

2019-2022

CAMPAGNE DE
SOLLICITATION

Ascension
of Our Lord
Parish

CAPITAL
CAMPAIGN



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ST. ANNE IN 1892

ST. ANNE IN 1892

Dear Supporters of Ascension Parish,

Our Capital Campaign to raise necessary funds for major repairs, refurbishments, and upgrades to the church was launched on May 26, 2019. It was an opportune moment, the timing was right, because less than ten months later the world was thrust precipitously into an unrelenting global pandemic. This affected us all, including houses of worship and Ascension Parish.

The response to the Campaign has been phenomenal, and the generosity and support of parishioners and benefactors incredible. We have exceeded our objective, and pledges made have been promptly honoured. The primary work projects, including the Bell Tower, repointing of the stone, replacement of the floor covering under the pews, the repair and restoration of the Casavant Opus 1344, are now completed.

With the remaining funds generated by the Campaign, we are fortunate to have been able to augment our parish reserve fund, which will allow us to undertake future projects and sustain the building which is approaching its centennial.

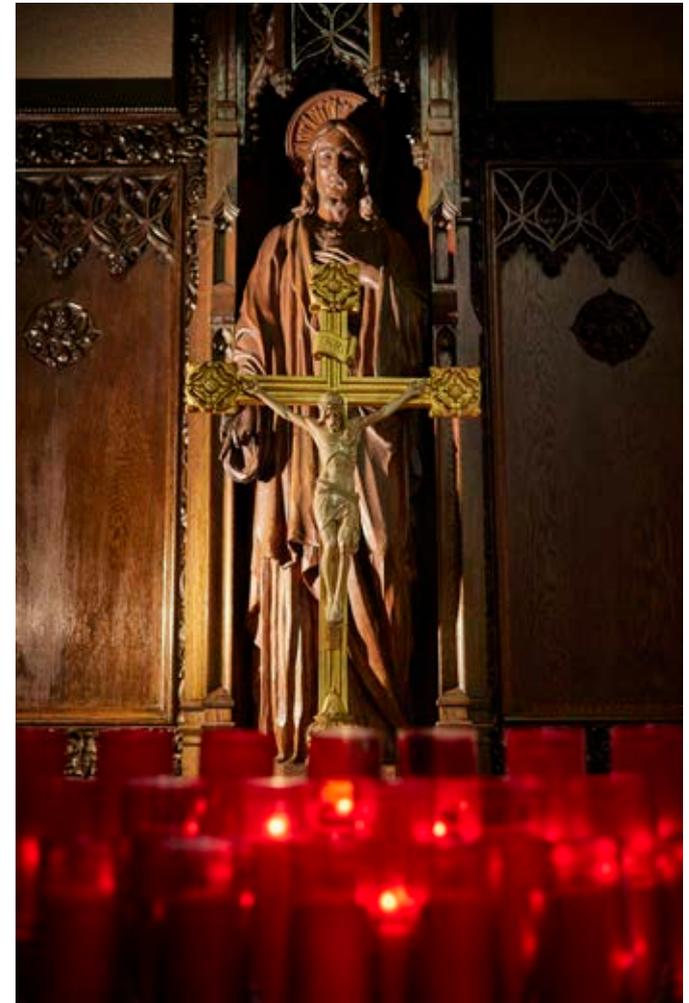
We are immensely grateful to all our parishioners, benefactors, former parishioners, various organizations and foundations, and friends of Ascension Parish, who responded to our Campaign with generosity and enthusiasm.

We wish to express our deep appreciation to Campaign co-chairs John Peacock and Barbara Cefis, and to the members of the Campaign Coordinating Committee, for their indomitable and cooperative spirit, and their combined efforts which contributed to the success of the Campaign and allowed us to surpass our objective.

With reliance on our Ascended Lord, and the continual prayers and support of all who call Ascension Parish their spiritual and faith community, we can look to the future with much optimism and pride, and find in this church a place of solace, spiritual fulfillment, and a haven of fervour and solemnity.

In gratitude, respectfully I remain,

Father Lawrence Mac Eachen, Pastor



Oratory of the Sacred Heart

A unique monument with a rich spiritual, social and architectural legacy

1926

A group of Irish Catholic residents of Westmount, who had been worshipping at a local French parish, appeal to the Archbishop of Montreal, the Most Reverend Paul Bruchési, for authorization to establish their own parish church.

Their request is turned down by the archbishop, but the dauntless group of citizens set their sights on the Vatican, where, in time, they obtain Papal permission and return home triumphantly to build their new house of worship.

Ascension of Our Lord Church will be celebrating its centennial during the Christmas season of 2028, only six years from now.

A parish which came into existence only after the Irish Catholic residents of Westmount successfully petitioned the Pope in Rome, Ascension of Our Lord has made its mark these ninety-four years. Its distinct architecture and aesthetic grace and its sacred music ministry, anchored by the church's unique Casavant Opus 1344 and polyphonic choir, have made it a haven of peace and solemnity for parishioners and visitors alike.

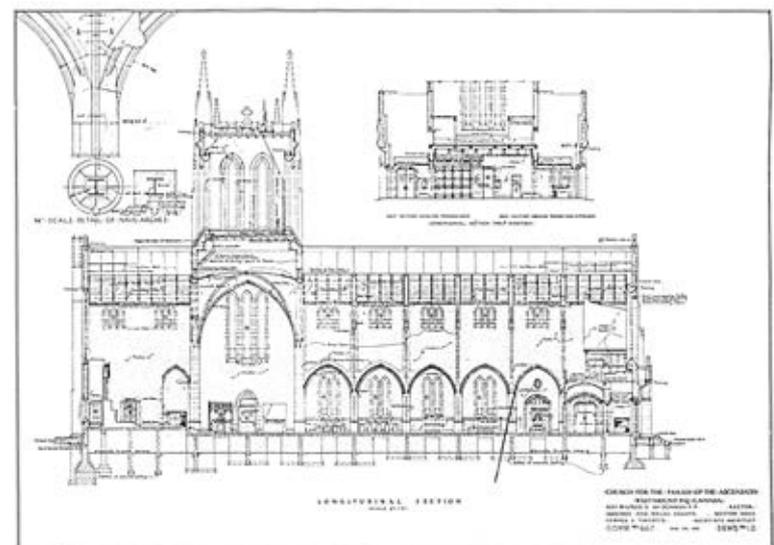
The perseverance, vision and responsibility of the founding wardens of 1926 have stayed with the Ascension Parish over the decades. The founding wardens who built this magnificent structure successfully engaged its parishioners in the project. Succeeding generations of wardens and parishioners have followed suit, assuring the proper care and maintenance of the church so it can best serve the parish and the community.



Laying of cornerstone, 1927

1927-28

Having found and purchased a sizeable tract of land from the Grey Nuns on Sherbrooke Street between Clarke and Kitchener Avenues, the trustees raise the more than \$325,000 required to construct the stately 13,500 sq.ft. Ascension of Our Lord parish church. The cornerstone is laid in October 1927, and the first Mass is celebrated in an almost-completed church on Christmas in 1928.



Longitudinal profile, 1927 (Westmount Archives)

Ascension Parish held its first capital campaign in 1988.

The motive for that campaign is succinctly explained in the opening pages of the donor recognition booklet that has been placed on the kneeler before the oratory of the Sacred Heart on the northeastern wall of the church, immediately to the left of the main Sherbrooke Street entrance.

“Originally constructed in 1928, by 1985 the church, although well-maintained, faced major restoration. Moisture was seeping through the masonry, virtually all the stained glass windows required resetting, and the organ had deteriorated to the point where rebuilding was necessary. After technical studies and two years of preparation, the wardens launched a campaign to raise \$500,000 in fall 1987. By January 1988, the objective had been oversubscribed.”

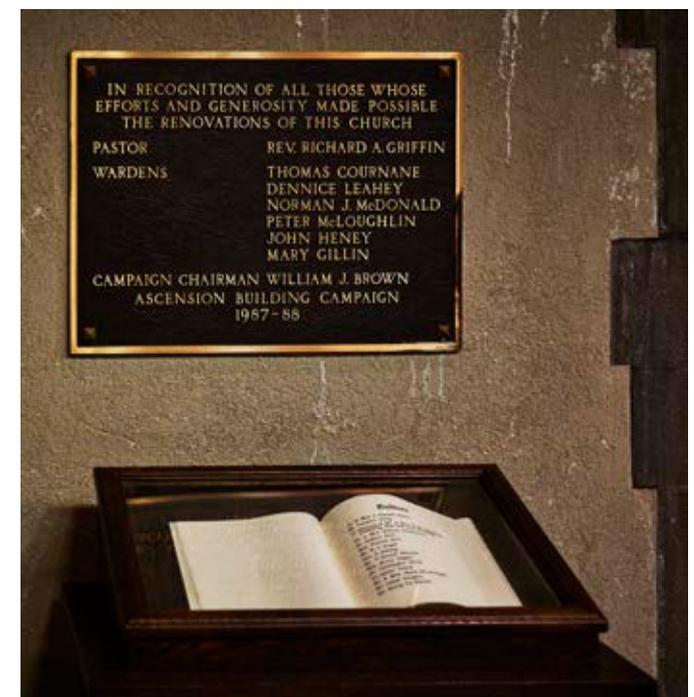
Thirty-four years later, Ascension of Our Lord Parish launched the second capital campaign of its ninety-one-year history. Architectural structures of this size and instruments of patrimonial significance require constant attention which the pastors and wardens of the Ascension did their best to assure in the years between the two campaigns. Nonetheless, as the years passed, issues requiring capital improvement surfaced and it became more and more apparent that they had to be addressed.

The most important of these was the Bell Tower, whose interior structure had rusted considerably due to infiltration. Inside the church, the pews required refurbishment and the original linoleum tiling under the pews was lifting and in need of replacement. Finally, the Opus 1344 Casavant organ required no less than a heart and lung transplant, its console and blower and bellows exhausted by usage and time. The wardens had been discussing these issues since 2015 and were in agreement that something had to be done. But the question was – where, and how to begin?

Ascension of Our Lord is not immune to the toll of time

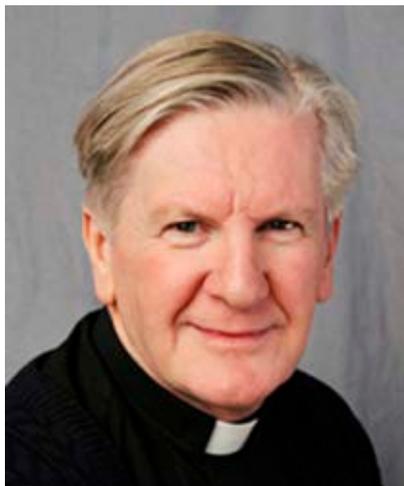


Masonry repair, 1986



Plaque and book with donor names near the oratory of the Sacred Heart in recognition of the 1987-88 Ascension Building Campaign.

The Campaign Story



SEPTEMBER 2015

Father Lawrence Mac Eachen becomes our new pastor.



JUNE 2018

The Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec grants the parish \$385,000 towards the completion of the Bell Tower project, conditional on the work being carried out within two years.

“Opus 1344 is one of a few Casavant (organs) of this period still in existence in the world, and is truly unique in Montreal. Such an instrument restored will be a great asset in the city.”

— Jacquelin Rochette, Artistic Director, Casavant Frères

Faced with the safety issues posed by the Bell Tower situation, newly named pastor Father Lawrence Mac Eachen called upon his experience in other parishes that had faced similar challenges and set about to initiate the work required.

He called upon architect Louis Brillant and, with his help, prepared a request for funding to the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec and submitted it in early 2018. Father Mac Eachen announced to the wardens in June 2018 that the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec had reviewed his funding proposal favourably and granted the parish \$385,000 to help it undertake and complete the Bell Tower project estimated at \$750,000. However, the balance required, \$365,000, would have to be provided by the parish. This turned out to be the spark required to have the wardens proceed with a capital campaign to complete the funding required for the Bell Tower repairs, and to finally address the other major projects requiring attention.

In fall 2018, the wardens actively began to prepare for the Campaign and as such, assumed the role of Campaign Coordinating Committee.

Janet and Dick Macklem, whose presence in and generosity to Ascension Parish have known no limits over the decades, were invited to join the committee and accepted, much to the wardens' delight. Several questions required immediate attention. What was the estimated overall cost of the projects proposed? What would be the Campaign's overall financial objective? And, who would lead this campaign?

The costs for the Bell Tower project were in hand and estimates for work that was required inside the church were quickly sought and received. As for the organ, there was discussion as to how much restoration and replacement should be done. In early December 2018, the Committee agreed to seek counsel from Professor John Grew, FRCCO, C.M., who had just recently joined Ascension Parish. Professor Emeritus and former Dean of McGill's Schulich School of Music, Professor Grew's international renown was key to his foundation of the International Organ Competition (CIOC) in 2008. This competition is held every two years here in Montreal and has drawn wide acclaim from the international organ community.

As for the repair and restoration of the parish's Casavant Opus 1344, one of the last organs on which the Casavant brothers worked, Professor Grew's recommendation was quick, decisive, and enthusiastically supportive of proceeding with the phased work plan proposed by Casavant, the organ's builders. He also encouraged the wardens to submit a request for funding to the Comité des orgues of the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec. Thus, the decision was made to include in the Campaign Table of Needs the first two phases of the organ restoration plan proposed by Casavant organ restoration, i.e., the replacement of the console and of the blowers and bellows.



THE NEED FOR THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

CHURCH TOWER REPAIR & REHABILITATION \$365,000

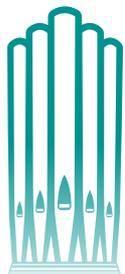


EXTERIOR & INTERIOR REFURBISHMENT \$325,000

Replacement of original tile flooring: \$75,000

Refinishing the church pews: \$100,000

Masonry repair and replacement: \$150,000



REPAIR & RESTORATION: CASAVANT ORGAN \$310,000

Blower and Bellows: \$60,000

Console replacement: \$250,000

TOTAL CAMPAIGN TARGET \$1,000,000

With the support of Father Mac Eachen, the wardens set the Campaign objective at one million dollars, and quickly moved to the next and very important step of conducting the research required to reach that objective.

Who were the potential donors? How much could the Campaign Coordinating Committee reasonably ask each of them to contribute? Who was best positioned to approach these individuals? How would the Committee inform the parishioners and prospective campaign donors in a compelling and convincing manner?

With the help of David Boucher, the wardens prepared and compiled a prospective donor list that indicated that the million-dollar objective was indeed attainable. Aware that committed donors are the best campaign solicitors, the wardens then resolved to make their personal pledges towards the Campaign. Fortified by the donor prospect list and the commitments made by the wardens, and with their full support, Father Mac Eachen then approached parishioners John Peacock and Barbara Cefis to solicit their participation as Campaign co-chairs. Both Mr. Peacock and Ms. Cefis graciously and generously agreed, and joined the wardens as co-chairs of the Campaign Coordinating Committee. By Christmas 2018, the foundations for proceeding with the Capital Campaign were in place.

Revitalizing an iconic symbol of our spirit and heritage



PASTOR

Father Lawrence Mac Eachen

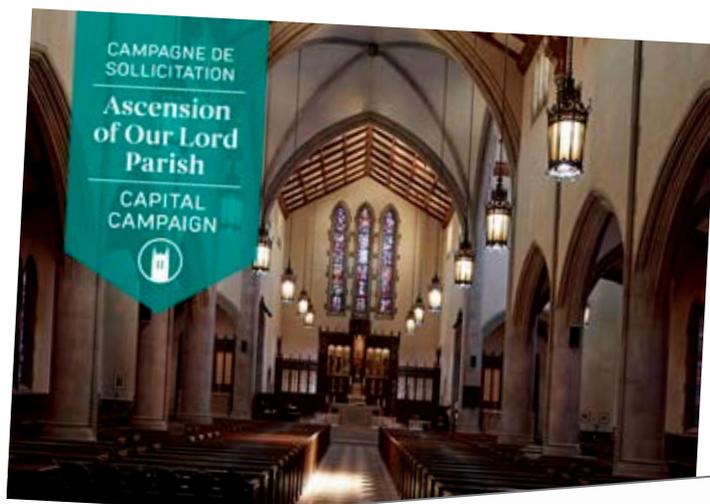
CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRS

Barbara Cefis
John Peacock

CAMPAIGN COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Donat Taddeo, Committee Chair
Bonnie Auger
Andrea Bobkowicz
Pino Di Ioia
Dick Macklem
Janet Macklem
Louise Mac Lellan

Campaign materials are created



APRIL-MAY 2019

Posters are created and displayed at the church entrance. They illustrate the Campaign objectives for the Bell Tower, the organ, and the church exterior, interior and stained glass windows.

Sara Morley of Design Postimage is hired to develop the visual identity and print materials for the Capital Campaign, in collaboration with the Campaign Coordinating Committee.

Photographer Christian Fleury takes dramatic photos of the parish for the Campaign documents.

On April 30, an article is printed in the Westmount Independent, "Ascension of Our Lord sets \$1-million fundraising target."

In early January 2019, the Campaign Coordinating Committee began to discuss the communications plan for the campaign.

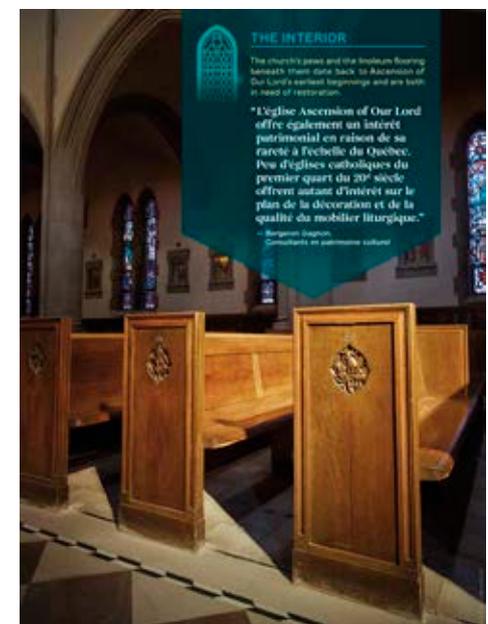
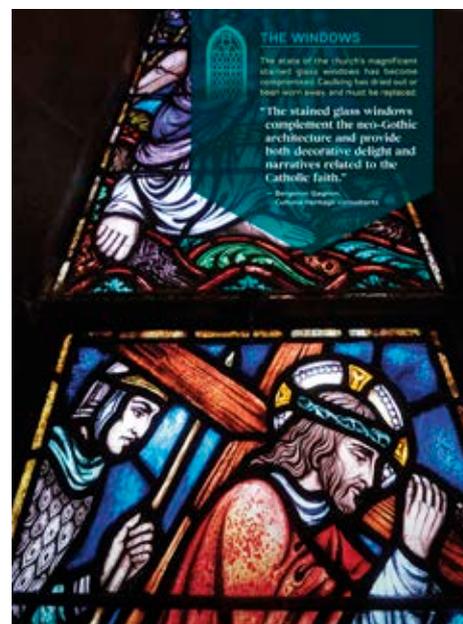
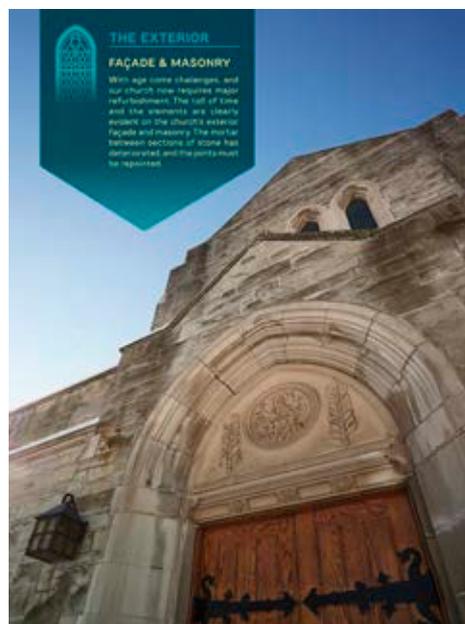
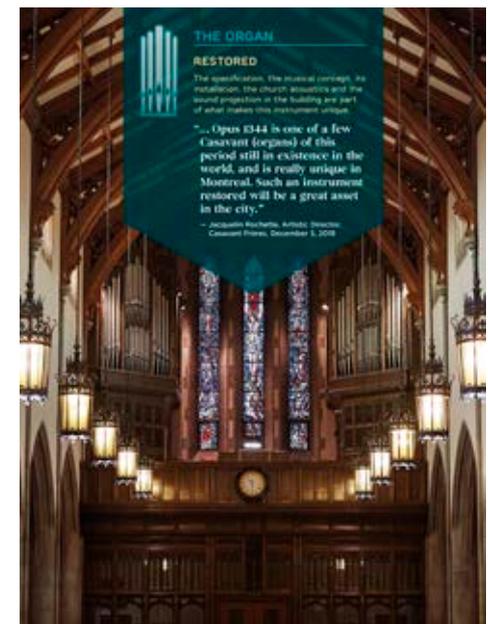
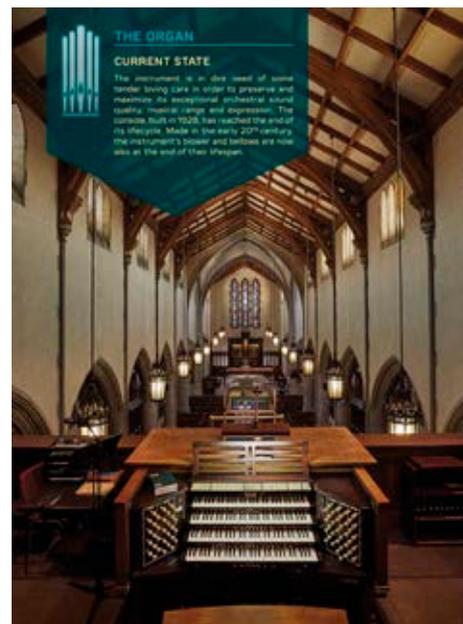
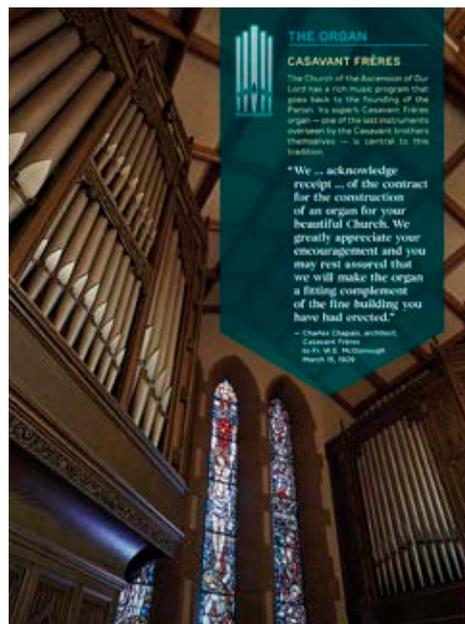
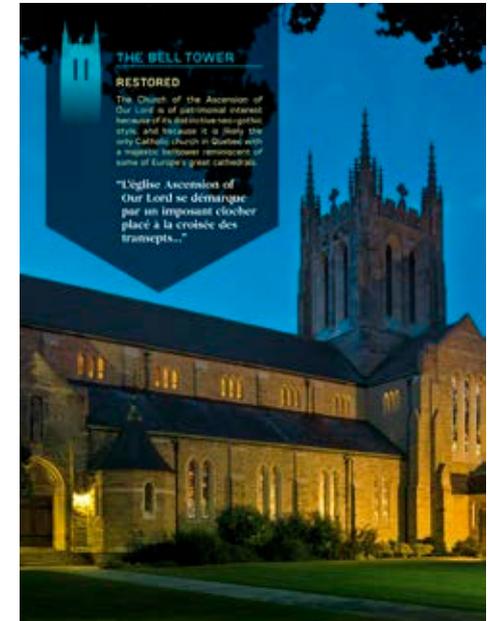
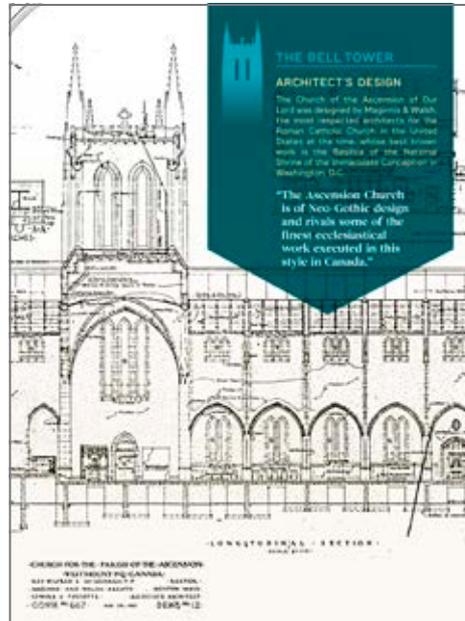
A Case for Support was commissioned and delivered and provided the basis for the Campaign brochure. Photos of the church, interior and exterior, and of the organ, were also commissioned and were put to good use in the campaign brochure, the campaign website – and the poster campaign.

Posters were placed at the church entrance every two weeks between mid-March and mid-May 2019, with photos and texts outlining the work to be done. The first three posters covered the interior of the Bell Tower and the church's exterior, the next three described the organ project, and the final three explained the work that was needed on the interior of the church.

These posters were key in informing parishioners and explaining the aims of the Capital Campaign. They prepared the parish for the Campaign launch held May 26, 2019, to which all parishioners were invited personally via postcard.



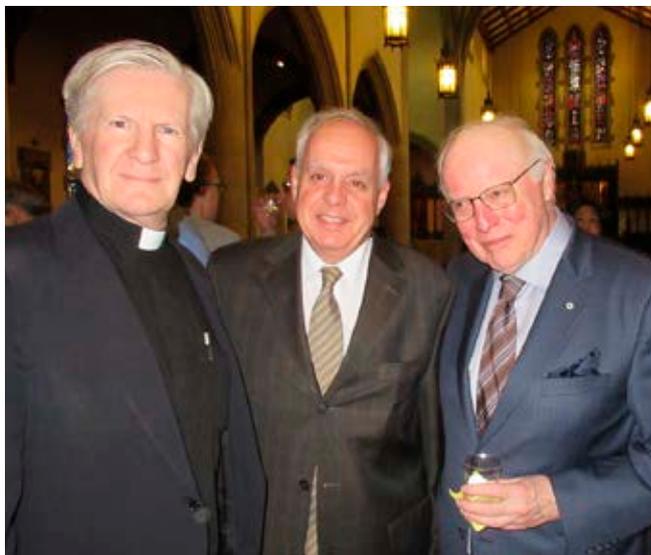
Father Mac Eachen and Donat Taddeo
(Martin C. Barry, Westmount Independent)



Campaign is launched



Campaign co-chairs John Peacock and Barbara Cefis at the Campaign launch.
(Veronica Redgrave, Westmount Independent)



Father Lawrence Mac Eachen, Jacquelin Rochette and John Grew at the Campaign launch.
(Veronica Redgrave, Westmount Independent)

May 26, 2019 was a bright and warm Sunday morning. Campaign Launch proceedings began immediately after the 10:30 am Mass.

There was a brief presentation of the Campaign by co-chair John Peacock; Professor John Grew addressed the congregation with regard to the importance and uniqueness of Ascension's Casavant Opus 1344 organ, and Dr. Clarence Epstein, heritage specialist and a member of Westmount's Historical Heritage Committee, explained the special place of Ascension Church in the history of Montreal's religious architecture.

Dr. David Szanto, Director of Music and Organist, and the Ascension Choir graced the event with their performances. A vin d'honneur followed to close the launch event.



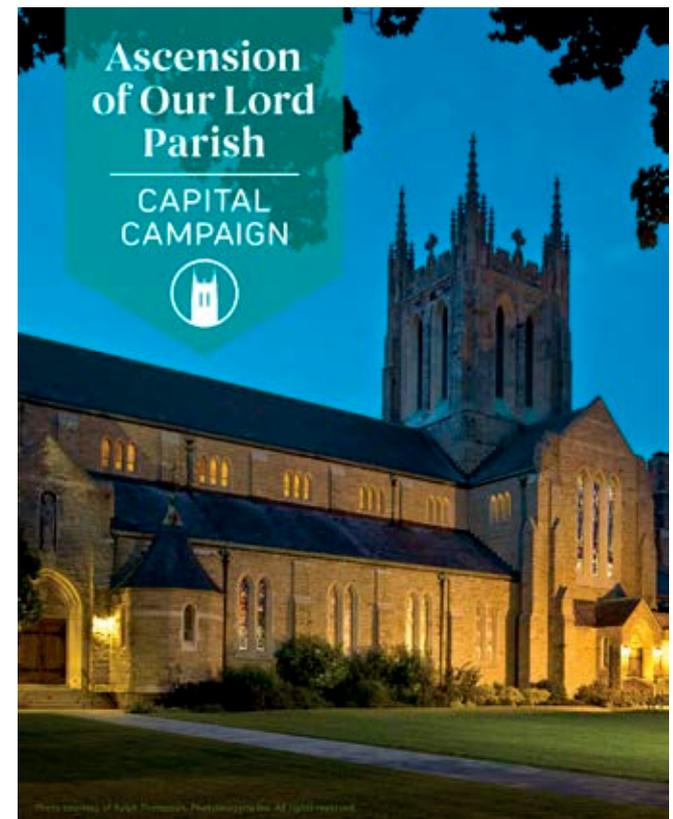
The moment came to carry out all the plans that had been made over the previous months.

In the days immediately following the launch, a letter of solicitation signed by Father Mac Eachen and the Campaign co-chairs, along with campaign brochures and pledge forms, were mailed to all parishioners. Campaign Coordinating Committee members then began the personal solicitation of the donors each had agreed to approach.

“ In actual fact, Ascension of Our Lord is a mirror that reflects who we are. It is a vibrant manifestation of our deepest identity. Thus, by joining hands and hearts together to infuse new vitality into our church, we will be breathing new life into our entire faith community.

The challenge of preservation provides us all with a privileged opportunity to contribute to the legacy of our community and to pass our rich heritage on to future generations as it was bestowed upon us. I pray that, through our generous, collective support of our proposed capital campaign, our magnificent parish church will continue to stand for years to come as a glorious symbol of God’s enduring love and presence among us.”

— Father Lawrence Mac Eachen, Pastor



MAY-JUNE 2019

The Capital Campaign is launched after Sunday Mass on May 26 with a goal of raising \$1,000,000.

A handsome booklet detailing the Campaign goals and pledge forms are sent to parishioners.

On June 11, an article is printed in the Westmount Independent, “Ascension of Our Lord Church kicks off fundraising campaign.”

Campaign goal is stretched



NOVEMBER 2019

A sign is installed on the front lawn to thank and encourage parishioners to donate.

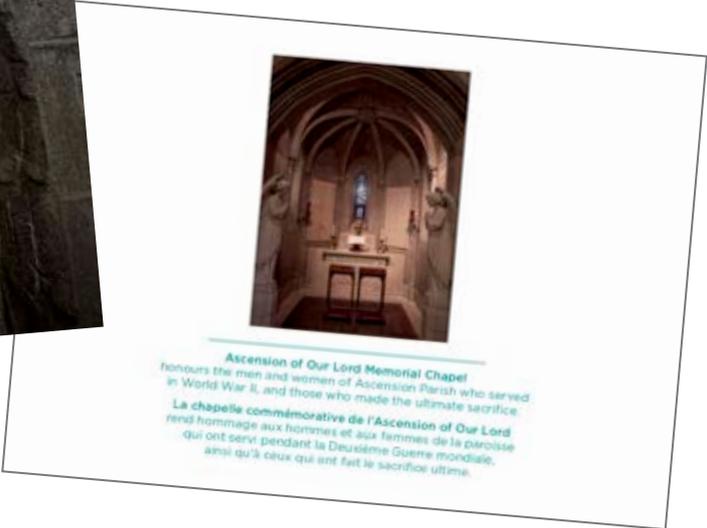
Thank-you cards are sent to all who donate to the Campaign.

The response from the parishioners and friends of Ascension Parish was very quick and encouraging.

The Campaign was given an incredible boost in July 2019 when a parishioner who wished to remain anonymous donated \$375,000 to the Campaign effort. By the end of September 2019, barely four months after the Campaign launch, the donations pledged exceeded \$900,000. The Campaign Coordinating Committee quickly realized that the extraordinary donation had to be leveraged, providing an incentive to those who had not yet made a donation to participate in the Campaign.

In early October 2019, co-chairs John Peacock and Barbara Cefis addressed the parishioners at the weekend Masses.

“ Given the extraordinary gift that we received, the Campaign Coordinating Committee has decided to stretch the Campaign goal to 1.3 million dollars. Not to do so would be to take the easy way out and fail to honour properly the outstanding generosity of this donor. In addition to being a wonderful example of selfless giving for us all, this exceptional donation is motivation for all of us to do more, not less. That is why we have set a new goal for the Campaign and are committed to reaching it. By raising the Campaign goal to 1.3 million dollars, we will provide the parish with a contingency fund to address unforeseen repairs and renovations.”



Campaign objective is surpassed

Almost a year after this appeal, the Campaign Coordinating Committee issued a campaign update in September 2020, announcing that the stretch objective of \$1,300,000 had been achieved, and indeed surpassed.

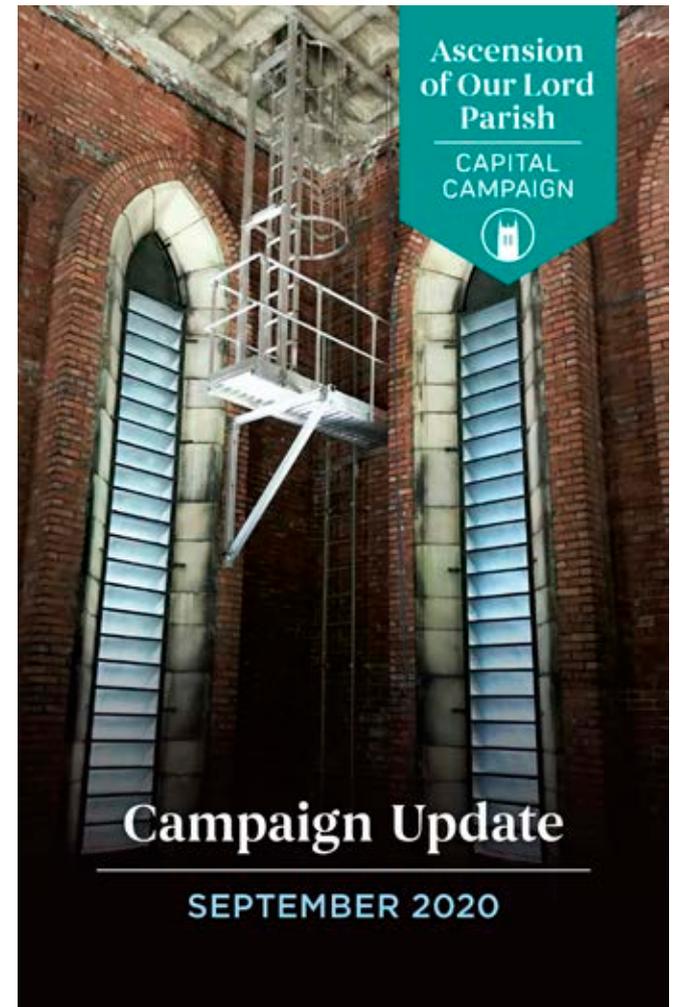
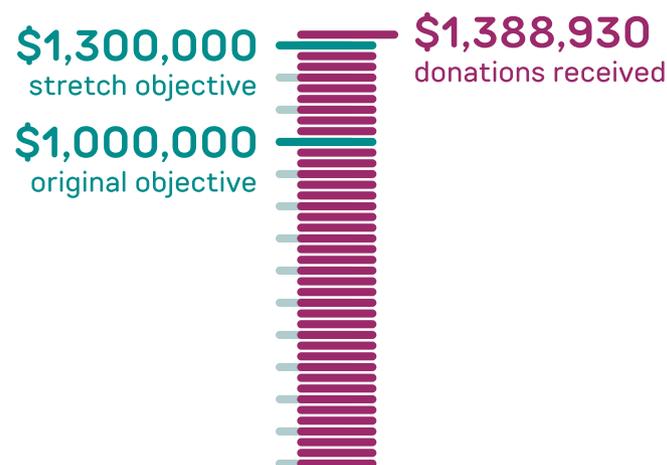
Commitments now totalled \$1,354,105, of which 82% (\$1,113,260) had already been paid. Equally important, the parishioner participation rate was at almost 50%.

As mentioned previously, at the urging of Professor John Grew, Ascension Parish had submitted funding requests to the Comité des orgues of the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec in February 2019, and they submitted again in February 2020. On both occasions, the funding proposals were turned down. Buoyed by the support for the Campaign and the work commissioned and almost completed to replace the organ console as well as the instrument's bellows and blower, in February 2021 Ascension Parish once again submitted a request for support to the Comité des orgues to help complete the organ restoration.

In June 2021, the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec informed Father Mac Eachen that on the recommendation of its Comité des orgues, the Conseil had awarded \$176,000 to Ascension Parish for the overall restoration of its Casavant Opus 1344 organ.

As the Capital Campaign came to a close, the donations received totalled \$1,388,930, clearly surpassing the stretch objective of \$1,300,000.

These donations were augmented by grants from the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec totalling \$409,852. All told, \$1,798,782 was amassed for the capital projects of Ascension of Our Lord Church. These funds will not only help Ascension continue to serve its parishioners, they will also help Ascension welcome local and international visitors to appreciate its architectural, musical and acoustic magnificence.

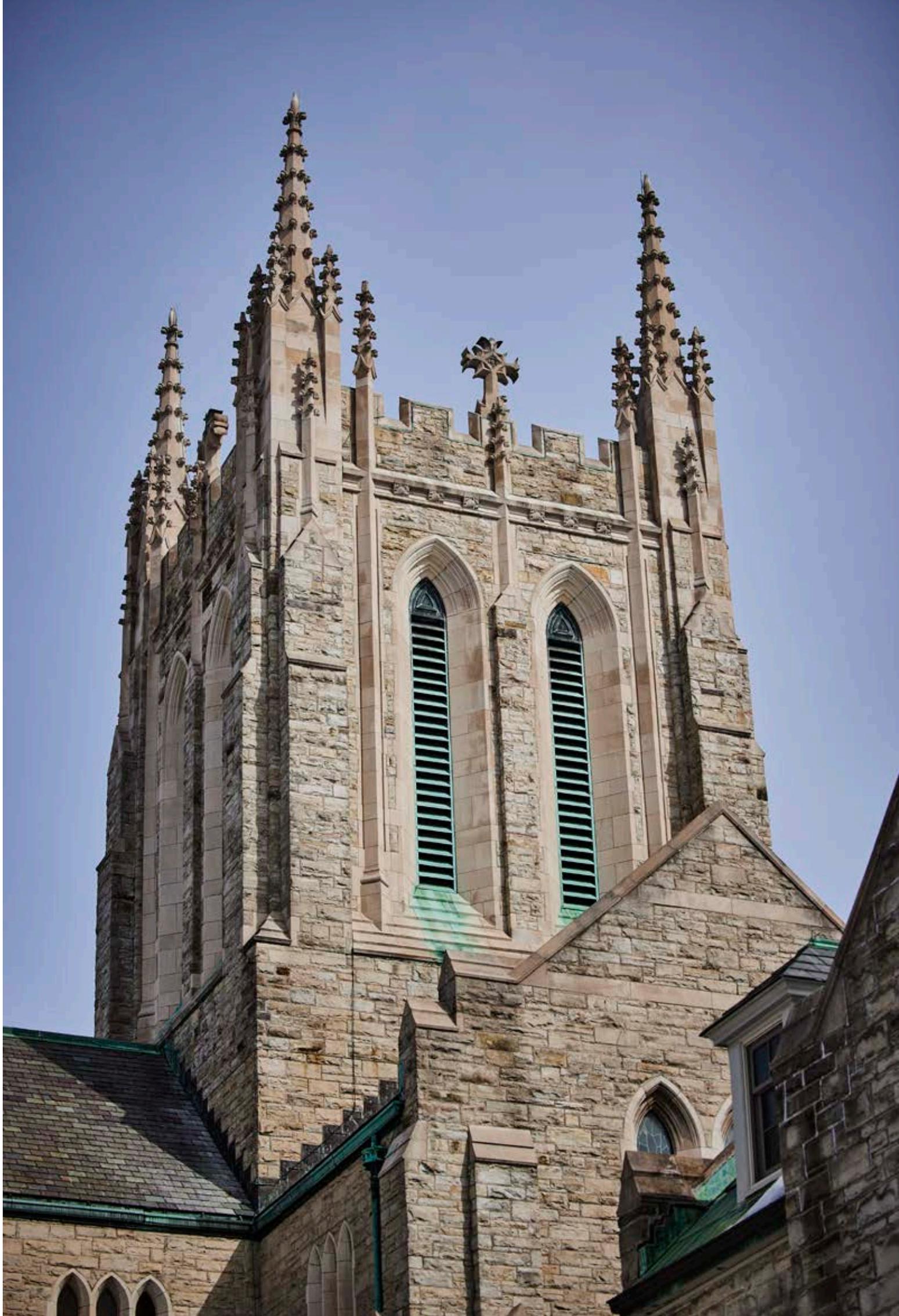


SEPTEMBER 2020

A letter of thanks and an interim Campaign Report are distributed to parishioners, indicating that the stretch objective of \$1,300,000 has been achieved. The report is also featured on the newly revamped Ascension website and includes a breakdown of the funds raised to date, and an outline of the ongoing restoration projects and incurred expenses.

JUNE 2021

The Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec grants the parish \$176,000 for the overall restoration of its Casavant Opus 1344 organ.



The Bell Tower

As of the closure of the Campaign in May 2022, the projects put forward in the Case for Support have been successfully completed.

2019-2021

Before repairs to the Bell Tower could begin, a way to safely enter the tower from inside the church needed to be developed. Accessed from a ceiling panel in the choir loft, a permanent catwalk is built between the inner and outer roofs of the church, from above the organ to above the sanctuary. A specialized ladder, ordered from Europe, is installed where the catwalk ends, so the masons can descend into the tower to do their work. This provides safe access to the Bell Tower, once and for all, for the current project and ongoing maintenance.

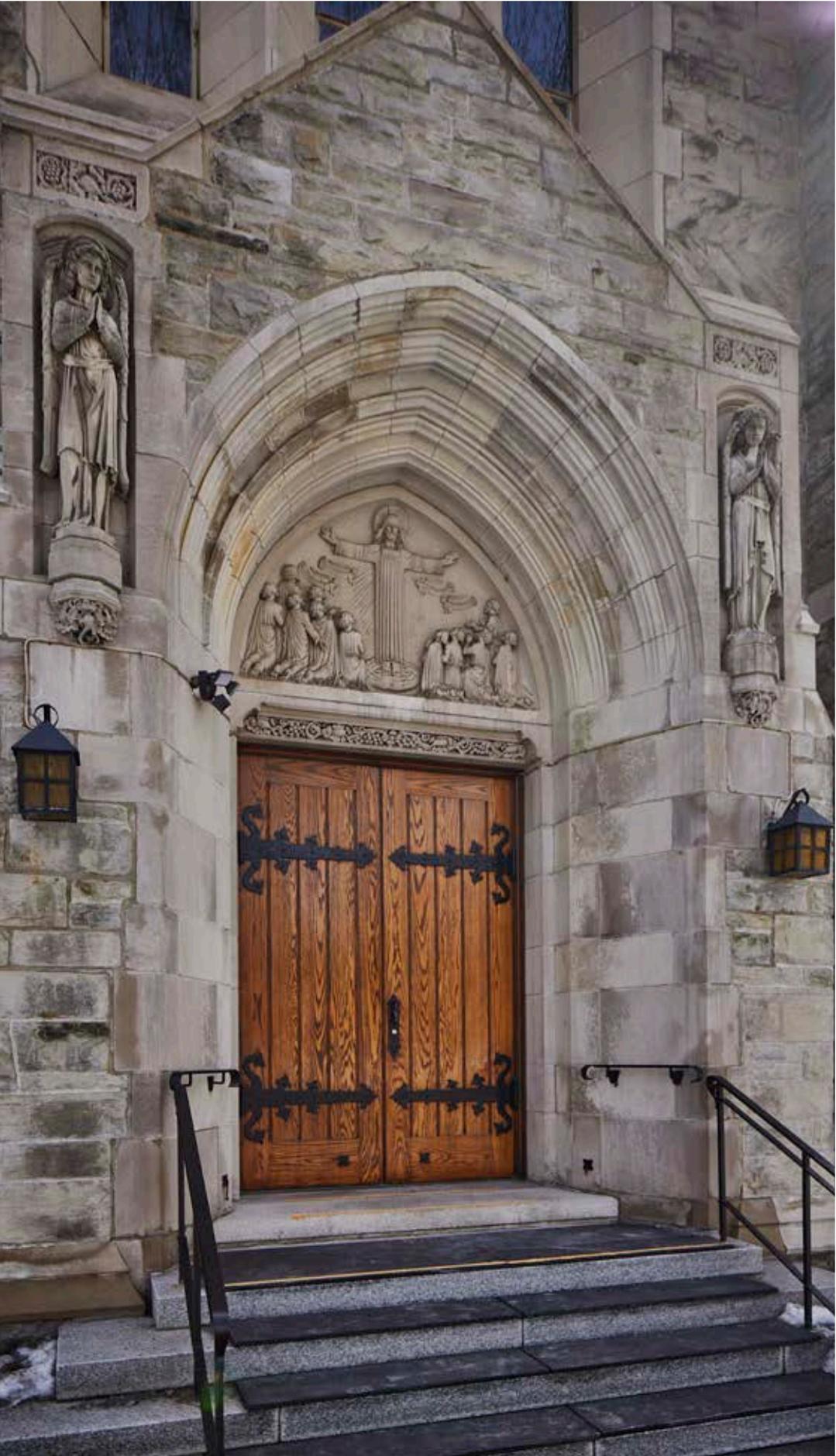
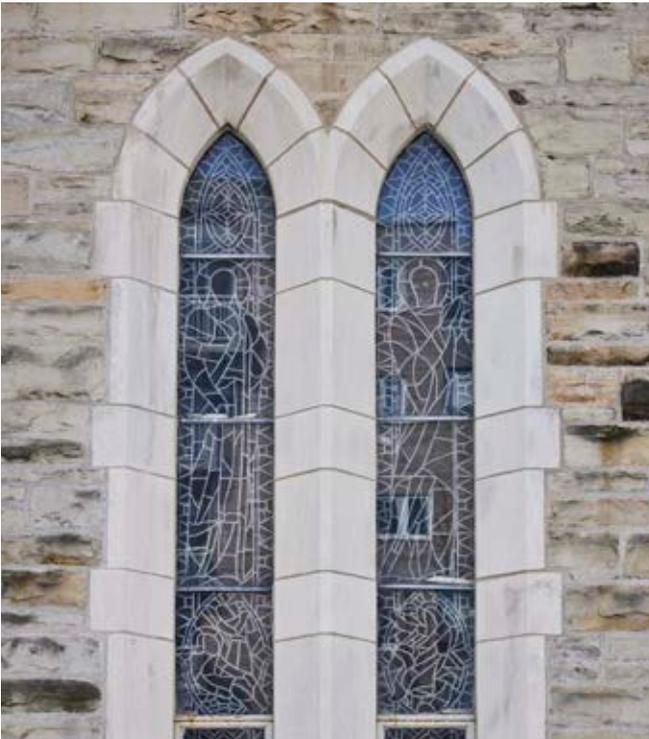


Exterior Refurbishment

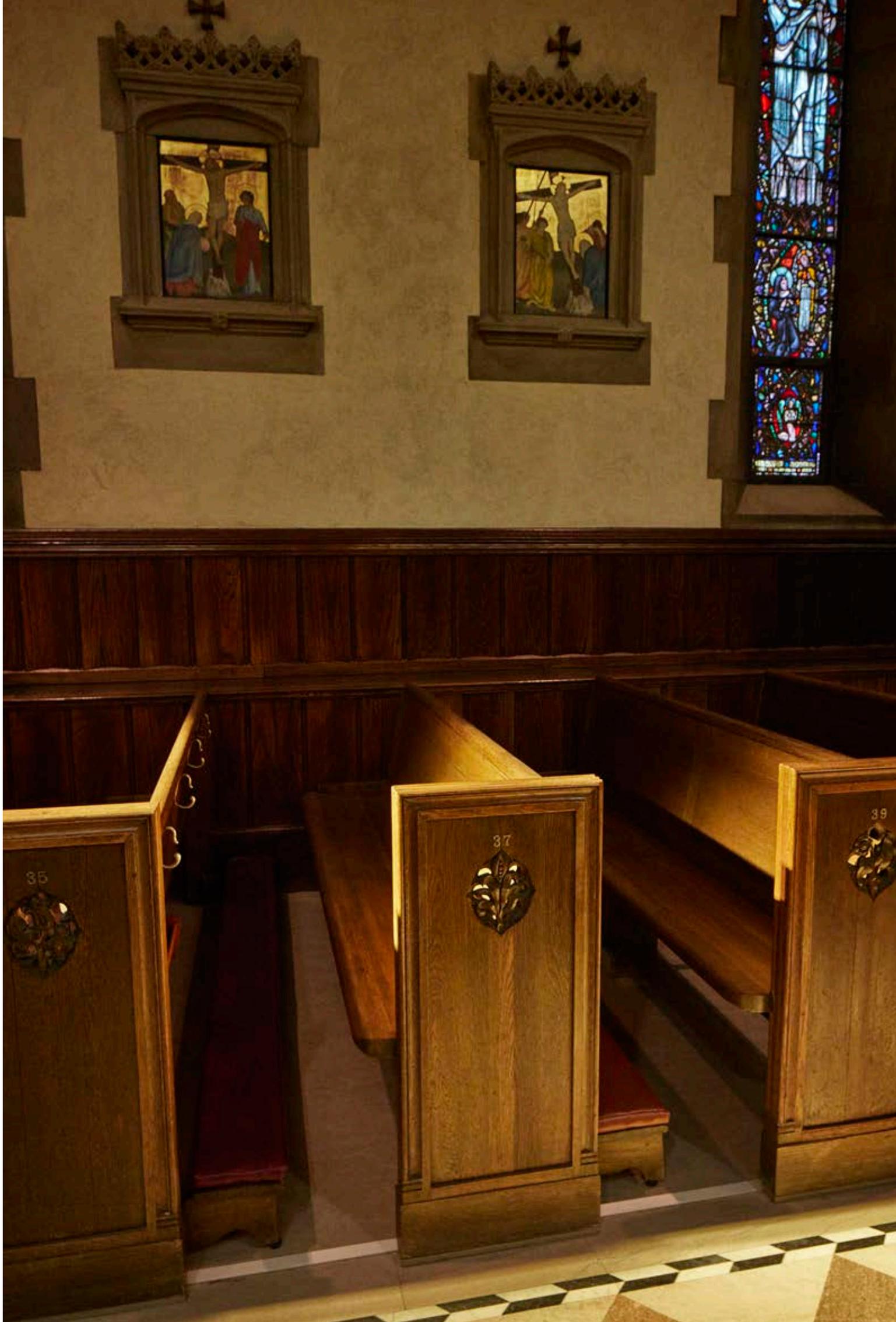


SUMMER 2021

Masonry repair on the Bell Tower is successfully completed, and all the exterior walls of the church are repointed.



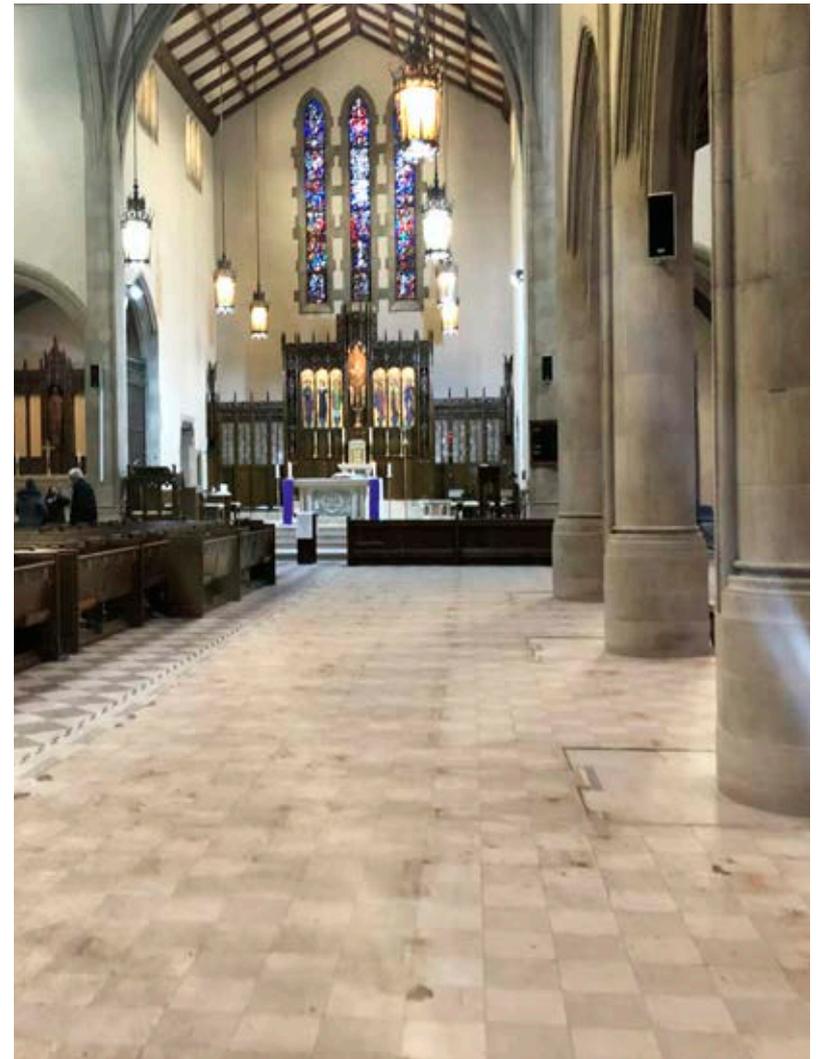




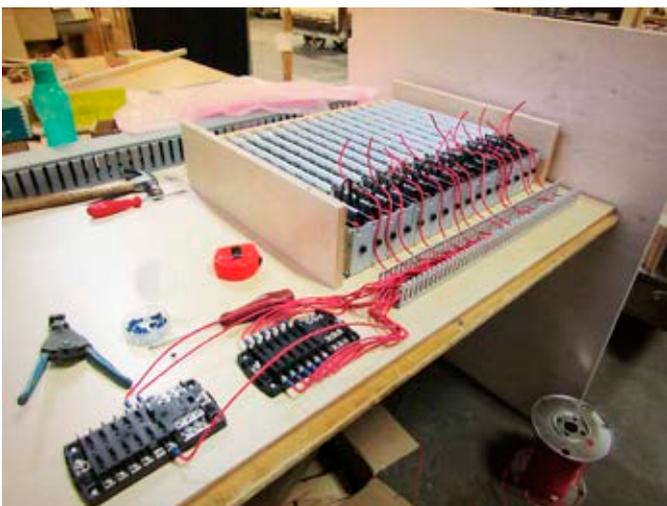
Interior Refurbishment

2019-2021

In fall 2019, the church pews are refurbished, and in 2020, all the linoleum tiling under the pews is removed and new flooring is laid down. At the same time, repairs are made to the kneelers to soften and muffle their impact when lowered to the church floor. The caulking around all the stained glass windows is inspected and repaired where necessary.



The Casavant Organ



The organ is restored at the Casavant Frères' workshop in Saint-Hyacinthe.



Fabien Tremblay, craftsman, also worked on the 1987 organ restoration.



Marco Laferrière, craftsman, has been working at Casavant Frères since 1994.



2020-2022

The work on the Casavant Opus 1344 organ spans two years, from June 2020 to April 2022. First, the instrument is completely dismantled and transported to the Casavant Frères' workshop in Saint-Hyacinthe. A new state-of-the-art console is installed, and the keyboards, stops and foot pedals are completely restored. A new blower and bellows are installed in the storage room next to the church's main entrance, replacing the original equipment that had been set in the church's sub-basement.

The grant received from the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec in June 2021 is supplemented by the parish, thus facilitating the completion of all five phases of the Casavant proposal for the instrument's restoration, which includes a new Pedal Contra Trombone 32'.





SEPTEMBER 2021

Joel Peters joins the parish as Director of Music and Organist in May 2021.

In September, Ascension of Our Lord Parish participates in the annual Religious Heritage Days event, and Joel Peters gives two recitals on the newly restored organ. He plays works by J.S. Bach, J. Peters, F. Frahm and K. Kimber Johnson. These concerts are presented in collaboration with the Canadian International Organ Competition (CIOC).

Joel also creates a video detailing the breadth of the restoration of the Casavant organ. It can be viewed on the Ascension website and the parish's YouTube channel.

Thank you

MAY 2022

This Donor Recognition Book is produced and displayed on a podium at the back of the church for all parishioners to consult. A special feature, detailing the church's history and the Capital Campaign, is developed for the Ascension of Our Lord website.

A plaque in recognition of the 2019–2022 Capital Campaign is commissioned, to be mounted near the oratory of the Sacred Heart.



Dr. David Szanto, Director of Music and Organist, 2003–2021

In summary, thanks to the generosity and support of its parishioners, and with the important participation and contributions of the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec, the significant capital needs of Ascension Parish identified in the Campaign's Table of Needs in May 2019 have been completed, and paid.

There will no doubt be additional capital work required in the decades to come. And, as Ascension Parish rose to the challenge in 1988 and then again in this recent Campaign, we are confident that those to whom this parish will have been entrusted will once again, with the help of the parish community, rise to meet the challenge.

The Campaign Coordinating Committee would like to express its sincerest thanks to all those who helped prepare and execute this Campaign, and in particular:

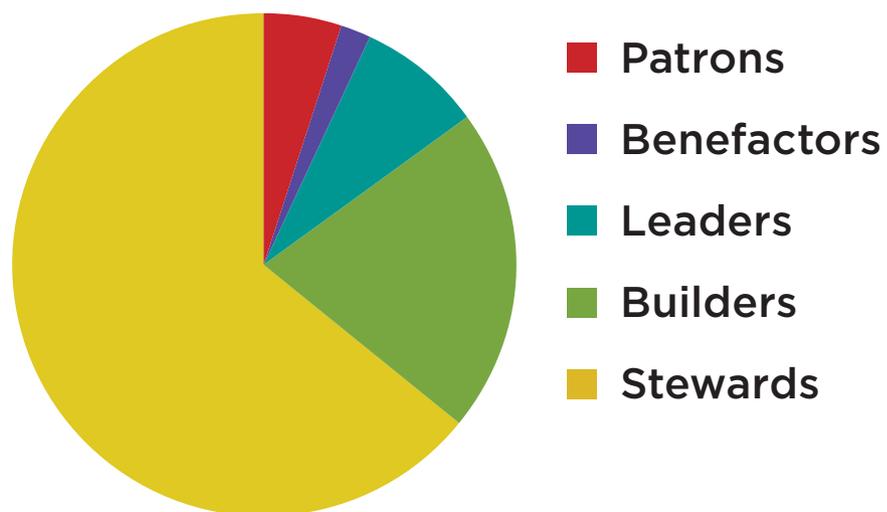
- To all the donors, for their generous and expeditious donations;
- To the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec, and in particular to Jocelyn Grou and Johanne Picard, for its collaboration and financial support;
- To Louis Brillant, project architect, and to Construction Adrien Charbonneau and its collaborators for the efficiency and respectfulness of their work on site;
- To Jacquelin Rochette and Dany Wiseman of Casavant Frères, for their oversight of the management and execution of the restoration of our Opus 1344 organ;
- To Dr. David Szanto, Director of Music and Organist of Ascension Parish from 2003–2021, for his outstanding contribution to the parish's music program and his critical role in the preparation and submission of the funding proposals to the Comité des orgues, Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec;
- To Peter Keller, for drafting the Case for Support;
- To David Boucher, for overseeing the research and composition of the donor prospect list;
- To Sara Morley, Design Postimage, for her outstanding production of all Campaign communications;
- To Edmund Nash, warden, for his generosity and technical expertise in hosting and maintaining the parish website, which facilitated online donations during the Campaign;
- To Effie Cordeiro, for carefully tracking and reporting on all campaign donations.



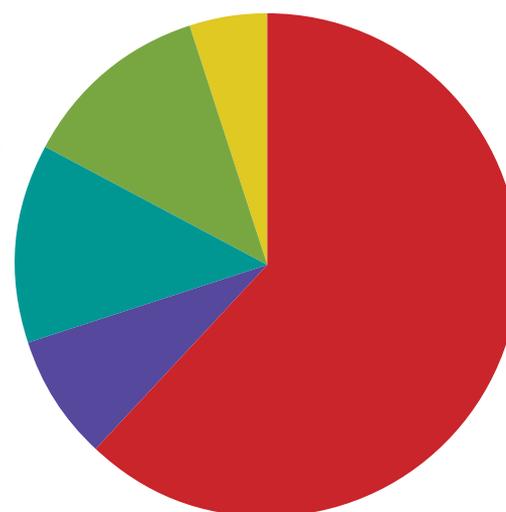
The Campaign in Numbers

	Donors		Amounts Pledged	
■ Patrons \$50,000+	10	5%	\$834,300	60%
■ Benefactors \$25,000-\$49,999	4	2%	\$110,875	8%
■ Leaders \$10,000-\$24,999	18	9%	\$199,000	14%
■ Builders \$2,500-\$9,999	39	19%	\$175,200	13%
■ Stewards \$25-\$2,499	130	65%	\$69,555	5%
TOTAL	201		\$1,388,930	

DONORS



AMOUNTS PLEDGED



Thank you for participating in the success of the Capital Campaign.

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