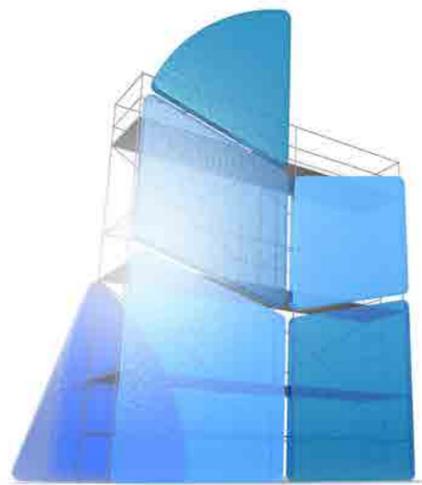


THE ST. AUGUSTINE'S PARISHIONER

St. Augustine's Catholic Community

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ST. AUGUSTINE'S
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

2018 A SPIRITUAL RENOVATION

At some point most of us have either directly taken part in a renovation or known someone who has. There are plenty of stories, most of them bad. Projects that went over budget, took much too long to complete and contractors who really should be employed in some other line of work. So why do we insist on renovating?

It's often because we experienced that feeling that things have gotten a little "stale" and need to be refreshed. When things were first put together, it all made sense but in the light of modern times, it's not quite as ideal. It might be as simple as a fresh coat of paint, or perhaps we're tearing the roof off and installing another floor. Either way, we're in for some "roll up your sleeves" hard work, planning and digging in the trenches.

But we don't tear down and start anew. We take stock. Some things still look fine and

perform the way we want them to, so no need to mess with those. Some things need to be improved so we remove the part that needs updating and replace it with something better. And some things just have no place here at all, like those 1980's appliances in the kitchen. They're going. Oh, and some demolition will occur.

And so it is with our parish and our spiritual lives. We need to take stock and review, keep what works, improve what doesn't and remove that which is not helping us in our mission of getting closer to God and all his children.

The Reno Gets Rolling

In the fall of 2017, Father Andrew launched the Spiritual Renovation initiative for St. Augustine's Parish, and, like any well orchestrated project, it began with asking the members of the parish what they felt was working

and what wasn't. More than 100 parishioners participated in the review process, and as you might expect, there were several ideas around making things better.

Among those that were the most oft repeated were things like improving the quality and clarity of the audio system in the church, adding better visual communication tools, improve and enhance the sense of a welcoming parish where everyone feels at home, making each Mass more meaningful and joyful in all areas of the liturgy, develop leadership in our ministries and provide outreach to the marginalized in our community.

Doing It Right

These are lofty goals to be sure, and to address them all properly, the parish leadership need two years or more. But the expectation is that we will all start to see change within a short time.

In order to most effectively and efficiently address these points, Father Andrew and the parish council discussed and agreed on assigning four specific areas of renovation work: Faith Formation, Liturgy, Community Life and Social Justice. Leaders and team members were assigned to each of these and began detailing task lists and work plans. You can read about the four work categories and their leaders in the "Meet the Construction Leaders" story in this issue.

According to Father Andrew, "The renovation will be an exciting time for our parish, perhaps pushing us outside our comfort zone a little, but ultimately resulting in a more vibrant, welcoming and socially active community."

Meet the Construction Leaders

EVELYN VOLLET
Team Lead



Evelyn has been a parishioner at St. Augustine's since 2012 and has been actively involved in the Eucharistic Ministry to the Homebound.

Although she has been a Catholic "since the cradle", her spiritual life has taken many turns. Her most significant spiritual growth came when her beloved mother became very ill and died in 2006. She was a significant influence on Evelyn. Apart from being a strong spiritual role model, she taught Evelyn the importance of contributing to your spiritual community with whatever gifts you have.

Evelyn's gifts are considerable. Professionally, she has extensive experience in project management, and is a contractor for the Archdiocese in Anti Human Trafficking Advocacy. She feels that she has been clearly called to lend those skills to the overall navigation of the Spiritual Renovation.

MARY ELLEN TURNBULL
Liturgy



Mary Ellen joined our parish in 1992. Soon after her arrival, she joined the 5:00 pm choir, and has been a dedicated member since. She's also an active member of the Parish Council and devotes significant time and talent to all things St. Augustine's.

As the leader of a choir, Mary Ellen knows how important it is to have all components working together to make a cohesive whole. She was a natural choice to head the Liturgy review for the Renovation. She's keenly aware of how vital it is to make the entire liturgy joyful and meaningful for the entire congregation.

Mary Ellen was involved in the music ministry long before she came to St. Augustine's, as early as age 12, in other parishes. Luckily for us, she made St. Augustine's her home. Even after moving to deepest, darkest Surrey, she continues to make the commute to West 7th.

PEGGY HO YUEN
Community Life



Peggy has been a member of our parish since 1986. But she wasn't always as actively involved as she is now. In those early years she attended Mass but didn't take her parish activity much further. Then,

when two parishioners suggested she join the Catholic Women's League, she accepted, and her life at St. Augustine's began to change.

Peggy is a naturally outgoing and friendly person, who is genuinely interested in the lives and values of others. She was a clear choice to lead the Community segment of our Renovation.

Her goal for this work is simple: a welcoming parish that motivates parishioners to become more involved and to provide avenues through which they can connect more meaningfully with the community. "Ultimately," says Peggy, "we want people to contribute in whatever ways are most comfortable for them."

Fr. Andrzej Stendzina: You Can Call Me Andrew.



Unless you're Polish, this will come as good news. Father Andrzej is not hung up on how people pronounce his name. In his words, "There are more important things in life." It's one of the many thoughtful outlooks he gained while living among the Metis and Dene people in Fort Simpson in the Northwest Territories. Andrew it is.

Andrew's grandfather owned a construction business in Lubliniec, a small town of 30,000 people in southern Poland. After the war, the communist party levied a 1000% increase in corporate taxes to stifle private enterprise. And so rather than join the family business, Andrew's father was forced into a career as a coal miner.

Andrew grew up in this communist environment, with martial law and curfews, and to this day finds things like Facebook and social media strange. In communist Poland, you didn't give out information about yourself for fear of what might be done with it. Even now he gets a little emotional reminder when he sees a police uniform. But today, after having lived more years in Canada than his native Poland, stories of his younger years flow freely.

Andrew, the oldest of the three Stendzina children, left home right after high school, and within two years had joined the Oblate seminary. He began five years of temporary vows, essentially a waiting period without commitment. At the end of five years both parties were committed and Andrew was deaconized.

First on the agenda was a move to Madagascar to join the Oblate mission there. Andrew was ready for the challenge and began learning French. But just when the plans seemed firmly in place, the Oblates made a decision to expand their mission in Canada. They began asking for volunteers. Andrew couldn't speak a word of English but was open to the possibilities a trip to Canada might bring.

Onward: Canada

By 1988 he was studying English at Toronto's Humber College, and within six months he was in Edmonton, awaiting his assignment. While Andrew's preference was to stay in the southern regions, his colleague, who accompanied him from the Polish seminary, wanted to go as far north as possible. In a bizarre administrative mix up, his colleague was assigned just north of Edmonton and Andrew to Fort Simpson in the Northwest Territories. He was convinced of the mix up when his plane ticket arrived with his colleague's name on it.

In 1988, getting on a plane with a ticket bearing someone else's name wasn't a problem.

Andrew was surprised by Fort Simpson's small population and harsh climate, and considered abandoning the mission but the warmth and friendship of the people there drew him in. In 1990, he became the first priest ordained in the Northwest Territories. His parents came from Poland for the ceremony, which took place at the altar where the Pope had met with the First Nations people. He stayed for the next six years.



A Tale of Two Fathers, after Fr. Andrew's 1st Mass.

His next 2 assignments were in Italy, then back to Edmonton, doing formation work for the Oblates. He found this task of reviewing and either accepting or rejecting new candidates into religious life emotionally difficult, so when the opportunity came to serve at the reserves around Edmonton, he jumped at it. He was responsible for six reserves, saying four Masses on Sunday and two on Saturday, with a lengthy drive between each. Through it all he remembered the advice his mother had given him years ago. "Remember, you are a guest". To this day, that's how Father Andrew treats his assignments. Listen and learn and be grateful to your hosts. Eventually you'll find ways you can contribute both culturally and spiritually.

In 2002, he was asked to join St. Albert's parish in Alberta, where a parish renewal was underway. Father Andrew enjoyed the twelve years he spent there. The parish was large, with 2500 families, and the renewal process was fascinating and enlightening.

The discussion turned to Vancouver. Although Father Andrew was long overdue for a sabbatical, there was an immediate need at St. Augustine's Parish in Vancouver, as their pastor, Father Terry, was quite ill.

Making Vancouver Home

Father Andrew has been here for more than three years. His father died 14 years ago. His mother is 84 and still lives in Poland, but he sees her once a year. "As long as she's with us, that's where my vacation time will be spent." His sister and brother both have families and live in Germany.

When Father Andrew first arrived in Vancouver, his pug, named Frank, helped him meet people. Frank has since died, and now he relies on his own social skills to meet people and make friends. He doesn't know when his next assignment is coming or where it will take him. In the meantime, the members of St. Augustine's parish are the lucky recipients of his spirit, generosity and kindness.

Meet the Construction Leaders (con't)

CLARA LUM Faith Formation



Clara could not have travelled much further, geographically and spiritually, to join our parish than she has. Born in the Fiji Islands, she was baptized a Catholic, but her upbringing did not include much in the way of Christian spiritual guidance.

With her arrival in Canada, her professional and personal life blossomed, but something was clearly missing. "A turning point came when my boss provided me with a copy of the youth catechism, 'Youcat'". Clara joined the RCIA at St. Augustine's and began her journey, driven by her passion to get closer to God.

Clara works with Sancta Maria House, where she implemented the Alpha course, teaching the basics of the Christian faith to the women in the home. Needless to say, Clara was resoundingly selected to lead the Faith Formation segment of our Renovation work.

EILEEN CERVI Social Justice



To say Eileen is an active member of St. Augustine's Parish is an understatement. Since arriving here in 1991, she has been co-ordinator and presider for the Children's Liturgy of the Word, facilitator

for Baptism Preparation, a member and co-chair of the steering committee for Pass the Torch, co-ordinator for the Advent Giving Tree for Covenant House, facilitator for the Youth Ministry and a member of the Parish Council.

Somehow she also finds time for her full time job as a teacher and Campus Minister at St. Patrick's Regional Secondary.

These roles provide the rewards that drive Eileen's generous spirit. Leading the Social Justice part of our renovation makes sense for her. "There's a lot of untapped desire within our parishioners to make a difference in the world. We need to help them accomplish that."