

Cathedral Ceiling Damage Update, September 13

The repair project has started! On Monday, crews from NIKO Contracting Co. started the work to protect the numerous fragile surfaces in the church. Below are some pictures from this week's work to date. The stained-glass windows will also be covered. This work is being done to provide an extra level of protection to our architectural and sacred items. The wall-to-wall scaffolding is intended to catch the falling plaster chunks, but we are preparing for the worse.



Protective covering over altar screen, Bishop's Throne and marble floor



Protection over carpet, Baptismal font, carpet. Nektarios Icon removed from church



Pews wrapped. Scaffolding will stand between pews.



Choir loft covered

Last week, Parish Council decided to proceed with the first two steps of the project: protecting the contents of the church and erecting the scaffolding. We still have not received the full engineering report from Wiss, Janney, Elstner & Associates (WJE) as desired, but they have been providing repair procedures, drawings, and cost and schedule estimates piecemeal. This has given us enough confidence that the first two steps are not going to change. Plus, WJE did commit to their damage inspection service in late September, after the scaffolding is erected. (Ironically, WJE is very busy with the restoration project now happening at Heinz Chapel.)

Erection of the scaffolding will start Tuesday, September 20 and take the rest of the week. Additional protection will be completed after the scaffolding is set-up.

Based on the information currently known, we estimate the total repair cost to be about \$400,000. However, the actual cost will depend on how large the required repair area will be and the specifics of the repair procedures. Our parish has the funds available for these first two steps from the balance in the Building Fund and the 2021 Foundation Fund income. Beyond that, we are exploring other financing options including obtaining a mortgage or other loan, fundraising, and principal withdrawals from the Foundation Fund. We would deeply appreciate donations toward this repair project. This was an unforeseen event, but an event that that our community can overcome. Between the parish's current financial resources and the generosity of our parishioners, we can accomplish the repair and end up with a better facility than we had before.

Progress of the repair project will be reported frequently. If you would like more detail on the repair effort, feel free to ask Vic Bertolina, Jim Machin, or Van Paras during any coffee hour.

Parish Council

The information below was part of the last update notice and is included for your reference.

Cause of the problem - 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).

Steps for the restoration - From the above 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 windows.
2. Erect scaffolding under the entire ceiling to provide access for testing and repair
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 than the old wood lath boards.
5. Paint the ceiling
6. Remove scaffolding and all protective enclosures and coverings.
7. Clean dust from the entire church.