

September 2021  
Restoring Our Community Foundation  
The Old Catholic Church, Fort Benton, Mt.

Greetings!

I will begin with a brief background about the old church and the board. I apologize for not always being timely with information, one just needs to email or call me with any questions you might have.

We hold two meetings per year for the Foundation business in April and September. We discuss the projects that have been completed and the many others that need to be considered and moved forward. On the current board is Father Mohan, Terry DeBorde and Vicky O'Hara. Benefactors are an important part to all aspects of the foundation. We currently have about 15 supporting members. This is an annual membership of \$25.00, and gives you a vote when attending one of the board meetings in person. Please plan to attend and be an active help to keep this project alive. Many things are on the to-do list.

The roof was completed but not before a lot of damage was done to the interior of the church. It was a classic example of out of sight and out of mind. Once it was learned that some, on the Parish council, said they would like to tear it down for the hospital parking lot, several benefactors came forward to help complete the inside restoration. The cracks, falling ceiling and walls were repaired and stabilized. The bell tower was the most concerned and looks to be still moving. Around the whole church a membrane was laid to direct more of the water away from the downspouts. A water sprinkler system was installed for the grass and volunteers care for the lawn. The outside gables were painted, gaps and holes were screened to discourage the bats, new plexiglass was placed over the stained glass windows and a honey bee hive was removed. As of the summer of 2018, people were once again able to safely enter the old church and enjoy the restoration work that had been done.

New things:

- An old Organ was donated and it works.
- A new keyless entry was installed on the front door, the code to enter is the year the church was built. 1907.
- The front statue of Mary is illuminated over the door on a timer as well as the inside lights. This enhances the illumination of the stained glass windows, which are still beautiful. Plan to drive by the old church after dark, breathtaking!
- One issue this summer was the cost of connecting to the city water main once the hospital shut off our water supply for their parking lot, the cost was \$6,000.00, ouch! We didn't see that coming. Which now means the rain gutter repair will be put on hold.

- The basement will need cement poured to stabilize the front two corners to keep the front of the church and bell tower from moving.
- The bat entrances need another dose of screens to discourage entrance.
- The gold stenciling still needs to be applied on the walls, looking for an artsy person to do this job.
- Need to have someone take a look at the bell tower to see if the bell is secured. It was mentioned that the last person up there said the bell housing was crumbling. No one knows if any work was done to the bell supports when the roof was repaired.

The list can go on and on but you get the idea. Your continued help and support as well as input is always appreciated.

The most exciting and best news yet!! Years ago Father Erickson sold some of the artifacts from the old church, one of which was the sacristy light from the altar. This precious relic has returned home, as in the Prodigal Son. We believed we would never see it again other than hanging in a bar in downtown Fort Benton. John Diekhans and several others were instrumental in the Sacristy lights return. To celebrate we will be having a parish pot luck the first Sunday of October after the 11am Mass. Please plan to join us for the celebration of the return of the "Prodigal Son."

We are currently looking for pictures to locate where the Sacristy light was originally hanging. No one seems to remember its location at the Altar. Let me know if you can help with this issue.

The September meeting is planned for Tuesday September 28th at 5pm.

Thank you for your continued encouragement, thoughts and prayers.

Blessings,

Vicky O'Hara cell # 406-899-4529