

Church of St Francis Xavier
Parish Renovation Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Information correct as of 15 Apr 2018

Need for Renovation

1. Why do we need to renovate the church?

The need to renovate started from a decision to repaint the church in 2015. However, when a condition survey was conducted, it was found out that we needed to first undertake some essential repairs that included the fixing of water seepage, spalling concrete, tripping of electrical supply, replacement of air conditioning systems, slippery walkways and pavements.

At the same time, there was a requirement from the Archdiocese to create rooms for certain purposes, including a counting-cum-counselling room with CCTVs.

On 24 Jan 2016, our priests launched the vision of our Parish, in alignment with the vision of the Archdiocese – to build a more vibrant, missionary and evangelistic church. In our Parish, we sought to accomplish this through “disciples making disciples”.

Arising from the above, it became apparent that we needed to take a holistic approach to renovate and upgrade the Church and achieve both objectives at the same time.

2. How was the budget determined?

The budget estimate of \$6.8 million was not determined at the start of the project. With direction from the Parish Priests, the Committee worked with focus groups made up by parishioners to determine the scope of work. Based on this, the external consultants developed the design, cost estimates and budget. This estimated budget has since been approved by the Parish Finance Council and Archdiocese Finance Commission.

3. Why do we need additional space? Can we reschedule our activities to accommodate church activities?

Our Parish is growing, and we need additional space in order to cater for the future growth of our Church.

Therefore, for this project, we are creating flexible multipurpose spaces that can be reconfigured easily for various purposes. For example, the new Parish Hall can be converted into a hall with five smaller rooms for break-out rooms during seminars. Our Church Basement that encompasses a new nursing room, gift shop and library, also has multipurpose rooms with collapsible partitions that can be used for meetings, evangelical activities, prayer sessions and fellowship.

The nature of church activities is that they usually coalesce around weekends and week nights, because the vast majority of parishioners work regular hours in a typical weekday. Given this condition, the Parish has tried without success to reschedule activities to avoid congestion, which leads to the need for additional space. Majority of our active parishioners who volunteer have full-time jobs with the preference to serve over the weekends.

4. Why is there a need to make the parish more wheelchair-friendly?

We want to build a more inclusive Church and future-proof our Parish, catering for an increased population as well as an ageing population. Part of our plan includes improving accessibility for wheelchairs, prams and the elderly. With the elimination of some staircases and the levelling of the Plaza, we seek to reduce barriers within Parish premises. This will allow our parishioners to navigate their way around more easily and safely.

Also, our current Barrier Free Accessibility provisions do not meet the requirements of the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) of Singapore. We are taking this opportunity to fix this and comply to the specified requirements.

5. We feel that there is a need to do a renovation, but we do not agree with some parts. Can we have options and only renovate some parts?

Together with external consultants, the Committee has developed the current proposal that they feel best meets the current and future needs of the Parish. As the deliberations for the proposed changes are closely interconnected, the plans need to be looked at in totality and holistically as there are many synergies gained from the proposed plan. Therefore, it would be difficult and we would not recommend providing parishioners with options as that would then not be the best proposal that we could put forth.

6. Who came up with the brief for the renovation project and why do you select these sections to be renovated?

The project brief is based on the scope of work that was developed by the Committee. The scope of work was determined through discussions with our Parish Priests and various focus groups. These focus groups are formed by parishioners who were sought via an open invitation notice in the Manna bulletin for their expertise and help in certain areas last April.

Parish Building Committee (PBC)

1. Who makes up the PBC team?

The composition of the PBC is based on *ALPS Instructions to Parishes on Building Projects* which determined that the following should be included: specialists in their own professions – comprising personnel from the building trade and other suitable qualified professionals such as architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and lawyers.

2. How do they ensure that this is the best proposal that is put forth to us?

The PBC worked with external consultants to develop this proposal. With their professional experience and expertise, they countercheck the consultants' work and ensure that what is proposed is sound and feasible. The current proposal is the result of many rounds of revisions and collaborative discussions. During this period, the PBC has also gone back to the various focus groups to get feedback to ensure that the proposal would meet the current and future needs of the Parish.

Church Entrance

- 1. Will the entrance be widened so that pedestrians coming in from both sides of the gate can have a more levelled and safer entry and exit from the church?**

No, the front gate cannot be widened beyond its current boundaries. However, we will be incorporating several changes that will improve safety, usability and aesthetics.

Church Front Porch

- 1. Will the newly added wheelchair ramp be sheltered?**

No, the newly added ramp will not be sheltered. However, there are two ramps in the Church that will be sheltered – the ramp at the Adoration Room, as well as the ramp on the right side of the Church. We will be enhancing the shelter for both ramps, and these ramps can be used during inclement weather.

Bell Tower Ramp

- 1. Will the ramp under the bell tower still be there, or will it be removed?**

The ramp will still be there.

- 2. Will the ramp be widened to accommodate the width of two wheelchairs?**

We may not be able to widen it – it is difficult as it is currently in between both legs of the bell tower. It should be sufficient for wheelchairs and prams to travel up and down in a single file.

Adoration Room

- 1. Are we going to enable wheelchair access into the Adoration Room?**

Yes. With ramp access and the change of the entrance into the Adoration Room, wheelchair access will be enabled. This is also part of our objective to improve accessibility within our premises.

- 2. Will the Adoration Room be carpeted, now that there will be wheelchair access within?**

Instead of carpeting, we are planning to install rubberised tiles and/or parquet for cleanliness and ease of maintenance.

- 3. Will the Adoration Room be sound-proof, as it is a little distracting when you can hear noises from outside?**

We will look at enhancing the sound-proofing but it will not be totally sound-proof.

4. Will there be seats in the Adoration Room?

Yes, there will be some seats in the Adoration Room.

Community Hall

1. Why do we need to move the canteen when the current one can still be used? All we need is for the current kitchen facilities to be renewed.

One of the objectives of this project is to improve the accessibility and safety within Parish premises. The levelling of the Plaza that integrates the Main Church, the Parish Centre and the Parsonage is a key aspect of the project. Once the Plaza is levelled, parishioners will be able to manoeuvre their way around the three buildings easily, safely and under shelter.

With the levelling of the Plaza, the free space between the entrance of the current canteen and the staircase that leads up to the Plaza will be tight. This will cause a bottleneck given the large amount of parishioners heading to the canteen over the weekends. In addition, with the levelled Plaza, the crowds cannot spill over to the outside anymore, which limits the capacity of the canteen.

Therefore, it makes sense to shift the canteen to where the Parish Offices are, and where it is more easily accessible. Also, with the bigger space, we will be able to accommodate more people and crowds can spill over to the Plaza.

Furthermore, the new Community Hall (with the canteen) will be bigger, brighter and airier than the current canteen at the basement. This makes it more inviting and comfortable for parishioners to linger on for fellowship. For our young adults getting married in Church, it will also provide an improved venue for wedding receptions.

2. Can we make provisions to be able to cook in the canteen?

Due to safety reasons, there will be no open flames allowed in the canteen. However, there will be induction hobs and warming up facilities to help with the preparation of food on Sundays.

3. Will the canteen be open 24/7?

No, the canteen will follow the normal operating hours of the church.

Church Basement

1. Will there be a wake room at the basement of the Church now?

No, there will not be a wake room.

2. Can we explore moving the Priests' Office and Parish Office to the Church Basement?

We have considered this option. However, due to the pillars within, it is difficult to optimise the space and carve out offices for our Parish Priests and Parish staff. In addition, the ceiling is low with no natural light and poor ventilation, making it an uncondusive work environment for our Parish Priests and Parish staff who spend most of their time here. Also, it is inconvenient that there is no washroom on that level, so they would have to make their way up the Plaza to the existing washrooms on the first floor.

3. What will the Church Basement be used for when the current canteen is relocated?

We will be expanding the current Adoration Room and including a new vestibule alongside. We will also be having a refreshed Gift Shop and a new Library, as well as a Nursing Room for mothers to nurse their babies. In addition, there will be new multipurpose rooms with collapsible partitions for the diverse needs of various ministries and communities, as well as some storerooms for ministerial items.

New Parish Hall

1. Will there be a lift that goes up to the New Parish Hall on the 3rd storey of the Parish Centre?

Yes, there is an existing lift that goes up to the 3rd storey of the Parish Centre where the new Parish Hall will be built. The new Parish Hall can also be accessed via the lift in the Parsonage.

2. Why do we need a new Parish Hall when the current one is useable as long as we fix some of the AV equipment?

We will be shifting the Priests' and Parish Offices to the location of the current Parish Hall. Therefore, we would need to relocate and build a new Parish Hall on top of the Parish Centre.

The new Parish Hall will have a high ceiling, and be column-free with improved sound acoustics. There will be improved flexibility in the configuration of room spaces, and also ample space outside the Hall for fellowship, food service, contemplation and quiet reflection.

3. Why do we need to relocate the current Parish Hall, and incur more cost to build a new one?

There is a need to relocate the current Parish Hall as we will be shifting the Priests' and Parish Offices to its current location. The Priests' and Parish Offices will be displaced by the new Community Hall. The deliberations surrounding these movements are closely interconnected, stemming from the need to integrate the buildings and improve accessibility and safety within the Parish premises.

4. How many more people can the new Parish Hall accommodate?

The new Parish Hall can accommodate 300 people, the same number as with the current hall but with more flexibility, better acoustics, facilities and washrooms. There will also be an additional break-out space outside the Parish Hall and also space for the children's playground.

5. How are you going to control the number of people entering the new Parish Hall or prevent heavy equipment from breaching the structural safety limits?

The new Parish Hall can take up to 300 people according to fire safety guidelines. Structure wise, it can accommodate significantly more people than what fire safety guidelines dictate. Under normal usage, no structural safety limits will be breached.

6. Why must we move the Parish Hall to the top floor? Can we explore moving other things e.g. Parish Offices, meeting rooms and spaces?

We have considered moving the Parish Office and even the Priests' Quarters up to the top floor. However, with such a large space, it is best optimised to place the Parish Hall on the top floor of the Parish Centre.

7. Can we construct a multipurpose hall on the top floor of the parish centre?

Yes, we can, as advised by our consultants Alan Yap Engineers & Associates Pte Ltd.

8. Since we are adding another level to the Parish Centre, are the building foundations strong enough for it and is the 3rd floor built to take the extra loading?

Yes, the building is piled to accommodate an extra floor in accordance with building regulations laid down by the BCA.

9. Is the new Parish Hall going to be safe from collapse? How will you ensure that new floor level will not collapse?

As with all building structures and associated modifications in Singapore, there are four layers of checks required before BCA Approval is granted for construction:

1. The structure must be designed by a Professional Engineer
2. An independent Accredited Checker Engineer must be engaged to check and concur with the design of the Professional Engineer
3. The design of the Professional Engineer and verification of the Accredited Checker Engineer must be submitted to BCA for final approval before permit is granted for the works to be carried out
4. BCA conducts spot checks of the work during construction of key structural elements and again at the time of TOP Application to ensure that the building is built in accordance with the Approved Design and is safe for occupation before granting TOP

This protocol has been in place in the industry and highly regulated by BCA for over 30 years. There has not been a case of any building structures completed under this protocol collapsing in Singapore to date.

10. In the computation of the total weight on the Parish Hall, did you factor in the weight for furniture and fittings?

Yes, all these factors have been considered and included by our consultant Structural Engineers.

Grotto of Our Lady of Grace

1. Why do we need to move the Grotto when the current one is still useable and prominent?

There is a need to improve safety from vehicular traffic and locate the Grotto away from vehicular noise and lights. The relocation will provide all-weather access as well as barrier-free accessibility. The Parish will be able to better optimise the vacated space for large scale events or fellowship gatherings.

2. The Grotto is just behind the Plaza, it will be too noisy to focus on Mother Mary. How will you address the noise issue?

There will be less vehicular noise because there will be no vehicles going around the Grotto. The surrounding structures will also help to dampen sounds.

3. Will heavy rain splash into the new Grotto?

Depending on the severity of the rain and wind direction, some rain water might splash inwards to the Plaza, as it is open-sided. However, both the Plaza and new Grotto are fully sheltered.

4. With the relocation of the Grotto, how will the parking of cars be reconfigured?

We have proposed a revised traffic flow plan where there will be a single lane marked out to allow for drop-off at the ramp on the right of the Church. Cars will not be allowed to park on this lane to facilitate the through flow of traffic. We encourage our parishioners to park their cars at the Basement carparks when possible.

Once the renovation is completed, together with the wardens, the best parking solution will be developed.

Plaza

1. Why must we level the floor?

One of the objectives of this project is to improve the accessibility and safety within Parish premises. The levelling of the Plaza that integrates the Main Church, the Parish Centre and the Parsonage is a key aspect of the project. Levelling the Plaza eliminates the five different levels that parishioners currently have to navigate when moving from the Main Church to the Parsonage. Once the Plaza is levelled, parishioners will be able to manoeuvre their way around the three buildings easily, safely and under shelter.

2. Will there still be tables and chairs outside for us to sit at?

Yes, there will still be tables and chairs at the Plaza.

Main Church

1. Are there plans to put large screens in the main church hall to project Missal readings, like many of the other Churches?

We are in the process of looking at alternatives which will not affect the current aesthetics.

2. Are we getting new pews?

The existing pews will be retained but refurbished.

3. Will the rock background behind the crucifix be removed? We have a brown crucifix on a brown background, so the central focus is just not there.

No, the rock background will not be removed. Only the waterfall feature which has broken down and caused water seepage will be removed. It will be replaced by a plain backdrop that will allow better setting for liturgical themes.

4. Will you consider creating a “cry room” within the Church?

There is no current plan to include a cry room in the Main Church due to space constraints.

Parish Office

1. Why do you move the Parish Office to the 2nd floor, making it inconvenient to access it now?

We are moving the Priests' and Parish Offices to the 2nd storey, as the new Community Hall will be relocated to its current location. We had spent time deliberating on the move but it proved to be the best option for the offices to be shifted to the second floor.

2. Moving the Priests' and Parish Offices to the 2nd storey creates a luxurious space for the offices. What else will be on the 2nd storey?

The 2nd storey of the Parsonage will encompass the Priests' offices, a new reception, office spaces for staff, meeting spaces, private counselling area, secure counting room, as well as archival and server rooms. In addition, there will also be a multipurpose space on the same floor that parishioners can use for activities and prayer sessions.

Regarding the Presentation on 15 April

1. Are the designs and plans final and is there room for change?

The major scope of work is defined, and is subject to approval from the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore. Adjustments to the design can be made, and we welcome any suggestions on how to improve the designs and plans. You can reach the PBC at reno@sfxchurch.sg.

2. What is the purpose of this presentation?

The purpose of this presentation is to provide parishioners with a more detailed explanation of the project so that they will have a better understanding of the renovation works that will take place.

Regarding the Vote

1. What are we voting for?

The motion of the vote is whether the Parish should proceed with the renovation project that has received in-principle approval of the Archbishop on 10 February 2018. For more details on the poll, please refer to the Polling Instructions leaflet.

2. Archdiocese has approved the plan, so why do we still need to vote?

As this is a large project, the Parish Priests would like to take a poll to gauge parishioners' support of PBC's recommendations.

3. What happens if parishioners vote not to proceed with the renovation?

The current process will be stopped, and our parish priests will decide on the next steps forward.

4. What if I cannot attend mass over the voting weekend?

You will only be allowed to vote over the voting weekend.

5. Why are there no other options for us?

Together with external consultants, the Committee has developed the current proposal that best meets the current and future needs of the Parish. As the deliberations for the proposed changes are closely interconnected, the plans need to be looked at in totality and holistically as there are many synergies gained from the proposed plan. Therefore, it would be difficult and we would not recommend providing parishioners with options as that would then not be the best proposal that we could put forth.

6. Does it mean that if more than 50% of the votes are in favour of the renovation, the renovation project will proceed?

Yes, the decision on whether to proceed with the renovation will be based on a simple majority.

7. What other communication events or channels will be in place to gather feedback and comments from parishioners?

You can email your feedback or comments to the PBC at reno@sfxchurch.sg.

8. When will work commence?

Work will tentatively commence in the 4th Quarter 2018 to 4th Quarter 2019.

9. Who decides on the poll method and criteria?

The Parish Priest has commissioned an independent parishioner to conduct the Parish Poll.

Regarding fundraising

1. What happens if you raise more than \$2.3million?

We will keep the Parish updated regularly on the progress of our fundraising. Therefore, once we reach the target, the Parish will be informed at the earliest available opportunity. However, if excess funds trickle in beyond the \$2.3 million target, these funds will be channelled to our Church reserves as a sinking fund for future use.

2. Having to raise \$2.3 million sounds like a lot of money. Are we confident that it can be achieved?

We believe that the target of raising \$2.3 million can be achieved comfortably. This belief is based on the fact that our Parish has approximately 4,400 registered parishioners and many others who are not registered but attend Mass regularly at SFX, including volunteering at Ministry activities. If each parishioner contributes what they can to this amount, raising \$2.3 million should not be insurmountable.

3. How do you intend to raise money?

We intend to primarily raise funds from within our Parish only, and will not be canvassing for funds from the public. From within our Parish, funds will be raised from a combination of individual pledges, parish-level and ministry-level activities. Besides raising the necessary funds, the aim of these activities is also to allow parishioners to be aligned with our Church's objectives of fostering an inclusive, inviting and evangelistic Church.

4. When will fundraising start and how can we help?

Fund raising will start shortly after the Parish Priest exercises his authority to proceed with the renovations as set out by the PBC. It is envisaged that fundraising efforts will continue for a period of 24 months or when the target amount of \$2.3 million is reached, whichever comes last.

Parishioners can help by volunteering their time in helping the Fundraising Committee or volunteering their time and ideas to their respective ministries. Individuals who are not part of any ministry but wish to run activities to raise funds should contact Thud Chee (thudchee@gmail.com) or any other PBC member, to discuss and coordinate their efforts before proceeding with it. We would like to encourage as many as possible to be actively working on activities to raise funds.

Regarding cost estimates

1. What are the major cost areas?

The major cost areas are the Parish Hall, the Community Hall, the Parish Office and the levelling of the Plaza. Unfortunately, we will not be able to provide detailed cost estimates as the revelation of such details will compromise the Tender process.

Miscellaneous

1. How many extra rooms do we have after the renovation?

There will altogether be 11 rooms – Parish Hall (5 rooms); Church Basement (2 rooms); Parish Office (1 room); Parish Office – Multipurpose Space (2 rooms); Priests' Quarters (1 room).

2. Will you be upgrading the lifts?

At present, the lifts meet the functional and safety requirements stipulated by the BCA. However, we have separately requested a lift modernisation proposal from the lift contractors, OTIS and Kone, to meet accessibility requirements, such as buttons with Braille markings and individual floor announcements.

Lift access is restricted as the 2nd and 3rd storeys open up directly into the Parish Hall and the Priests' Quarters respectively. To address the concerns on lift access between buildings, the proposed renovation will unify the common areas of the 2nd and 3rd storeys of both the Parsonage and Parish Centre. This will allow easier access between buildings, and the flexibility to use either lift to access both buildings while still maintaining security of the rooms.

3. Will services in Church be disrupted during the renovation?

During the renovation, the Church may close for a few months, and Masses will be conducted at an offsite location. More details will be shared once available.

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