

Steeple Talk

2007—2008

St. Thomas Aquinas Church *Mass communities:*

There are six Mass communities that worship at St. Thomas Aquinas Church at two daily Masses and four Sunday Masses.

Daily:
7:15 am
12:15 p.m.

Sunday:
7:30 a.m.: Fr. John Hester presides.
8:45 a.m.: Sponsored by the Thomas Merton Center, a lay-led non-profit religious education organization based on the principles of Vatican II, which hires presiders and coordinates the liturgical environment with the other Sunday communities.
10:30 a.m.: A regular parish Mass.
12:00 p.m.: Features the St. Ann Choir — dedicated to the mission of singing Gregorian Chant as an integral part of Catholic liturgy. In addition to the complete year's cycle of Gregorian chant for Sunday Mass, the choir also performs medieval and Renaissance polyphony and polyphonic masses of the Renaissance for holy days and other feast days.

STA Site *Committee plans:*

Monthly Meeting:
4th Wednesday in Thomas House basement hall.

MEETINGS
Open to all who are interested in participating in the work of improving St. Thomas Aquinas Church.

Monthly newsletter:
The Site Committee has published Steeple Talk each month to facilitate communication with the six Mass communities and the parish.

Editors of Steeple Talk:
Kay Williams, 650-328-2781, kaywill@pacbell.net; Jane Bahr, 650-967-8246, bahrjunior@comcast.net

Thomas House renovation dominated the Site Committee's year:

The Site Committee has focused this year on plans for the rehabilitation of the Thomas House, the old rectory next door to the church on Waverley Street. The house has been leased to non-parish groups for most of the last 15 years.

The Site Committee has for nearly three years been building support for a return of most of the Thomas House to use by the Mass communities. Last fall, an inspection of the Thomas House by a contractor revealed most alarmingly that the electrical system in the

house is woefully inadequate. The needs of the STA Mass communities and the realities of building maintenance have resulted in the current plan to upgrade and renovate the Thomas House, reserving the top floor for rental units and returning the main floor to the parish to support the pastoral needs of the worshipping community.

Considerable discussion this year among the Site Committee and the parish Finance and Building



St. Thomas Aquinas Church

and Maintenance Committees on when to terminate the current lease and begin the actual renovations resulted in a timeline that started ticking in August 2008—a big step forward toward the Site Committee's goal.

Thomas House Project Team is up and running:

The year's Site Committee monthly meetings were taken up primarily with the spade work of looking critically at the Thomas House and using local resources to outline a plan that would be acceptable to the pastor, Finance Committee, Building and Maintenance Committee, and the Pastoral Stewardship Council.

Mario Veloro, Site Committee member and an architect, prepared preliminary

drawings of the house as it is now and of proposed changes to the house. Two major presentations to the Pastoral Stewardship Council were made during the year, giving the rationale for returning the house to parish use and outlining the proposed construction requirements and costs that could be anticipated. The untimely death of stal-

wart Site Committee member Tom Jaworowski in December, 2007, was a significant loss to the Site Committee (as well as to many parishioners personally). Tom's steady leadership and elegant reporting is sorely missed.

However, by late spring the Thomas House Project Team was formed, with representatives from the Finance, Building and Maintenance, and Site Committee participating. Bob March and Tom McKay are the Site Committee representatives and look forward to a productive year.

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ST. THOMAS
AQUINAS CHURCH SITE COMMITTEE**

751 Waverley Street
Palo Alto, CA 94301

St. Thomas Aquinas Site Committee:

Jane Bahr	Helen Baumann	Judy Foley
Lorraine Dabney	Bill Mahrt	Bob March
Kieran McCarty	Mike McMahon	Mario Veloro
Kay Williams	and occasional others	

Mission Statement: The Site Committee for St. Thomas Aquinas Church works to encourage community-building within our six individual Mass communities, among our Mass communities, and within the larger parish community. We do this by enhancing our liturgies, exercising responsible stewardship of our facilities, and working to improve communications at all levels of our parish community.

Site committee meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of the month in the basement hall of the Thomas House. All are welcome. Contact: Helen Baumann, 327-9236, hbaumann@aol.com.

From the church steps:

Garden: The Site Committee is recruiting volunteers to form a garden committee. The liturgy teams at STA would love to have more options for cut flowers from the sunny side of the church, which is currently planted entirely with agapanthus. The Site Committee sees a garden committee as a wonderful opportunity for community formation and a way to provide needed support for liturgical ministries.

Hospitality: The 8:45 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. Mass communities regularly sponsor after-Mass hospitality for an hour or more each Sunday. In the good weather months, coffee, donuts, and other refreshments are served in the Memorial Garden adjacent to the church building; in the colder months folks gather in the basement hall of the Thomas House. Occasionally, hospitality was offered after the 10:30 Mass as well.

The basement hall location is not handicapped accessible, however. This lack was a driving force behind the pressure to reclaim the Thomas House main floor for use by the Mass communities.

STA Church exterior:

Last summer the exterior of St. Thomas Aquinas Church received a major facelift. A new roof was installed in June and by September the exterior was repainted.

The Site Committee was very interested in the choice of colors for the painting. With the consent of parish business manager Chuck Tully, the committee members consulted a colorist for ideas on enhancing the exterior, as well as with the City of Palo Alto for information about restrictions on color choices. Information about possible color combinations were promulgated to the congregations on posters and in *Steeple Talk*. Color paint chips suggested by the color consultant were passed around and commented on. The magic of computer simulations allowed various color combinations to be presented on pictures of the

church. Consideration had to be given, of course, to coordinating exterior paint colors with the color of the roofing tiles.

Prep work for the painting included lead abatement procedures that necessitated shrouding the church with protective sheeting—before the painting could even begin. The new colors of the exterior, while similar to the previous gray and off-white, have surprised and delighted parishioners. The subtle difference that seems to enliven the building is attributed to the choice of a very white color for the trim against the mushroom tone of the siding.

And Chuck Tully was pleased that the painting was done in time for the September wedding, as promised to the bride!

...and the interior, too:

Following the very pleasing results of the painting of the exterior of STA, the Site Committee turned to reviewing the areas of the church interior that needed attention. Painting the interior was on the parish maintenance schedule for 2008.

A task force for addressing the interior of the church was formed under the leadership of Judy Foley. Brainstorming meetings were held in early 2008, yielding a potpourri of suggestions and considerations. Ideas that have come forth include moving the organ back from the balcony railing, removing the carpet from the altar, rebuilding the altar in hard wood, replacing the walnut altar table and ambo, redesigning the altar floor with additional square footage, replacing the red carpet with a sage or forest green carpet, keep the creamy wall color, etc.

A “field trip” to Church of the Nativity in Menlo Park, which did a significant interior renovation this spring, was attended by several Site Committee members. The task force attended a meeting with the diocesan Environment and Art director and learned what *not* to do in a church. And there is time for more deliberation as the church interior will not be painted in 2008.