

**Sacred Heart Parish**

26 Wintonbury Ave.  
Bloomfield, CT 06002

July 19, 2024

Dear Sacred Heart Family,

Two months ago, I wrote you all a letter outlining the renovation work in the choir loft. At the end of the letter I hinted that there were more projects coming soon to care for the Sacred Heart campus. Now is the time to inform you of the rest of the work in the church.

I have been planning a renovation / improvement of the church building for quite some time. These improvements were contingent on the work in the choir loft and the location of the music ministry. The larger renovation will address three elements of the church building: 1) the flooring in the church, 2) the layout of the pews, 3) and the arrangement of the sanctuary.

The church has the original vinyl tile from 1963. While the aisles and the sanctuary are carpeted, the original tile is visible underneath the pews. This tile has far exceeded its usable life. It is dirty, scratched, discolored, and the glue that holds it to the floor has begun to release. On top of that, the tile and the glue both contain asbestos, and their decay needs to be addressed. In consultation with the archdiocese, trustees, and finance council, we have decided that now is a good opportunity to remove the old tile and to abate the church building of the hazardous materials. The old tile will be properly disposed of, and we will install a new floor in the church. The new floor is going to be made of slip resistant porcelain tile that will resemble the look and feel of stone. It is very durable, low maintenance, and aesthetically pleasing. The entire church – nave, sanctuary, and aisles – will be tiled. The center aisle will also receive an attractive design.

Our pews are spaced very closely together. They are located 29” apart – the standard is around 35”. This makes the pews, especially when the church is full, uncomfortably tight. There is no room to kneel without putting the kneeler in the pew behind you down. There is no space to enter a pew if someone is sitting on the aisle. Finally, when someone sits directly in front of you, it seems like you are almost breathing on their neck. Additionally, the front row does not have an end with a kneeler so that no one uses the first row for seating. This project will respace the pews so that they are around 35” apart, construct a front for the front row, and clean the pews / refurbish the kneelers. This will make the church much more “user friendly” and hospitable, especially at larger masses.

The sanctuary needs to be more properly ordered. I have never been comfortable with the presider's chair occupying the most prominent position in the church. Our sanctuary is large but not effectively structured toward worship. This plan will move the presider's chair near to where the cantor is stationed. The altar and the tabernacle will be placed on top of the steps – both for clear sightlines and for a clear motion towards the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The front step of the sanctuary will be cut back so that it is even with the walls and does not jut out at the odd angles that it currently does. (Cutting the sanctuary back is also the reason we can respace the pews without losing any seating capacity).

This is a significant renovation. It will greatly improve our church for worship and prayer. The worn-out elements will be replaced. The pews will be repaired. The archbishop has given his approval for this major project, which is a promising investment in the future of Sacred Heart Parish.

This renovation will be funded in part from a generous bequest to the parish and from our endowment. After the work is done, I will ask you to be the judge of its worthiness in our annual collection. It is a blessing that we have the capability to be able to finance this project.

Now, it will require a sacrifice of time and space. Abating the vinyl floors takes time – the pews will have to be removed, the church tented and protected, the flooring will be removed, and the air quality will be tested before continuing. After that, it will also take time to install the new flooring. Throughout this period, we will not be able to use the church building for Mass and prayer. Rather, weekday Masses and the reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist will take place in the chapel. Weekend Masses will take place in Fr. Picher Hall. All told, the work is estimated to take eight weeks to complete. My goal is to finish the work before we get to busier parts of the year. The work is scheduled to begin in two weeks with weekend Masses beginning in Fr. Picher Hall on the weekend of August 4<sup>th</sup>. It is a sacrifice to move out of the church building, but I believe this is a sacrifice that will bear great fruit.

Thank you all for your support and I will be happy to answer any questions along the way.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Michael". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Fr. Michael