

The Future of St. Paul's Church Update

We are looking forward to life "post-Covid 19" in the coming months. This means continuing with the work we were doing last year to create a vibrant Stella Maris Parish to serve our area.

We have been pleased to see so many members of St. Paul's Church in ministry at the St. Michael's location in Spryfield. It has been difficult during the Covid restrictions, however new relationships are being established.

In November 2020 the parish leadership of Stella Maris submitted a report to Archbishop Dunn recommending the closure of St Paul's Church. Since that time we have been faced with a new challenge - the church roof has sprung a leak and we've found out the whole roof needs to be re-shingled!

The cost to do the full re-shingling is in excess of \$50,000, but the exact cost cannot be known until the old shingles are removed and the sheathing inspected, as contractors expressed concerns about the integrity of the sheathing. In the short term, we are proceeding with a patch to the leaking part of the roof as soon as possible and hope for the best until the status of the building has been decided. Racoon damage and a subsequent rainstorm also caused damage to the wall behind the altar last Fall, but the roof was repaired as soon as it was discovered. It is important to add that neither leak had anything to do with not heating the building over the winter.

The churches that make up Stella Maris Parish have all been struggling to deal with the challenge of diminishing resources, both people and money. As a step to alleviating these pressures, the hall at St Paul is being prepared for a sale to the charity Chisholm Children's Services. As this is a beautiful alignment to our mission many parishioners are enthusiastic about the prospect and it is hoped that this will be successful. The glebe cannot be sold as it is on the same property as the church and cannot be legally subdivided.

So, it's time to decide what happens next. Archbishop Dunn has approved the next step in the process for the discernment of the closure of this church. This will be an opportunity for parishioners to provide direct feedback to him and through small-group consultations on the proposed plan of closure, specifically any new, viable options to alleviate the financial and demographic realities faced here. Consultations will begin in September.

As a final note, there is strong support in the Parish for retaining the grotto in Herring Cove, and so, regardless of the outcome, we are committed to preserving this beautiful shrine to our Lady as part of our parish, and hope parishioners from across the parish will support its upkeep.

Masses at St Paul's Church

With the government's COVID reopening plans unfolding, it is time to revisit the possibility of masses at St Paul's church. The first lockdown derailed our plans for holding one and then two masses per month at St Michael's church; gathering as one vibrant faith community with the new Stella Maris choir. Since then, the smaller churches were not used due to the complexity of COVID protocols and the very limited seating capacity. This forced us to have all the parish masses at St Michael's church. In the past fourteen months our parish has taken great strides in forming a new, unified community. Of course personal connections to our traditional churches are still real, but our reality of moving forward to having a strong, unified parish is still very much our goal. To help parishioners move toward our vision of being missionary disciples in our area, the parish will be offering occasional Sunday masses at St. Paul's during the warmer months as soon as current restrictions on physical distancing are relaxed enough to make this viable.

Who will be involved? We hope that people with experience serving at the liturgy who are not currently serving in liturgical ministries will rise to the call to support these masses. The Liturgy Committee will coordinate these volunteers. Please email or call the parish secretary if you can lend a hand.