

Our Lady of the Assumption Among the Hurons of Detroit

Fifth Report - September 20, 2021 (Revised November 20, 2021)

Note: Valuable input received from the First Nations community prompted corrections (shown in **Bold**) to Section 4: Assumption Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

September 20, 2021 marked the second anniversary of the joyous return of Assumption Parish to Assumption Church. This report provides an update on the current status of the Assumption Church Restoration project under five headings:

1. Restoration Progress
2. Revenue and Expenses
3. Significant National Historic Site Initiative
4. Assumption Truth and Reconciliation Commission
5. Moving Forward

1. Restoration Progress

You will recall that the Stabilization Phase 1 consisted of the new copper shingle roof, the asbestos abatement, and the new hot water heating system. This work enabled Assumption Church to be returned to full time use in September 2019. The completion of this phase has ensured the stability of Assumption Church, has halted further deterioration, and has secured the time required to complete the entire restoration.

The Second Phase, which is now underway, focuses on the interior restoration. The scope of the interior work includes new insulation, ceiling plaster consolidation, plaster repairs, painting including the stencils, an upgraded fire alarm system, and other related work. The work on the interior has been divided into three stages: 2A (East Aisle), 2B (West Aisle), and 2C (Centre Aisle including the sanctuary).

The interior work already completed in Phase 2A was quite extensive:

ATTIC WORK:

- new stairs in the bell tower to replace aluminum extension ladders
- a staging platform over the sanctuary roof
- catwalks in the attic down the centre and east side
- new LED lighting throughout
- new wiring for feature lighting of the ceiling
- new fire alarms
- removal of all loose debris thereby eliminating a significant amount of dead weight in the attic and enhancing the overall health of the ceiling
- removal and replacement of 3 layers of attic insulation

- plaster keys reinforced, where required and application of plaster consolidation material, re-establishing mechanical connection of plaster to wood lathe

INTERIOR WORK:

- temporary removal of pews, speakers, Stations of the Cross and wall plaques
- erection of access scaffolding with three working levels
- hazardous materials abatement
- restoration of deteriorated ceiling and water damaged plaster
- removing, painting and reinstalling all plaster stars on the ceiling
- replicating plaster stars, replacing missing and damaged stars
- applying high-quality paint systems on all surfaces
- identifying and recording existing paint scheme (18 different colours)
- creating new stencils to restore the original stencil decor
- developing modelling for new sound system
- installing conduit on columns for the new speakers

Phase 2A (East Aisle) has been completed except for the painting and stencils which are scheduled to be completed in early October. Work has continued throughout the pandemic.

The design work for 2B (West Aisle) has been completed and Allan Avis has prepared a budget for 2B totalling \$1,110,000 (attached). The 2B scope of work is virtually identical to 2A. Some expenses which were required for 2A are not required for 2B. These include the stairs in the tower, the staging platform over the sanctuary, the centre aisle attic walkway, and the design and architectural plans which included identifying 18 paint colours. The architect fees have also been reduced to 3.5% for the remainder of Phase 2.

The Heritage Planner for the City of Windsor and the Ontario Heritage Trust have both approved the entire interior restoration plans.

2. Revenue and Expenses:

A summary of all the costs incurred as of September 20, 2021 totals **\$3,590,174**.

Architect's Initial Condition Report Cost	\$ 32,098.78
Phase 1 Restoration Total Costs	\$1,800,381.35
Phase 2A Restoration Total Costs	<u>\$1,757,694.11</u>
Total Restoration Costs Paid to Date	\$3,590,174.24
Cash on Hand (rounded)	\$ <u>500,000.00</u>
Total Revenue	\$4,090,174.24
Phase 2B Budget	\$1,110,135.00 Funds still required: 610,000

Assumption Parish is very grateful for the generosity of over 750 donors, big and small, who have made it possible for the progress we have made. Major donors from outside the parish include the Diocese of London (\$1,000,000), the Toldo Foundation (\$500,000), and donations of \$100,000 each in shares by two individuals. Donating shares of a public company is a very tax efficient way to contribute. Even Bishop Ronald Fabbro, CSB made a personal donation of \$25,000.

A retired businessman who wishes to avoid media exposure contributed \$500,000 a few weeks ago. This has made it possible to begin restoration of Phase 2B, the West Aisle. Most of the work in the attic has already been completed, including the removal of the old insulation and the ceiling plaster consolidation. We will need another \$610,000 in order to complete the West Aisle.

Assumption Parish continues to commit that all funds donated will be used entirely on the cost of restoration with no monies being used for fundraising. The work can only proceed based on the money received. Assumption Parish is determined to avoid incurring any debt from the restoration.

3. Significant National Historic Site Initiative

In a related matter, Assumption Parish has applied to the Monuments Board of Parks Canada for recognition as a Nationally Significant Historic Site. This honour was denied twice before in the last 40 years, but we are quite confident of achieving success because of the Indigenous origins of the parish and the support we are receiving from the First Nations. An historian has been assigned to examine our eligibility for this honour. If we are successful, it will open the potential for government grants and heritage donors who can only support non-denominational causes. We expect a site visit from the historian this fall after pandemic travel restrictions are lifted.

4 Assumption Truth and Reconciliation Commission

It is difficult to convey the depth of the sorrow many of us feel about the horror of the residential school tragedy. Although there were no Indigenous Residential Schools located in London Diocese, our indigenous children were forced to attend several residential schools located hundreds of miles from home.

The assertion that there were no Indigenous Residential schools located in London Diocese was not correct. Mt. Elgin Residential School was located 20 miles southwest of London within the Diocese of London in the traditional territory of the Chippewa of the Thames First Nation. It operated from 1851-1946 with a capacity of up to 160 students. This was only one of several Indigenous Residential Schools where indigenous children were forced to attend.

In addition, a question and exception were taken to the statement that "our indigenous children were forced to attend residential schools." What is meant by using the term "our" in this context? The possessive pronoun "our" has been used historically and on-going to insinuate church and state ownership, subjugation, paternalistic abuse and possession of Indigenous people, lands, waters in general and Indigenous children in particular.

The basis for this concern is best explained in a video prepared by the Anglican Church on the Doctrine of Discovery. It helps to explain the First Nations perspective in a very compelling fashion.

Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen lands, Strong Hearts.

<https://youtu.be/mQwkB1hn5E8>

The Assumption Parish Team has been discussing how the parish could respond in a meaningful way to the Residential School tragedies. As a first step, a Book of Condolences will be placed in Rosary Chapel for visitors to sign and express their sorrow for the loss of these innocent children.

The Parish Team has decided to establish a committee called the Assumption Truth and Reconciliation Commission with a mandate to explore how we can advance the process of reconciliation. Subject to the approval and support of the Indigenous community a Memorial Book would be created which listed the names of everyone from London Diocese who were lost when in attendance at the Residential Schools. Story Boards explaining the Residential School system could be developed and displayed. Other Story Boards could outline the Indigenous and French heritage of Assumption Parish. Copies of the Statement of Apology by the Catholic Bishops of Canada and of the personal apology of Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, CSB could be provided.

Another possibility being considered could add a new name to Rosary Chapel. The name Assumption Truth and Reconciliation Chapel is one name among others being considered. This could make the Chapel a focal point and a centre for the pursuit of Truth and Reconciliation in our parish, in our region and in the Diocese. It could become a place where Truth and Reconciliation is fostered and nourished in fellowship with the First Nations.

This could be a powerful way to demonstrate the depth of our sorrow for the pain and suffering our country and our religious institutions inflicted upon the First Nations people. It is hard to imagine the depth of the pain that was inflicted upon these children and their families in our name. Perhaps reflecting on the five Sorrowful Mysteries depicted in the Chapel's stain glass windows would be helpful.

When one Indigenous scholar was visiting Martyrs Shrine recently, he called me to suggest that these children who died in the residential schools were martyrs in the view of many of Indigenous. The Assumption TRC could become a shrine where the First Nations' loss could be recognized and mourned.

The initial reaction from Indigenous leaders who have been consulted about this concept was a concern whether this proposal was merely a token or 'flavour of the month' response. They expressed the need for an ongoing dialog to understand the full extent of the damage caused to their society and culture by this instrument of colonialism. They also said that

every effort to acknowledge the harm that was inflicted and to learn more about their suffering which continues even to this day was important and meaningful to them. They said that while every little bit helps, it is important that this would be a beginning not an end, that this is not a 'one and done'.

The First Nations were so generous to Assumption at the very beginning of our arrival on these shores. Fr. Pierre Potier S.J., the first pastor of Assumption Parish, related in his memoirs how 25% of the space in the new church was set aside for the use of the Huron who were so generous with their contribution of land for the support of the mission and the parish. At the outset of the Assumption Church restoration project, we expressed the hope to create a meaningful way to honour this commitment. The Assumption Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in conjunction with the First Nations people, will seek out meaningful ways to honour that commitment.

We look forward to receiving input from all the members of the parish and from anyone who wants to share their thoughts and ideas on how this initiative can be a meaningful one.

5. Moving Forward

The restoration of Assumption Church has continued to progress despite many obstacles. The disillusion of many supporters caused by the clergy sexual abuse scandals and now by the new awareness of the Residential School tragedies has created a difficult time for the Church and a difficult climate for this restoration project.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a direct impact on Assumption Parish and on our larger community. Our condolences go out to those who have suffered loss during this worst pandemic in the last hundred years. The needs created by the pandemic have rightly claimed priority for many generous donors. We have also suffered a direct loss by the prolonged recovery from Covid experienced by our Pastor, Fr. Maurice Restivo CSB.

Nevertheless, Assumption Parish has endured many tragedies over its 300 years. We continue to have every confidence that Assumption will celebrate its 500th anniversary! We are incredibly grateful for those who have already given such generous support. For those who have hesitated to donate, you are invited to consider the importance of preserving this special part of our heritage. If we have any pride in our heritage or in our community, we really have no other choice.

ASSUMPTION CHURCH NEEDS YOUR HELP

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

Assumption Parish - assumption@dol.ca 519-253-2493

Paul Mullins - paulmullins@xplornet.com 519-982-3300

Donations can also be made directly to Assumption Parish or through canadahelps.org under "Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Windsor, ON"