



SAINT JAMES BASILICA MAKING CHANGES; For release March 22, 2010

Jamestown, N.D. - One of Jamestown's historic landmarks is embarking on an effort that, upon completion, will improve its ability to better serve its followers. Parish leaders at Saint James Basilica have announced the start of the *Building Community in God's Kingdom* Capital Campaign. Officials hope to raise \$1.6 million over the three-year campaign and use the proceeds to fund much needed improvements.

“We’ve been praying about these changes for more than six years and believe the time has finally come to move forward,” Rev. Al Bitz of Saint James said. “We’ve discussed the improvements and understand the numerous benefits they’ll provide now and for generations.”

Plans call for the addition of two buildings to the church grounds. A new living quarters for the priests - which the Diocesan policies indicate are to be separate from the offices - will be constructed just south of the existing rectory and a new community room will be added on the west side of the current building.

“Since the rectory was built in 1956, the priests of Saint James Basilica have lived in the same building where they work,” Charles Axtman, a capital campaign General

Chair said. “This arrangement is convenient, but offers little in the way of privacy and hinders the day-to-day spiritual refreshment all priests need to best serve their parishioners.”

The new community room will hold up to 100 parishioners and be used for a variety of functions such as pre and post funeral gatherings, Bible study, luncheons, retreats as well as community building occasions after Sunday Eucharists. Along with the construction of the new buildings, plans call for some office renovation, space for a new maintenance garage and an increased church parking area.

Before moving forward with the project, the leaders at Saint James Basilica hired the Steier Group, a national fundraising and development firm from Omaha to conduct a parish-wide feasibility study. The positive results convinced leadership to move forward.

“The results proved to us that our people are ready to accept the challenge that is now in front of us,” Rev. Bitz said. “We are encouraging every parishioner of Saint James Basilica and the outlying parishes that we serve in Buchanan, Pingree and Windsor to assist in this effort. With the Holy Spirit’s guidance and the support of our parishioners, we’ll reach our goal.”

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Saint James Basilica was established in 1883 and the current church building was built in 1914. It was elevated to a minor basilica in 1989, one of only 66 minor basilicas in the United States. Including the outlying parishes in Buchanan, Pingree and Windsor, St. James Basilica serves almost 1300 households.