

Our Lady of the Assumption Among the Hurons of Detroit

Fourth Report – December 1, 2019

Our Lady of the Assumption Parish acknowledges that Assumption church sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy. The Huron, who were given refuge by the Three Fires Confederacy, shared this land with Assumption Parish in order to establish the first Catholic parish in Canada west of Montreal.

1. On September 26, 2019, Most Reverend Ronald Fabbro, CSB, Bishop of the Diocese of London, Rev. Maurice Restivo, CSB, Pastor of Assumption Parish, and a thousand parishioners celebrated the return of Assumption Parish to Assumption church. At the start of the celebration, Bishop Fabbro read the above Indigenous statement. This was a fitting beginning for this new chapter in the 277-year history of Assumption Parish. It is an important reminder that the incredible 277th year of the first Catholic parish in Canada west of Montreal began with this sharing by the Huron refugees who had been given sanctuary in this territory by the Three Fires Confederacy. This fourth report is presented upon the substantial completion of the stabilization phase of the restoration.

Phase 1 Stabilization – Copper Shingle Roof:

2. The installation of the new copper shingle roof was completed by Double AA Roofing on time and under budget. Over 600 donors contributed over \$161,000 to the copper shingle campaign. The City of Windsor donated \$250,000 by redirecting money to the new roof that had been originally approved in 2010 for work on the east wall of the church but had never been advanced. The total cost of the roof was \$600,000. The names of the donors were written by hand on the back of the copper shingles. We also wrote the names of everyone who donated or volunteered for the past fundraising efforts.

Phase 1 Stabilization – Asbestos Remediation:

3. Asbestos Remediation was undertaken by R. C. White under a separate contract with the Diocese. It required the removal of all contaminated material including 3–4” of soil from the dirt floor, the installation of a heavy plastic membrane over the dirt, and a final layer of concrete.
4. A series of tunnels cut into the dirt floor in the service area are accessed through an opening in the basement boiler room wall. This access is so shallow that you have to crawl for approximately twenty feet to reach the closest tunnel.
5. To facilitate the asbestos remediation and the installation of the new heating system, a new temporary opening was created through the east wall next to the parking lot. The approval from the Ontario Heritage Trust for the temporary direct access required that the foundation wall be restored using the original stones after the work in the crawlspace had been completed. It was also decided to enlarge the interior access through the boiler room wall to provide permanent access for future maintenance.
6. However, when the workers were deepening the tunnel access from the boiler room, they encountered bones buried in the soil. The digging was stopped immediately and the bones were left undisturbed. It was decided to abandon the enlargement of the boiler room access. The bones were covered again and encased under the plastic membrane and concrete floor. It was decided to make the temporary access from the parking lot a permanent one.

7. The discovery of the bones was not a complete surprise. A plaque on the east wall of Assumption church honours four pastors and one nun who had been interned under the church. The nun and three of these priests had died years before the current church was built, so their bones may have been moved from the former church/churches. An appropriate marker will be provided at the place the bones were uncovered. The remains included Rev. Pierre-Philippe Potier, S.J. (1700–1781), who was the first pastor of Assumption Parish, and Sr. Marie-Clotilde Raizenne who was a nun belonging to the Order of the Congregation de L’Enfant Jesus (1766–1829). She established the first school for girls at Assumption.
8. New LED lighting has been installed to replace the inadequate, makeshift lighting that was used in the past. This has eliminated old extension cords that posed a serious fire hazard.
9. The asbestos remediation proved to be quite onerous. Many areas in the crawl space had only a couple of feet of clearance. The workers were required to wear protective clothing and use respirators. These difficult working conditions caused a high turnover of workers who could not tolerate the heat and the unpleasant working conditions. This created a three-week delay before work could begin on the new hot-water heating system.

Phase 1 Stabilization – Hot-Water Heating System:

10. Encore Mechanical & Building Services Inc. has substantially completed the contract to install the new hot-water heating system. New hot-water radiators with cabinets have been installed. The fire proofing of the boiler room has been completed. New plumbing has been provided for the washroom at the church entrance. The provision of heat in the church from the new system was delayed by three weeks. This delay occurred during an unseasonable cold snap when temperatures in the church on the weekends were as low as zero. The Parishioners and Clergy were very patient and understanding of these uncomfortable conditions. As of November 22, heating has been restored.

Phase 1 – Financial Report:

11. The original Phase 1 budget of \$2,225,000 was revised to \$1,600,000 based upon the low tender awarded to Pupatello & Sons Ltd. The revised budget contained contingency and cash allowances in the amount of \$190,000. These allowances provide for certain anticipated and other costs that have not been identified in the construction specifications. These provisions are considered prudent when restoring old buildings. Any use of these funds is preauthorized by way of Change Orders approved by the architect, the parish and the Diocese. The cash allowances were for specific items such as lightning protection and structural reinforcing of the nave floor.
12. At the conclusion of Phase 1, eighteen Change Orders have been approved totalling \$103,000. The remaining allowances in the amount of \$87,000 are now available for the next phase. We are grateful to Pupatello & Sons who have substantially completed the contract under budget. The successful Substantial Performance of Phase 1 Stabilization secures the immediate future of Assumption church. The long-term future requires much more work that is needed on the plaster, the paint, and the exterior walls.
13. Financial Summary Phase 1:

Construction Budget	\$ 2,225,000
Contract Award Price	\$ 1,600,000
Actual Cost	\$ 1,513,000

PHASE 2 – PLASTER CONSOLIDATION & PAINT RESTORATION:

14. The architects and historic plaster consultants advise that we need to secure the plaster before it is exposed to the potential trauma from work on the brick and stone exterior walls. Although major restoration of the exterior walls, balustrade and pinnacles is required, there is no immediate threat to their structural integrity.
15. The plaster consolidation consists of three steps:
 - i) the removal of all insulation and vacuum cleaning in the attic above the ceiling;
 - ii) the application of several coats of an epoxy-like solution that reattaches the plaster to the lathe;
 - iii) the liquid solution will seep through the cracks in the plaster and must be quickly wiped off the ceiling to prevent damage to the paint and murals.
16. In order to clean the solution from the ceiling, extensive scaffolding is required to provide access. The scaffolding creates a temporary second floor at approximately the level of the top of the columns.
17. Upon completion of the plaster consolidation, the scaffolding that is already in place will provide the opportunity to restore the murals and other ceiling fixtures.
18. The plaster and paint work are expected to take a few months to complete. Doing the work in three stages has been approved by the Diocesan Building and Loan Commission starting with the east aisle (2A), then the west aisle (2B), and lastly the centre aisle, the sanctuary and the two side chapels (2C). It is expected that weekend celebrations can continue during this process, but a temporary return to Holy Name of Mary has not been completely ruled out.
19. The budget for Phase 2 has been established at \$3.5 – \$4.1 million depending on how soon the work can be completed. Since we can only proceed based on the money in hand, we may have to proceed in stages even though this may ultimately be more costly. The actual costs will only be known after tenders have been completed.
20. The Diocesan Building and Loan Commission approved completing the design work and applications to Ontario Heritage Trust and to the City of Windsor Heritage Committee. We expect to be in a position to tender the work early in 2020. No work will be authorized unless we have the funds to pay for it.
21. The cash for the restoration to date has been provided through the generosity of over 750 individual donors. Of special note are Diocese of London (\$1,000,000), City of Windsor Heritage Foundation (\$250,000), Toldo Foundation (\$250,000), and Anne Safranyos (\$100,000). After paying all expenses for Phase 1, the cash on hand is \$1,000,000. We are grateful for the overwhelming support.
22. Work has begun on the architectural design, contract document preparation, and the approvals required from the City of Windsor, the Ontario Heritage Trust and the Diocese of London for all of Phase 2. Phase 2A has been budgeted at \$1.4 million. We need additional cash on hand of \$400,000 in order to issue the tender for Phase 2A. In order to do all of Phase 2 at this time, we would require a total of \$3.55 million.

23. Various components of the Plaster & Paint Restoration provide opportunities to recognize donations:
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| Gold Stars | \$ 1,000 donation |
| Chandeliers | \$10,000 donation |
| Angels & Apostles | \$25,000 donation |
- In appreciation for their support and generosity, every donor will be recognized in an album permanently displayed in the vestibule of the church. All donors of \$1,000 or more will be presented with a golden star, a replica of the multitude of stars imbedded in the plaster ceiling of Assumption church. The major donors will also be presented with a framed picture as a permanent family keepsake. Every donor will receive a charitable donation receipt.
24. The ability of Assumption Parish to be financially sustainable into the future is an issue of ongoing concern by potential donors. There is great encouragement and confidence from the revenues provided by the parking lot. Assumption Parish has had a positive balance of over \$40,000 each year for the last five years and had accumulated a surplus of \$580,000 as of December 31, 2018.
25. The weekend attendance has increased each year for the last five years. After the return to Assumption church, the weekend attendance during October 2019 averaged 950. This is an increase of 250 from 2016.
26. **Assumption Cares:** Assumption Parish serves the west end of the City of Windsor. This area has the lowest family income in Windsor and is among the lowest in the entire country. In response to this harsh reality, Assumption Parish has entered into a partnership with the Windsor-Essex Compassionate Care Community to provide a wide range of programs for everyone who lives in the west end of Windsor. These programs are free and are offered to anyone living in the west end of Windsor, regardless of religion. A few of the eighteen programs offered are: Free Haircut Day, Health Screening, Cooking Experience, Bridgeview Youth, Exercise for Chronic Pain, and Feeding Windsor Community Meal.
27. A primary goal that helps to justify the huge cost of restoring Assumption church is the commitment to making the church available for use by the community at large. An illustration of this goal is the performance by Windsor Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of Handel's Messiah on December 5, 2019.
28. There is great potential to support tourism by making Assumption church available for bus tours. Indigenous and French historical artifacts and other displays would have great appeal.
29. Assumption Parish, the first parish in Canada west of Montreal, has returned home to the historic Assumption church. Now that Phase 1 has been completed successfully, on time (almost!), and under budget, we are embarking on Phase 2 in a spirit of "gladitude": an optimistic feeling of gratitude and sense of joy from the exhilarating celebration of the return to Assumption church.

ASSUMPTION CHURCH NEEDS YOUR HELP

For further information or to donate to the restoration of Assumption Church:

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Donations can be made through <https://assumptionparish.ca>