



STA Site Committee Semi-annual Report

March 10, 2010

(last report: September 9, 2009)

The STA Site Committee continues to meet on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. The meetings are held in the Thomas House basement hall and are open to all interested persons. Kay Williams continues as chairperson, Bob March as secretary, and Helen Baumann as volunteer coordinator; Lorraine

Dabney represents the Site Committee on the PSC. Stalwart members include Anna Jaklitsch and Mario Veloro; others attend occasionally.

The Site Committee publishes a monthly newsletter, *Steeple Talk*, on the Sunday before the 4th Wednesday. It is inserted into the parish bulletins that are delivered to STA each week, and it is also posted on the parish website. Volume 4 of this publication began in February 2010. Besides news about the St. Thomas site, *Steeple Talk* often includes reports from the PSC meetings, news from each of the 6 Mass communities that celebrate at the church, and announcements of parish events.

The Site Committee lost a devoted member, Jane Bahr, who died November 19 of a recurrence of cancer that had been in remission for 5 years. Jane gifted the parish with a bequest that she designated for the construction of a handicapped ramp into the Thomas House. Her spirit, intelligent observations, and willingness to attend meetings, edit the *Steeple Talk*, and speak up on behalf of the needs of the site are sorely missed.

Thomas House:

The major focus of the committee over the past 6 months has been the development of the Thomas House renovation plans.

In September, the Project Team, which guides the process of rehabilitation and renovation of the building, watched the architect, Lippert and Lippert Design, apply to the City of Palo Alto for a determination of the lot line between the Thomas House and the church building. Also, the deed for the property had to be found at the office of the Diocese of San Jose.

In October, the architect presented to the Project Team a preliminary outline of costs, which were reported to the PSC in November. The goals of the project were reviewed at the PSC meeting.

In November, the Project Team met with architect Lippert and advised him that parts of the design were to be designated as “alternates” in order to keep the costs below what the parish could afford, i.e. \$450,000. Those “alternate” enhancements would add an estimated \$63,000 to the total and would have to be funded separately.

In December, Chuck Tully met with the diocesan building and maintenance personnel. Lists of contractors were provided by the diocese.

In January, the architect submitted his working drawings (January 7) and Chuck Tully applied to the City of Palo Alto for building permits (January 13).

On February 1, the tenants vacated the building. A walk-through of the house with contractors was held and the Request for Proposal and Bid Form for contractors were distributed.

On March 3, bids from the contractors were received.

Church interior:

The Church Interior Task Force meets every third Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. in the SAG Hospitality Center. Judy Foley is chairperson. All interested persons are welcome to attend.

The interior committee settled on the re-design of the altar, consulted with a sound engineer about amplification in the church, and prepared a binder with the results of all the research done on improvements to the church interior—the overall “wish list.” Then the committee chair and different members met with Fr. George, the parish Building and Maintenance Committee, and the diocesan Art and Environment Committee, presenting the binder and taking suggestions and comments. Ultimately, Bishop McGrath will have to approve the changes to the altar.

The cosmetic elements are also under consideration—particularly the carpeting. Judy Foley, members of the committee, and Nora Lundin met just last week with a carpet representative who had samples for their review.

The timing for these enhancements to the church interior is still not set, but consideration has to be given to the schedule of weddings. And the budget for the renovations is still not spelled out.

Exterior:

The agapanthus along the Homer St. side of the church have been removed and await the plantings outlined by Deke Rowell. A proposal for purchase of the plants is in preparation.

Events:

- **Time and Talent** was held in October and an estimated 100 parishioners looked over the displays and requests from the various ministries—with a net result of 14 new people signing up as volunteers in various ministries.
- **Kenyan gifts sale:** In October and December, gifts from Kenya were on sale. Proceeds benefited the girls' high school in Fr. Daniel Kiriti's parish in Naivasha, Kenya.
- **Bishop McGrath celebrated Mass at 8:45 on February 7:** At the invitation of the Thomas Merton Center community, Bishop McGrath con-celebrated Mass with Fr. Aranha and Msgr. Boyle and enjoyed hospitality after Mass in the Thomas House basement hall.
- **Brainstorming on Thomas House project costs:** In December, January and February several regular and *ad hoc* site committee meetings were held to discuss how the Thomas House project could be trimmed to reduce costs without impacting usage needs. The suggestions were collected by Ted Baer for the parish Finance Committee.
- **Thomas House Open Houses** were held on February 14 and 28, and many parishioners from the four Sunday Masses and from other parts of the parish took the opportunity to walk through the house and offer suggestions as to uses they thought the house could serve.