

A few comments from our Parish Administrator about exterior facilities projects...

Aisle Roofs

As most of you have probably noticed the east side of the church has been a bit of a “mess” for the last few weeks. A major reason for this has been the need to replace the roofs above the east and west side aisles of the church. Initial concerns about these roofs were identified during a routine inspection conducted in fall of 2010. Early in 2011 our Buildings & Grounds Committee determined we needed to act this year particularly for the east side roof. Weather permitting our plan is to complete both roof replacements this year. If weather or other conditions do not cooperate the west side roof replacement may reasonably be deferred to next spring.

Clerestory Stained Glass Protection and Steeple Windows

A priority for the increasingly stressed clerestory stained glass windows of the church has been to replace the existing exterior Lexan plastic panels with safety laminated storm glass. In addition, a number of the single pane plate glass windows in the steeples are damaged and have been identified as safety risks. With guidance from our Building & Grounds Committee, we decided to replace the steeple windows with textured safety laminated storm glass and address the clerestory window protection as one project.

The stained glass protection portion of the effort has progressed to the point that the scaffolding on the south side of the church will be removed the week after Thanksgiving (11/28). While all damaged steeple windows have been addressed, due primarily to weather delays, we will need to wait until early next spring to complete the remaining steeple window replacements. The primary reason for this delay is winter. Unfortunately, to be effective application of paint and caulk requires sustained temperatures above 35 degrees. So here in Wisconsin we are running out of time for this type of work.

Façade

This past summer we engaged an independent contracted engineer to conduct an inspection of the church exterior based on City of Milwaukee building façade ordinances. While overall the church is in “good” or better condition, there are a number of exterior issues we need to confront which were identified during this examination of the church. For example you may have noticed tuck-pointing, stone and other masonry repair taking place in tandem with the glass and roof work.

In addition, for safety concerns, we have removed parts of a number of finials* particularly on the front of the church. The current plan is to restore and replace these finials next summer.

A more complex challenge facing us is at the very top of the exterior of each transept. The top of the transept walls are capped by sections of stone, or concrete, called “copings” supported on the back side by bricks. While the copings have been repaired in the past near the peaks, overall the copings and bricks have deteriorated to the point the inspecting engineer considers them to be “potential failure risks.” Consequently, the east side sidewalk (between Gesu and Johnston Hall) must be closed for safety reasons until we complete the coping and brick repairs early next spring or summer.

Fortunately, access to all entrances and exits at Gesu and Johnston will not be affected by this closing. The bad news is anyone wanting to walk from Lot J to Wisconsin Avenue, or vice versa, will need to use the sidewalk on the west side of the church or another alternate route.

We apologize for this inconvenience and thank you for your support and patience. We also appreciate your constant understanding as we move forward in good stewardship to care for this beautiful church we all love.

If you have any questions or comments please contact John O’Brien at the Parish Center.

*For the non-architects among us, a “finial” is defined as an architectural device, typically carved in stone and employed decoratively to emphasize the apex of a gable or any of various distinctive ornaments at the top, end, or corner of a building or structure. At Gesu we have a variety of beautiful finials in need of repair that will be addressed over time.