

Cathedral Ceiling Damage Update, August 25

The maintenance committee has had two inspections of the sanctuary ceiling by the engineering firm Wiss, Janney, Elstner & Associates, a large, nation-wide, company specializing in structural and architectural analysis of construction-related problems. We are waiting for their report and recommendations on how to test the remainder of the ceiling and recommendation on how to repair. This report is expected any day (it is already late).

In our discussion with the engineering firm, the plaster had slow growing cracks emanating from ceiling cutouts, such as lights and ducts that separated the plaster from the underlying lath board. They have seen this failure before in buildings of this vintage (120 years old). From these discussions and discussions with other contractors, this is the current expectation of how the repair work will proceed.

1. Protect all items in the church that could be damaged by a falling chunk of plaster including the Bishop's Throne, altar screen, pulpit, and stained glass. Some of these will have hard enclosures built.
2. Erect scaffolding under the entire high portion of the ceiling
3. Test the structural integrity of the plaster across the entire ceiling.
 - If an area has a good bond, install mechanical supports to prevent future problems
 - If an area has cracked away from the lath board, remove the damaged plaster
4. Replaster both the area that has fallen and areas where cracked plaster was removed. Several coats of plaster will be required. The newly plastered areas will use modern steel lath panels which provides much better structural support.
5. Paint the ceiling
6. Remove scaffolding and all protective enclosures and coverings.
7. Clean dust from the entire church.

We have been doing much of the groundwork in preparation of the final direction from the engineering report. Two scaffolding companies have been on-site to review the requirements and have provided quotes. We have also had contractors on-site who could provide the plastering and painting.

We don't know how expensive the repair will be. It will depend on how large the required repair area will be and the specifics of the repair contained in the engineering report. But we do know it will be very expensive; the scaffolding alone will cost more than \$75,000. To start financing the project, St. Nicholas Cathedral has a healthy balance in the Building Fund plus the income earned from the Foundation Fund could be appropriated for this project. Beyond that, we are exploring other financing options including obtaining a mortgage, initiating a fundraising campaign, and principal withdrawals from the Foundation Fund.

The spiritual and social life of the parish will continue as usual during this church repair. Divine Liturgy has been in the small hall. All Religious and Greek Education classes and youth activities are proceeding as usual in September. And the church picnic is going forward on September 11. That said, we will expedite the repair process as much as possible, while ensuring that we have a ceiling that will easily last the next 100 years.

Parish Council