

## St. Ludmila Community Center Proposal 2021

Approximately twenty-five years ago, Fr. Harry Koelker brought together a group of parishioners to have a conversation about the future of St. Ludmila Parish. After careful thought, a lot of prayer and discernment **your community** decided to move forward with a feasibility study to determine if it was possible to build a new church to meet the growing needs of St. Ludmila Parish.

This decision was not easy, it involved a lot of questions and research. On September 1, 2001 many of you participated in the liturgy, celebrated by Archbishop Hanus, to bless and consecrate this sacred space. A dream that came true! Looking back, I believe many would agree their prayers and hard work paid off. Daily we gather in this sacred space for worship, religious education opportunities, to celebrate the sacraments of the Church, some come throughout the week to pray quietly in the Eucharist Chapel others gather for meetings.

Today, I come before you asking the same question. “What can we do to prepare and to enhance the ministry of St. Ludmila Parish for the future?” It is hard to believe, but I have been with you for over five years! Over the course of these five years, I have done my best to be a wise steward of the spiritual and financial gifts you have entrusted to the Parish along with the Finance and Pastoral Council. Sometimes it is difficult to be a wise steward when dealing with aging facilities.

Approximately eighteen months ago, a few parishioners asked to meet with me. The topic of conversation was our aging buildings on our campus including the school, the convent/parish center, the gymnasium, the white sheds and the rectory. They asked if they could put together a team of parishioners to evaluate the buildings, their usage and efficiency. **Believing that this parish belongs to you the people, I gave them my blessing.** This group consisted of parishioners with professional experience as contractors, plant managers, engineers, electricians and individuals with knowledge about heating and air conditioning. It also included staff members, youth representatives, educators and representatives from Finance Council and Pastoral Council.

After their initial walk through, they again asked to meet with me to give me a list of anticipated expenses with short, medium and long term goals. It did not take this group long to determine that it was going to be very expensive to repair, remodel and bring our current facilities up to code and to make them as energy efficient as possible.

Some of the major costs considered for the school was the replacement of the original boiler in the school, replacement of the windows to be more energy efficient, upkeep and perhaps replacement of the roof and tuckpointing costs. The conversation continued, even if we make all these repairs, the upper level of the school is not handicapped accessible. Also, even if we make all these repairs, we still have an aging building that is not energy efficient, is no longer being used for its original purpose and perhaps limits our future growth as a parish.

The focus of our conversation then looked at the Convent/Parish Center. This building was built in 1962 to house the Notre Dame Sisters teaching in our Catholic Schools. This building now houses our offices, meeting space and storage for the parish. This group walked through the building ~ all three levels. They again quickly determined this building is not very welcoming, not being used for its original purpose and is not energy efficient. This past summer, remember the heat? At times we had six window air conditioners running. Many of the staff had their doors closed to keep their offices cool and the hall, staff work room and meeting rooms were extremely warm. Due to the construction of this building, it is not possible to run duct work to convert to central air. None of the restrooms are handicapped accessible and the upper and lower levels have limited access and are not fully utilized. Again, it was determined we could spend a lot of money on this building to bring it up to code and to remodel it to meet our needs, but it would be expensive and again we would have an aging, remodeled building.

Using as realistic figures as possible, it was estimated that it would cost \$9 to \$10 million dollars to repair and remodel the School, Parish Center, gymnasium, out buildings and the rectory to bring them up to code to meet our current and future needs.

It was after this conversation, the question was asked, could we build a new building? What would it cost? Where would it be located? Would it meet the needs of our growing parish? Would it enhance our ministry? Would it be more energy efficient? The answer to all these questions was – let's look into it!

Seeking guidance, I contacted the Archdiocese of Dubuque for advice. The Archdiocese has been a part of our conversation from the beginning and they have provided the committee and myself great advice. When I applied for our first proxy, a document that keeps the diocese informed of major projects, I received an email from the Archdiocese that simply stated, "It is an exciting time to be a member of St. Ludmila Parish!" With that vote of confidence, the committee continued to move forward! On Friday, we received our second proxy giving us permission to look into a feasibility study!

You may or may not recall, you were invited to complete a survey about a year ago about this project. Those comments were gathered and analyzed. The committee then asked staff, committees, Bingo, Kolach Festival, Bazaar and organizations that use our space, if there were no limitations what would a perfect space look like. That information was then analyzed and shared with an architect. With their guidance, it was determined to meet all the needs of our growing parish, the staff and committees, we would need a facility with approximately 35,000 square feet on two levels. Using realistic construction numbers as of today it is estimated a new facility could be built for approximately 7 to 7.5 million dollars.

This would be one facility that would be connected to the church. All of our parish offices would be together, the entire building would be energy efficient, it would provide adequate space for our current ministry and would allow room for future growth. A new facility would allow us more flexibility and the new facility would allow us to host community events, wedding receptions and other social activities.

You may be asking why do I keep speaking of growth? Proposals are being made for two or three new housing developments that would be in our parish boundaries over the next ten years. If we plan for the future and continue to offer quality offerings, I would hope and pray, Catholics in these developments would want to be a part of our faith community.

This weekend after Mass we have our FIRST DRAFT of what a new facility would look like. As you leave Mass today, you are welcome to stop by and look at the drawings provided. The committee and I would like to hear your feedback, ideas, thoughts and suggestions! Now that we have drawings, the next step is to do a feasibility study, with the blessing of the Archdiocese! Asking the question, is it possible to raise 7 to 7.5 million dollars to make this dream a reality?

We interviewed three organizations and unanimously agreed upon Community Counselling Service Co., to help us with this project. We are finalizing details on this agreement. For the next four to six weeks, they will be meeting with parishioners, asking questions and gathering data. If they reach out to you, please share your honest thoughts and opinions. This will help the committee in their decision-making process, determining if this project is possible. Please pick up a bulletin and read the pastor's corner for more information!

I want to thank the committee for their commitment to the parish and for asking the tough questions. It is because of their initiative and dreams, as parishioners, they are looking and planning for the future of YOUR parish. It was then they invited me, the staff, our committees and I hope each of you to dream about what tomorrow could be! Twenty-five years ago, Fr. Koelker and a group of parishioners had a dream that became a reality! May we do our part to make the sacrifices necessary, to keep their dream alive and do our part to be wise stewards looking to the future with hope and providing adequate facilities for our ministry!