

Parish Update, June 12, 2011

I am pleased to update you on our work on the campaign for the Center at St. Thomas, particularly our community-facing efforts. As we did for our campaign within the parish, we have hired a professional consultant to assist with these efforts, and her guidance, connections, and support are invaluable. With Tracy's assistance, we have pursued ongoing efforts falling into three main categories: (1) building partnerships with community non-profits, (2) meeting and educating potential donors, and (3) preparing applications for foundation grants.

As you may have read in the June Collect, we are building on our experience in partnering with community organizations, such as the Boys Scouts and Alcoholics Anonymous, as we look toward construction of the new Center.

We continue to engage in exciting conversations with the Bellevue Boys and Girls Club about offering their services in the Center during times when the Church is not using the facility. As you know, the bulk of parish activities in the current Great Hall occur on Sunday and in the evenings, leaving large portions of the building unused during weekday hours, particularly in the late afternoon. This provides a great opportunity for a respected and skilled organization like the Boys and Girls Club to offer after-school enrichment programs – in math, science, technology and the arts – that will serve the needs of our parish families, St. Thomas School families, and other young people in our neighborhood. And of course we look to further strengthen our existing relationships with Alcoholics Anonymous, the Boy Scouts, and Congregations for the Homeless, while continuing to explore new partnerships with other non-profit organizations that support our mission of outreach and service to the community.

Partnering with groups like the Boys and Girls Club, who can bring turnkey operations, ensures that the new Center will be well utilized while our parish resources – human and financial – remain invested in the core mission of our ministry. And, we hope that as people unfamiliar with St. Thomas come to the Center, they will learn more about our work as a parish and the opportunities for reflection and worship within the church. But even if these community members don't worship with us on Sundays, serving them through our new facility will be a way to live out our mission and will reinforce the bonds of our parish community.

Simultaneous with our discussions with partners that might use the Center, Lex and others are meeting with potential donors – including local corporations and charities, families with a historic connection to the parish, and friends and neighbors recommended by parishioners – about opportunities to support this exciting project. The generous campaign giving from within our parish – which has impressed a number of potential donors with whom we have spoken – shows our commitment to making the vision of the Center a reality, and provides an essential foundation for our community engagement efforts.

We are also in the process of submitting proposals to a number of local foundations. These proposals also highlight both the deep commitment of the parish and the opportunities for the new Center to serve our entire community.

We feel very good about the reception we are getting as we engage with these potential donors and foundations. However, we do realize that it may feel like the process is moving slowly in contrast to our rapidly successful parish fundraising last fall. But given that people outside the St. Thomas community are not familiar with our plans for the Center (or our current work), we must take the time needed to share our plans and excitement, listen to their feedback, and then engage in a dialogue about how they

can help build this much-needed community asset. Many of us within the parish needed to be educated before we understood and were inspired by the full opportunity offered by the new Center, and the same is true of potential donors in the community. Based on the level of interest and engagement we are seeing as we reach out to the community, we feel strongly that these efforts remain worthwhile and are worth the investment of time and energy.

As we continue to move forward with our planning and our fundraising, we will not only keep you informed but would appreciate your thoughts. Please do not hesitate to contact me or members of the clergy or Vestry with your ideas and suggestions.

And let us all continue to keep in mind that the new Center, in whatever form the Lord guides us to create it, will provide much needed and wonderful space for our youth ministry, parish celebrations, and community outreach. Your early investment in this project has brought us to this exciting point, and your continued prayers, support, and enthusiasm will see us through to wherever the Lords intends us to be. Thank you.