

A Renovated Church — and a New Form of Leadership

On September 13, 2008, parishioners walked into St. Anne church and saw the first major improvements since the church was built in 1962. While several elements still remain to be done, the summer renovation was a huge step in a process that was first suggested over a decade before. Plans for a church renovation were first drawn up—and then tabled—in 1991. Other suggestions were offered and considered throughout the 1990s.

In 1999, Father Bob Camuso had hired architect Steve Lee to work with a Building Committee to develop a comprehensive three-stage plan to include the renovation of the church, the renovation of the school, and the construction of a new parish hall/gymnasium. But the 2001 Ash Wednesday earthquake led to a re-prioritization of the stages, and the renovation of the school and construction of the hall was moved ahead of the church renovation. Soon after the school and hall project was completed, the church was reconfigured into the round, but no further steps were taken at that time.

A new look for the church

When Father Bob was reassigned in 2005, and Sister Marilyn Geiger was appointed as Pastoral Coordinator, she continued the planning for the church renovation. In 2006, the original altar platform and baldachino were removed and a permanent altar and platform were built in the center of the nave.

Sister Marilyn left that summer, and Ron Ryan was appointed Pastoral Coordinator. After consulting parish leadership, Ron moved ahead with a capital

campaign to raise funds both for the church renovation and to reduce the debt remaining from the school and hall projects. Early in 2008, as St. Anne began the celebration of its Centennial, Ron announced that major portions of the planned renovation would happen that summer. The work would include replacing the roof, the

installation of two skylights, the construction of a nursery for childcare, separating the two transepts to form a day chapel and a narthex, the creation of a Eucharistic chapel, a reconciliation chapel, a new baptismal font, and painting the walls and ceiling.



Major elements of the church renovation include the new baptismal font and skylight.

The parish pitches in

The day after school closed for the summer, parishioners moved necessary furnishings and supplies to Banchemo Hall for Mass. Throughout the summer, dozens of people

pitched in on weekend work parties to help with landscaping and gardening. In the final days before the church reopened, parishioners worked hard cleaning the new church in preparation for the first Mass. They wielded Brasso, vacuum cleaners, mops, Windex and good, old fashioned elbow grease to ready the church for the biggest day of its second century.

When that day arrived, most people were delighted with the results. The renovated worship space was filled with beautiful, natural light and the new ceiling and wall colors made the space brighter. Both young and old were drawn to the baptismal font with its “living water” gently pouring over its sides.



Sr. Ethna O'Doherty polishes a holy water font.

During Mass on the first Sunday in the renovated church, there was another first: the blessing of the parish's first Holy Land pilgrimage. The ten-day excursion, from September 15-24, was part of the parish's Centennial Celebration, and included a visit to St. Anne Church in Jerusalem, the oldest

church dedicated to our patron, built on the site of the saint's home. The pilgrimage was a dream come true for many of the group.

More to come

"We're not done yet," announced Ron Ryan, on that first weekend as he



Judy Casey and Windex brighten a door.

thanked all those who had made the renovation possible. "But we have taken a huge step forward and helped to create a space that expresses who we are as a community."



Tascaie Jennings touches up the furniture.

We hope that in the not too distant future, additional elements can enhance the church renovation. Designs have already been drawn up for a new ambo that will incorporate marble from the original altar of the 1962 church, and a search is on for an appropriate crucifix for the east end of the church. These elements can be added once funding is available.

"This is a great way to mark our Centennial and to start our second century," commented Ron. "It's also a testimony to the commitment and generosity of our parishioners."



Parishioners at prayer in the new day chapel.

New Model of Parish Leadership Introduced

At the same time as the church was undergoing changes in its physical appearance, the parish was undergoing change in its leadership structure. In July 2005, Archbishop Alex Brunett appointed a lay pastoral coordinator—not a pastor—and a parochial vicar as leadership for St. Anne Parish.

The shortage of priests was the driving force behind the new leadership model. Over the past several decades, the number of priests ordained has remained static while the number of Western Washington Catholics has doubled. When Father Bob Camuso was reassigned in July 2005, the Archbishop appointed Sister Marilyn Geiger and Father Paul Pluth using this new model of parish leadership.

Father Paul described the model this way:

"Essentially, Sister Marilyn is in charge of the parish. As pastoral coordinator she will be responsible for everything that is non-sacramental." Describing his duties, Father Paul explained, "I am responsible for celebrating the Eucharist on Sundays, holy days and daily Mass. It includes the



*Sr. Marilyn Geiger, OSF
Pastoral Coordinator
2005 - 2006*



*Fr. Paul Pluth
Parochial Vicar
2005 - 2008*



Priests from St. Anne's past and present concelebrate the Parish's Centennial Reunion Mass on October 9, 2008. From left: Fr. Roger O'Brien, Fr. William Treacy, Fr. Jim Dalton, Fr. John Bowman, Fr. Steve Sallis, Fr. John Renggli and Fr. Tony Haycock.

monthly Masses at healthcare facilities, school Masses and visiting the classes for First Reconciliation and First Communion. In short, I'll be responsible for the things a lay person is not delegated to do."

This was not the first time Fr. Paul was involved in this leadership model. "I've done this before in two other parishes and it works out very well. Most people will not experience any loss of pastoral presence. When a priest is needed, I'll be there."

We're not alone

St. Anne's is not alone in the use of the pastoral coordinator - parochial vicar model; currently there are 10 parishes in the Seattle Archdiocese using it. Today, Ron Ryan is St. Anne's pastoral coordinator and Fr. John Bowman is the parochial vicar.

"The model has its roots in Vatican II which called for a fuller involvement of all the members of the Church," explains Ron. "The pope, bishops, priests, religious orders and laity all have unique roles and responsibilities, but it is by collaborating together that we most fully become the Body of Christ, the Church, with God at the head. God speaks not only through the clergy, but through all the members; we can best discern what God is saying by the clergy and laity working together."

"Rather than be passive recipients, the new structure asks us all to get involved at some level even though we may disagree with some decisions. And we're asked to stay committed to working together and remaining an active part of the faith community."



*Ron Ryan
Pastoral Coordinator
2006 - present*

Soon after Ron arrived at St. Anne, he began to work with the Pastoral Council in expanding the parish's leadership structure, expanding some of the already existing commissions and creating new ones. "The councils and commissions are ways that the lay people of the parish can be actively involved in providing leadership," says Ron. The Pastoral and Finance Councils handle issues affecting the overall life of the parish; the commissions focus on specific aspects or 'slices' of parish life, such as the school or liturgy or social justice."

In 2007, the Ron introduced a discernment process for the councils and commissions, inviting all parishioners to consider themselves and others in calling forth leadership for these groups. Within two years, the number of members on the councils and commissions had grown to over 50. "These parishioners are providing a tremendous service to our parish," observes Ron. "Their vision and leadership help the whole community grow in doing what the Gospel calls us to do."

Not perfect yet

The change in leadership structure is a huge paradigm shift for Catholics and St. Anne—as other parishes—has struggled to make this shift.



*Fr. John Bowman
Parochial Vicar
July 2008 - present*

“The St. Anne organizational model isn’t working perfectly yet,” Ron says. “Shifting from a structure in which the priests were the only ones to exercise leadership to a community in which clergy and laity work together can seem difficult and messy. Some parishioners may prefer the old hierarchical structure.”

To address some of the questions and issues, Ron and the parish leadership groups hosted a series of town-hall style meetings in the spring and summer of 2008. “Candid Conversations” allowed parishioners to voice their concerns and to receive information on various topics, such as the leadership structure, parish finances and the church reconfiguration.

Fr. Bowman Arrives

In late May 2008, it was announced that Father Paul Pluth had been reassigned and Father John Bowman had been appointed as St. Anne’s new Parochial Vicar. A priest for nearly 44 years, Father Bowman said he was delighted with his new assignment and delighted with the pastoral coordinator / parochial vicar arrangement. “It will be great to put behind me the responsibilities of a pastor, the endless meetings, the fundraising. I’ve been doing that for a lot of years. I might have a suggestion once in a while, but I try not to intrude in the areas that are not my business anymore. Sometimes you have to bite your tongue, but there are no areas of conflict. Ron and I collaborate very well. It helps that I am in charge of the liturgy and all things sacramental.”

Vision for the next century

As the parish welcomed Father Bowman, Ron Ryan called the community to consider what they wanted St. Anne to look like as it begins its second century. “Our Centennial is an opportunity to celebrate the past, but it also calls us to look to our future. What is God calling us to do? What is our mission as



Judy Killion hosts a Conversation Café where parishioners share their hopes and dreams for St. Anne’s second century.

a Catholic parish? What do we want our community to look like ten, twenty, fifty years from now?”

To explore these questions the parish leadership conducted a series of small, informal gatherings, called Conversation Cafés where parishioners shared their thoughts, ideas

and dreams for the future of the parish.

These small gatherings were hosted by members of the parish’s councils and commissions, and were held in their homes, local coffee shops, or at the parish. The results from these meetings will be used to draft new parish Vision and Mission Statements, and eventually in developing a new Parish Five Year Plan. All these will be invaluable in planning for our second century.

What does the future hold for us? Certainly we will start by coping with our nation’s severe financial crisis, which will undoubtedly have a profound impact on parishioners and parish. What other challenges await us? Whatever they are, we know that God has blessed us abundantly and will be with us every step of the way in our second century.