

Parish Concerns:
Growing Community
Limited Space



June, 1998

PARISH SURVEY



**JANUARY 17, 1999
TOWN HALL MEETING**

- Report Presented
- Commitment to:
 - Univ ministry
 - Present location
 - Moving forward



Pastoral Council
Finance Council
Building Committee



August, 2000

Request for Proposals
for Needs Assessment



Committee Reviews
Submissions



November, 2000

Victor Johnson
Interviewed and
Chosen

December 8, 2000



Dear Parishioner

An ongoing concern in our parish over the past number of years has been the increase of our community and the strain this has placed on our facilities. In the June 1998 a parish survey was taken and in January, 1999 the results were presented at a "town hall" meeting which was open to all parishioners. During our discussions of the current and future physical space needs of our parish, two very important points were made. It was a strong desire among parishioners that we remain committed to our ministry to NMSU and in doing so, it was imperative that we stay in our present location. The second point made was that we need to move forward in addressing the needs of our parish.

So What Has Been Happening?

Attempts have been made to address some of our space needs, and the issues have been kept alive in our the Building & Grounds Committee, the Finance Council, and the Pastoral Council. Finally it was decided that the best way to address all the physical space needs (liturgical, educational, social, and administrative) of our parish is through a Needs Assessment Study conducted by a professional architect. It was decided that the architect must not only be knowledgeable of the space requirements for Catholic worship, but also be able to involve the whole parish community in determining our needs.

Members of the building committee formulated a Request for Proposals based on the results of the 1999 survey. In August 2000, we sent Requests to 6 architectural firms that experience with Catholic parishes and liturgical design. Three New Mexico firms responded. A Needs Assessment Evaluation Committee (consisting of members of the Finance Council and the Building Committee) evaluated each proposal with respect to the respondents' liturgical experience, projects completed, projects in process, professional background, and most important, the ability to facilitate our community through this process.

After studying the responses from the various firms, there was a unanimous consensus to invite Victor Johnson from Santa Fe to a face-to-face interview with committee members. After spending a morning with Mr. Johnson, there was a strong sense among the committee members that he embodied not only the professional background we required, but also the ability and personality to successfully assist us in our process. After conferring with the committee, I offered Mr. Johnson the opportunity to join us in our process. He gladly accepted. Later that afternoon, Victor Johnson met with a few members of the parish community at an open meeting to which all parishioners had been invited.

Consultation w/
Pastoral/Finance
Councils, Bldg Comm,
and Diocese



Committee to Oversee
Parish Assessment
Process



January 20, 2001

Process Begins
with Kick-off



Parish Input to Process



Presentation
of
Report



Where Are We Now?

We have offered Victor Johnson the opportunity to facilitate and guide us in our Needs Assessment Project. The anticipated costs for this study will be approximately \$15,000 which will be paid out of the funds we already have in the Diocesan building fund account. The study should last no longer than 4 months.

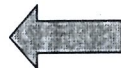
The purpose of the needs assessment process is to study and make recommendations with regard to the present and future space needs for all aspects of our parish. This is an all-inclusive process and all parishioners are encouraged to participate. There are no preconceived plans in this process. Mr. Johnson and his staff will gather all the data and input from our community, and then make observations and recommendations to the parish.

What Will We Have After the 4-Month Process?

We will have a set of documents that will address the specific tasks identified in the Request for Proposal.

- An evaluation of the present building with regard to use, function and efficiency.
- An evaluation of the existing facility's ability to accommodate the needs of the present and projected membership.
- A recommendation as to the parish building needs based on the current and projected membership over the next 5 years.
- An evaluation of the parish's present land holdings with regard to their suitability as a building site for new facilities and/or the expansion of the existing building.
- A written space program establishing space designations and their respective areas.
- A statement of probable construction costs if any construction, new or remodeling, is deemed necessary.
- Adjacency diagrams based on the written program of spaces. They shall include comparison of the existing facility with the programmed space needs, clearly identifying any deficiencies.
- A one to two-hour briefing to the pastor and parish on the completed assessment and future options that the parish has.

With these tasks completed, we will have the tools with which to make an intelligent and informed decision about the next step we will need to make as a parish.



We are now here

- Evaluate the parish's present land holdings with regard to their suitability as a building site for new facilities and/or the expansion of the existing building.
- Prepare a written space program establishing space designations and their respective areas.
- Prepare a recommendation as to any minimum land requirements necessary to accommodate a facility based on the written program of spaces.
- Develop a statement of probable construction cost to build a new facility, based on the written space program. The statement shall include the option of remodeling and/or expanding the existing building.
- Include with the completed Needs Assessment adjacency diagrams based on the written program of spaces. It shall include comparison of the existing facility with the programmed space needs, clearly identifying any deficiencies.
- Prepare a 1 to 2 hour briefing on the complete Assessment and brief the parish Finance and Building Committees within 3 weeks after delivery of the Assessment.

We expect that this process will take about 4 months.

Victor Johnson then spoke, saying that it might well be a once-in-a-lifetime experience to share our vision for a new parish facility. He clarified that today's agenda was not how much was it going to cost or how long it was going to take, but "what is our vision" and "what are our needs."

We began with the Newman Mission statement:

We the people of St. Albert the Great Newman Parish are a diverse Catholic community with a ministry to New Mexico State University as well as to the wider community. We strive to proclaim and celebrate Jesus Christ through Word and Sacrament. We seek to achieve our mission through prayer, study, and social and spiritual outreach. We welcome and accept all who wish to join the celebration of God's presence and gift of life.

He asked if the people present felt that our mission statement is one of consensus and if the community supports the mission statement. The mission statement was validated without dissent. He said that the first focus of today's group will be for everyone to contribute their view of the parish goals which should be consistent with the mission statement and be measurable.

Throughout the ensuing discussion, some statistics were given. Currently the parish has approximately 580 registered families and serves 300-400 university students. Attendance among the four weekend masses is between 1300 and 1700 with 30-36 attending daily mass. Religious Education serves approximately 230-240 grade school children and 36 high school students. The present worship area has 275 chairs. We are the 5th largest parish in the diocese.

Victor invited members of the group to share their goals for the next 5-8 years. The discussion which followed was lively and animated. The following is a synopsis of the comments made by individuals concerning our mission to the university and the community :

- Newman has a tradition of hospitality, and we need to enhance our hospitality by creating a spirit within our gathering place.
- We need religious education from cradle to grave, but it does not need to all be under one roof.
- We need better administrative spaces in order to allow the many processes of Newman to occur
- How much more growth is reasonable? Is growth controllable? Our goal for maximum parish population is _____ and for maximum number of university students is _____.
- One of the problems heard in the community is the fear/concern that we will grow so large that we lose our community. We do not want to be a huge church. We are not willing at this time to add additional masses because of lack of clergy. We are unable to make people feel welcome if we have no room for them. We need to hang on to the flavor of this community so that we can remain welcoming without losing who we are.
- As far as growth is concerned, Victor mentioned that many bishops want facilities for about 1200 due to clergy limits. Outside restrictions may limit our maximum size unless additional, contiguous land is acquired.
- How do we stop growth? Set possible size limits?
- No parish boundary has been our ideal. There may come a time when we can't take more members. We need to put more emphasis on the citizen parish without losing the university focus because the parish members are the ones that pay the bills. We may lose priests in the future and more Masses may not be an option. So our goal is to _____.
- We must address the issue of future growth. It is true the parish had a lot of growth in the past few years, but it is not reasonable to expect that our growth will continue at this high pace since it may be related to what happened in other parishes. However, some growth does need to continue because Las Cruces will continue to grow. Our goal should be to accommodate the growth of _____ families per year to a maximum size of _____.
- An important mission is to the university. One of the things we need to see is more visibility of the university at all the masses. **How do we do this???** We need to preserve the stimulating and life-giving character that derives from serving the university. Our goal in this respect is to _____.
- It shouldn't be either/or as far as Newman's dedication to the university. There is life-giving interaction between the two parish populations - the university and the citizen population. The citizen population is the one that carries through many of the functions

for the more transient university population. What can we do in that enables us to carry out our mission to both populations? Let us serve both, not set the two groups in opposition.

- Can we broaden our goal to include service to education at all levels, not just at the university level? ??????????????????????
- We need to expand our adult ministry; for example, a ministry where lay people are trained to minister on a one-to-one basis for people in need. We can do this by _____.
- We need to channel the talents of the university students back into the parish by _____.
- Our goal is more integration of the students into the life of the parish and more integration of the two communities in religious education.
- One opportunity we have here is to provide education in the form of a lecture series at an academic level that would serve the community at large. An example of this is _____.
- Education for the primary and high school students is very important because we need to bring our children into the Catholic culture. We must provide our children with religious education. We should investigate to see if we can use university space in addition to our own.
 - Our goal for primary school religious education is _____
 - Our goal for high school religious education is _____
 - Our goal for a youth group is _____

Here are some of the specific comments about the worship and liturgical space:

- The Blessed Sacrament room is loved and used – it should be retained or relocated.
- We need to expand the Columbarium to a total of _____ niches
- We need a music director and space for the storage of equipment and music.
- We need a place to distribute as well as store our food pantry.
- We need a gathering place with good acoustics.
- It is very common now to have a gathering space that is roughly 1/3 of the worship space. We have a gathering place but not a social hall. Do we need a social hall?????
- We need to mature our leadership along with the building. Therefore, we need to _____.
- For the future, it would be ideal to have a priest, a full time, paid positions in religious education, liturgical ministry and worship, campus ministry, as well as expanded secretarial staff.

- We need to develop an all-purpose social facility that has showers for visitors who come as well as more storage and maintenance facilities.
- We need spaces for counseling and spiritual direction that have sound proofing.
- We may consider day care – the Lutheran church is debt-free because of their day care program.
- Part of our problem is the flow of the space. If we shifted entrances and exits we might be able to have the space we need.
- We need better air circulation and refrigerated air in the entire building.
- We need some type of conference room that would hold 50-75 people in more comfortable surroundings.
- We need an expanded Alumni room for students.

During the lunch break the discussion continued though the note-taking did not. After lunch we shifted focus from broad goals to defining specific needs. We proceeded around the room, with each member stating one or more needs that they considered important.

Comments on physical spaces needs:

- Classrooms/Meeting Rooms for religious education; sharing is okay but we need designated lockable storage space for various programs.
- _____ (number) more meeting rooms than we presently have for religious education, parish meetings and other meetings.
- A large maintenance storage area of approximately _____ sq ft plus another area of approximate _____ sq ft to store other goods and materials.
- Current meeting rooms accommodate small groups (10-12). We have no space for large (45-50) and medium groups (25-30). We need _____ spaces to accommodate large groups and _____ spaces to accommodate medium groups.
- _____ (number and sq ft) meeting rooms and offices for campus ministry.
- Administrative space – need a secure (private) place for meeting with priest and spiritual advisers
- Office for pastor needs to be _____ sq ft
- All staff offices should be together.
- All spaces need to air conditioned with refrigerated air, not evaporative cooling.
- Remodel current office and reception areas so that _____.
- More welcoming and more comfortable reception area.
- Community room(s) where you can check out a key and community groups could meet
- Recreation area for the students that provides _____
- Better area for children during mass; “crying” area or quiet area

Comments on the Worship area

- Increase the seating in the worship area to about 400 [we must provide 1 parking place for every 4 seats so additional seats mandate additional parking]
- Given that we want to stay in the current location, we want to maximize the size of the worship area (considering contiguous land acquisition) while keeping the size small enough that everyone feels like they can participate. (not everyone felt that we should increase the size of our worship area.

- Could we increase the amount of seating in the current worship space without increasing the size of the worship space?
- We don't want to increase size to the point that it decreases intimacy. Therefore the maximum size for planning should be _____
- Yes, our community expands and contracts with the semesters, but we want to accommodate everyone in one space.
- Could we have a more intimate area for daily mass within the larger space or nearby?
- A chapel is more of a luxury , not a requirement.
- There is more to intimacy than size. Intimacy is more an attitude, rather than the space.
[Victor asked us to consider how we define the characteristics of intimacy. Is it making eye contact, is it how we sit and see one another? Or is it a part of the living church that we bring with us to each Mass or activity?]

[Victor mentioned that we do in this process divides us as a community.]
- One individual associated with the Newman Shop suggested that it not be changed.
- Build a three story supplemental building (a basement plus 2 stories above grade.
[Current height restriction in this zone is 18 feet which probably rules that out].
- We need a prayer garden that allows us to enjoy our beautiful weather.
- We need to increase the space dedicated to our food program - La Bodega; currently we have about 150 square feet. We need 200-300 square feet.
- We need a preparation area for brides and grooms before weddings.
- It would be nice to have a vesting room in addition to the sacristy space.

Suggestions for Improvements to Existing Spaces:

- We need to improve the acoustics in both the worship area and De Colores Hall
- We need to expand the columbarium to _____ niches.
- Tear down the two casitas and build an all-purpose storage and meeting space.
- We need to improve the appearance and beauty of our spaces
- The kitchen is central to this community because of lunch bunch. We need improvements to the kitchen such as a sprayer.
[Victor asked us to start writing down the things that are wrong in the kitchen, getting very specific. Comments and requirements should be given to Chuck Boehmer.]
- Dream list – a prayer garden that makes use of our beautiful weather.
- Baptismal space – we need a font that doesn't leak, something with more dignity

- When you walk in the doors you don't recognize that you are walking into a church; we need to improve our entrance.
- Modern electrical/heating/cooling systems.
- "Family" type space for the rest of the community as well as the student community.
- We could have small areas that adjust to one large area?
- We need to think of the others that will come after us, not just focus on what we need. We need to plan for future growth. We don't want to be doing this again in five years.
- The circle-type seating area in the worship space is one of the important features that we need to keep.

Victor had been listing our needs as we went, so he concluded by giving each of us four green dots. We were asked to place the dots in front the needs that we considered to be our highest priority, either singly on several issues or in multiple dots on a single issue.

The process promises to be an exciting and important part of our development as a community, and parishioners are encouraged to either participate in future meetings or to communicate their opinions and concerns to one of the advisors.

The next meeting will be in 4 to 5 weeks. Most at the meeting concurred that Saturday morning was probably the best overall time to meet.

*Minutes taken by Kitty Berver with additions
by Fr. Mitch, Victor Johnson and Chuck Boehmer*