can help in this area.
- 18. Can we get any forgiveness of the Archdiocesan tax for Phase 2 construction costs?**
No parish is granted exceptions to the Archdiocesan Tax Policy. All revenues ear-marked for General budget or for Capital Improvements are subjected to Archdiocesan Tax policies. Educational facility projects are exempt from taxes, however.
- 19. Is there a bridge solution, e.g., sound and video to temporary overflow areas?**
Temporary solutions are simply temporary. With the ever increasing population in the Parish, the closure of smaller parishes along with the declining number of priests, we do not have a lot of time to ponder those issues that are sitting on our doorstep. We want those people who come to worship at St Cecilia to have quality experience with God. In our modern times, we know that those parishioners who do not have this quality experience will look elsewhere for their spiritual nourishment.
- 20. I do not want the money I donated for the Church expansion to go toward any possible school expansion.**
We understand your concern. This has never been considered.
- 21. I am glad to see the plan includes a 1200 seating capacity.**
Present plans for seating capacity for the Church has to start with 1200. In the event that only 2 Masses (per weekend) would be said, future seating capacity has to take that into account. 2400 people on a weekend in the near future is not that unreasonable. We could not seat 2400 people in the existing church with 3 Masses on a weekend.

- 22. Couldn't the Archbishop do more to increase the number of priests serving the Archdiocese (for example, partnering with bishops/diocese in India who has more priests than they need? This is done in Alaska and those who come to the US are happy to do so. Their English is excellent.**

The Bishop will have to speak to the question himself. The question has, in all likelihood, been discussed by the Archbishop. One would think that if the Archbishop agrees with this thinking, we would already have priests from other countries in parishes. The Archbishop in 2004 ordained a Vietnamese priest along with 2 Spanish speaking priests. The Archbishop is a smart man. We have to trust he knows what he is doing. There may be 2 issues here, one being language-related and one being cultural.

- 23. Shouldn't we be acquiring nearby properties now, to prepare for future expansion?**

This issue continues to be discussed. This costs money. Unfortunately, acquiring more property does not solve that need for more worship space at the current time.

- 24. Could we partly reduce the crowding at the 10:30 a.m. Mass by having Mass at 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 or 11:00?**

A change such as this may result in a more balanced attendance between the early and late Masses. This would depend on people changing their worship routines.

Ed Fawkes, Jeff Witt, Fr Nienhaus and Chuck Gilarski were panel members. The Parish Council thanks the 55 people who attended this meeting.