



# East Lethbridge Catholic Parish Assessment Project

## Communications Plan

February 24, 2023

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# 1. Introduction

This Communication Plan represents a critical step in the Detailed Project Plan that has been developed to support the East Lethbridge Catholic Parish Assessment Project. It is intended to support the coordination of communication and messaging to stakeholders to ensure transparency and trust. The Communication Plan identifies those stakeholders in advance in order to keep them informed in a timely manner. In addition, the Plan identifies overarching key messages for the Project, and specific Stakeholder Focussed key messages for those groups that may require more detailed communications. Finally, the Communication Plan identifies those who are accountable for the delivery of those messages, and the timing for that delivery. The individual accountable for message delivery is also responsible for maintaining the relationship with the assigned stakeholder, and for acting as a conduit to listen for any concerns that stakeholders may have, and for conveying those concerns to the Parish Project Team for consideration.

# 2. Background

The pamphlet titled “Timeline: Celebrating Contributions of the Roman Catholic Diocese to Province of Alberta: 2005” depicts the long, complex, and changing history of the opening and closing of Catholic Churches in Southern Alberta. An underlying theme that emerges from this historical review is that as parishioners needs evolve, change and call forth adaptation, so also does the need for dedicated Church building space. Those changing needs reflected economic, social and linguistic balance shifts, immigrant influx, and urban population growth. Parishioners then, as now, identified with their Churches, and change, though necessary, was often difficult to accept.

The East Lethbridge Catholic Parish also has its own evolving needs with ageing and physically challenged parishioners, escalating building maintenance costs for existing Church buildings, inadequate parking, and insufficient Church space for education and religious formation. In response to these changing needs, the former Bishop, Bishop Frederick Henry, issued a series of canonical decrees first twinning Assumption and St. Patrick’s as one parish (2001). The next decree (2006) merged St. Basils, Assumption, and St. Patrick’s into one new, combined parish called All Saints Parish. A third decree (2014) suppressed St Patrick’s church building so that it would no longer be used for public worship as a Church. A fourth and final decree (2016) formally closed St. Patrick’s Church.

Some members of the congregation, who opposed these potential Church closures, formed Save Our Churches Association (S.O.C.A.) in 2011. S.O.C.A commenced an official canonical appeal process to revoke the closure decree of St. Patrick’s and the appeal was denied by the Congregation for Clergy. Following this decision, in 2017, S.O.C.A. filed a subsequent appeal to the Apostolic Signatura of the Holy See. The Bishop Henry’s 2016 decree and the decision

of the Congregation for the Clergy was overturned in 2020 by the Apostolic Signatura. The Congregation for the Clergy advised the Diocese in Nov. 2021 that to comply with the canon law and the decision of the Apostolic Signatura that a church must be open for private prayer at least on occasion, and the Holy Eucharist must be celebrated in the church at least twice per annum – on its Name Saints Day (March 17) and on the anniversary of its erection date (September 24)

Bishop McGrattan was appointed the 8th Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary in January, 2017 while the appeal process of S.O.C.A. was underway. He was asked to submit a Votum to the Apostolic Signatura regarding the appeal process. After receiving the written decision of the Apostolic Signatura in 2021, the subsequent letter of direction from the Congregation for the Clergy and in acknowledgement of the significant time which has elapsed since the merging of the parishes in 2006, there is now the opportunity and necessity to assess and discern the future pastoral needs of the East Lethbridge parish. Such an initiative would provide a current assessment of the projected pastoral realities facing All Saints Parish and to allow for any healing of fractures which may continue to exist so that the parish might be strong and vibrant in its future communal witness and mission as a parish.

In late 2022, Bishop McGrattan in response to what has unfolded since 2006 has initiated the East Lethbridge Catholic Parish Assessment Project. The purpose of the project is to provide a process for the Parish which is designed to recommend both a strategy and implementation plan to the Bishop with respect to the requirements of dedicated church space for the parish and how the east Lethbridge pastoral needs of the city and surrounding areas can be also be served through the parish. This Communication Plan supports that project.

### 3. Parish Leadership Team – Key Concerns

- It is acknowledged that divisions have arisen in the parish, both current and historical, which have not allowed the Parish to move forward in the fulfillment of its overall mission. These include:
  - A perceived unilateral decision-making on the part of the Diocese of Calgary (i.e. Oblates departure, litigation with Lethbridge Catholic charities financial deficit, closure of St. Patrick's Church) which has created misinformation and resentment
  - A perceived disproportionate contribution of financial assets between St. Patrick's, St. Basils, and Assumption when they were merged into one parish
  - A perceived imprudent management of financial resources for capital and operational expenses to maintain the existing Church buildings which has resulted in blame and distrust of parish pastoral leadership
  - A perceived historical cultural difference between the current congregation of parishioner of All Saint Parish
  - A generational entrenchment among parishioners that is expressed in differing viewpoints concerning the nature of the parish and its future which has created tension among families and has pushed some away from the Parish and the Church

- A potential misalignment and/or disconnects between Catholic pastoral outreach and ministries within All Saints parish as well as with other Lethbridge Catholic ministries.
- The needs of East Lethbridge and that of the parish and parishioners are continuously evolving, and the perceived existence of divisions within the parish make it difficult to adopt a common vision and path for the future long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the parish.
- The perceived inaction of the Diocese of Calgary to respond to the decision of the Signatura regarding St. Patrick's Church building has further contributed to a distrust for some SOCA members, and the historical dispute over the process of closing the church has again surfaced personal and enduring suffering for some parishioners.

## 4. Diocese of Calgary Leadership Team – Key Concerns

- Divisions existing within the parish, both historical and current, detract from and weaken the Parish in the fulfillment of its overall mission.
- The perceived unilateral decision-making on the part of the Diocese of Calgary (i.e., Oblate's departure, process of closure for St. Patrick's Church) has resulted in resentment and mistrust
- There is a need and priority to respond to the Signatura's decision for St. Patrick's Church and at the same time balance the long-term capital needs of the Parish
- To understand the canonical rationale of the Signatura's decision with respect to the canonical process employed for St. Patrick's Church and to ensure those concerns are addressed with the current East Lethbridge Catholic Parish assessment process
- Dissatisfaction with the current status for opening St. Patrick's Church as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy and the desire to heal any divisions this might continue to create.
- The need to restore the image of the Catholic Church in Lethbridge and to unite the parish community of East Lethbridge as a witness of unity in faith, pastoral outreach and mission
- Develop a pastoral process and model which will serve as a prototype for any future church consolidations and closures

## 5. Communication Plan – Purpose

This communication plan outlines a coordinated and consolidated approach to messaging for stakeholders impacted by the East Lethbridge Catholic Assessment Project.

Successfully implemented, this plan will assist Parish leadership and the Diocese of Calgary in addressing the key concerns identified above, while asserting a proactive versus reactive stance to communication.

## 6. Components of the Communication Plan

### A. Overarching Key Messages

#### i. Purpose

The primary purpose of designating overarching key messages is to align Parish and Diocesan leadership with respect to the alignment of the vision and mission that they wish to communicate throughout the process. In addition to significantly reducing the potential for message misalignment, this document supports the involvement, engagement, and ownership of all leadership team members with the process and to ensure their accountability to deliver the intended messages.

The secondary purpose of the overarching key messages is to provide a standard or reference against which to review all related recommendations, decisions and communication to ensure transparency, consistency, and more importantly, to protect against any tendency to expand or over commit to the scope and mandate of the project.

#### ii. Accountability:

The Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary has the overall accountability both to approve overarching key messages and to hold leadership in the Diocese and All Saints Parish accountable for consistently delivering and supporting those messages, both publicly and privately.

#### iii. Key Messages (5 Max)

- As Church we are called to be united in the witness of our faith, to be one in Christ, one family of God
- We follow Christ with humility, allowing our prayer and reflection to guide decisions and actions for any needed reconciliation which promote the unity and mission of the Church.
- We need to focus on the assessment of those current and future pastoral needs of East Lethbridge which will ensure the long-term vibrancy and resiliency of All Saints parish
- We will employ a comprehensive consultative process to assess, discern and recommend options to the Bishop to ensure dedicated church building space to serve the future pastoral needs of the East Lethbridge Parish
- We will act upon the Signatura decision to re-open St. Patrick's Church based on the guidance from the Congregation for the Clergy so that Mass would be

celebrated twice per year as well as being open at least on occasion for private prayer.

## **B. Stakeholder Identification**

### **i. Purpose**

The primary purpose of stakeholder identification is to catalogue in advance a list of potential stakeholders that will expect to receive communication updates and developments on the East Lethbridge Catholic Assessment Project based on their own unique perspective which may be influenced by their particular interests and concerns. In understanding the distinct concerns of these different stakeholder audiences, parish project leadership will be better able to proactively make decisions to acknowledge – and possibly- address their respective concerns.

Using this approach, communication and messaging can be transformed into an opportunity to build engagement and address in a proactive way any negative reactions to the Project.

### **ii. Accountability: Father Kevin Tumback**

### **iii. Stakeholders**

The following audiences have been identified as potential stakeholders for the East Lethbridge Catholic Assessment Project:

- Diocese of Calgary
- College of Consultors
- Council of Priests
- All Saints Leadership Structure (including Pastoral Council and Finance Committee)
- All Saints Parishioners
- Other Lethbridge and area parishes and parishioners
- New Church Design Committee

- Fund Raising Committee
- Major Donors (current and future)
- Diocesan Finance Council
- SOCA (membership and Leadership)
- Media (Local/Calgary/National)
- Catholic School District
- Knight of Columbus
- Catholic Women’s League
- All Saints Insurance Provider
- Lethbridge City Mayor
- Lethbridge City Manager and Planners
- Holy See

### C. Stakeholder Focussed Key Messages

| Stakeholder           | Key Messages  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Diocese of Calgary    | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> </ul>   |
| College of Consultors | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> <li>• Need to design and implement pastoral planning processes that may impact parish communities and church buildings in order to maintain consistent alignment and unity in the understanding of the nature of a parish and the Diocese in forming the one Body of Christ.</li> </ul> |



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| <p>Council of Priests</p>                                  | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> <li>• Need to establish alignment and unity in the understanding of the nature of the parish and the Diocese in forming the one body of Christ.</li> </ul>     |
| <p>All Saints Leadership Structure (Pastoral Council)</p>  | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> <li>• Need to establish alignment and unity and in the understanding of the nature of the parish and the Diocese in forming the one body of Christ</li> </ul>  |
| <p>All Saints Leadership Structure (Finance Committee)</p> | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy.</li> <li>• There may be financial expenditures required to re-open St. Patrick’s church building as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy.</li> </ul>        |
| <p>All Saints Parishioners</p>                             | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> <li>• Need to establish alignment and unity and in the understanding of the nature of the parish and the Diocese in forming the one body of Christ.</li> </ul> |

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| <p>Other Lethbridge and area parishes and parishioners</p> | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues - The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> <li>• Need to establish alignment and unity and in the understanding of the nature of the parish and the Diocese informing the one body of Christ</li> </ul>     |
| <p>New Church Design Committee</p>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues - The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> <li>• Patience, perseverance, adaptability, and sustained commitment is truly appreciated as the assessment project develops recommendations for the proposed plan and path forward</li> </ul> |
| <p>Fund Raising Committee</p>                              | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the assessment project develops recommendations for the proposed plan and path forward, this will require an updated and renewed approach to fund raising in order to finance next steps of the project</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Major Donors</p>  | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The donations received to the Building Fund will be used for the church facility</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Diocesan Finance Council</p>                            | <p>Project Message Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues - The need for dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; to ensure for the future pastoral needs and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick’s as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> </ul>   |
| <p>SOCA</p>  | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need to dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge</li> </ul>  |

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|                               | <p>Parish and the City; ensure the future pastoral needs and the long-term vibrancy and resiliency of Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick's as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would a new positive legacy look like for SOCA that would assist all parishioners to heal past wounds and move forward together for a united parish for the next generation?</li> </ul>   |
| Media                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Messages</li> <li>• Press Release</li> </ul>  |
| Catholic School District      | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two issues – The need to dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; ensure the future pastoral needs and the long-term vibrancy and resiliency of Parish;</li> </ul>   |
| Knight of Columbus<br>CWL     | <p>Project Message Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need to dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; ensure the future pastoral needs and the long-term vibrancy and resiliency of Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick's as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> <li>• Need to establish alignment and unity and in the understanding of the nature of the parish and the Diocese in forming the one body of Christ</li> </ul> |
| All Saints Insurance Provider | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a detailed action plan that will meet legislative requirements for the re-opening of St. Patrick's church as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> </ul>  |
| Lethbridge City Mayor         | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three issues – The need to dedicated Church space that meets the future and evolving needs of the East Lethbridge Parish and the City; ensure the future pastoral needs and the long-term vibrancy and resiliency of Parish; and Re-opening of St. Patrick's as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> </ul>  |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to establish alignment and unity in the understanding of the nature of the parish and the Diocese as the one body of Christ</li> <li>• Acknowledgement that community divisions have occurred and the goal is to take steps to heal those divisions</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Lethbridge City Manager and Planners</p> | <p>Project Messages Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a detailed action plan that will meet legislative requirements for re-opening of St. Patrick’s church as directed by the Congregation for the Clergy</li> <li>• Recognition that the unified parish will be embarking on a plan for a church facility that will serve the city for the long term</li> </ul> |
| <p>Holy See<br/>Nuncio</p>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision of the Apostolic Signatura is being implemented, in compliance with local legislative guidelines</li> <li>• New East Lethbridge Assessment Project has been launched to assess strategic options for dedicated Church space and long-term vibrancy and resiliency of the parish</li> </ul>  |