

What they didn't teach me in seminary: Finance reports, broken air conditioners, toilets overflowing, capital campaigns, building projects and town permitting processes. That is why I take comfort in reading from the bible, these verses from Jeremiah 1:1-19

*“The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah thus: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I dedicated you ... I appointed you. ‘Ah, Lord God!’ I said, ‘I know not how to speak; I am too young.’ But the Lord answered me: Say not, ‘I am too young.’ To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear ... because I am with you ... to build and to plant ... Be not crushed on their account ... for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.”*

We are in a good place, I think, but there have been serious bumps along the way that I wanted to report to you, so that you can understand what I have concluded with our Buildings Committee and Parish Finance and Pastoral Councils as the best way forward.

First a brief recount of the very slow path, experienced from time to time as an arduous process: We first submitted our application to the Town of Greenwich last Fall and were given a meeting date with the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) on November 19, 2018. The ARC painstakingly considered the landscape and environment of our site, the protection of neighbors and predominant architecture.

With ARC approval in January, our application proceeded to the Planning and Zoning Commission (P & Z) and we had our first meeting on January 22, 2019. P & Z reviewed sedimentation and erosion control plans, and site plans. Concurrently, our land use attorney and architect negotiated with and obtained sign-offs from the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency, Conservation Department, and Wastewater/Sewer Department. Once the P & Z Commission approved our plans, the P & Z department had to conduct their staff review of our submission.

We just received the zoning permit for St. Timothy's Chapel which now permits us to apply for the building permit. The approval ordinarily takes 3-6 weeks and we hope to have the building permit for the Chapel by the end of September. We pray there is no further delay.

As for St. Michael's Church, we expect to receive the zoning permit soon and then can apply for the building permit for the Church, which we hope to obtain in October.

As you are aware, our original construction timeline was to begin at both locations after Easter (April 21) 2019 with the goal of completion by Christmas 2019. As we reach the final stages of permitting with the town, which has taken much longer than anticipated, we are faced with various timing alternatives for commencement of construction.

Of utmost importance our minds is to maximize the use of St. Michael's and St. Timothy's during the important Easter and Christmas liturgical seasons and to have worship services in place for as much of the period of construction, while causing as little inconvenience to Greenwich Catholic School in terms of traffic disruption and the use of their cafeteria when construction prohibits use of St. Michael's for liturgies.

As such, current plans provide for the work at St. Timothy's to commence early this Fall (estimated completion in 3-4 months), along with the addition to the Rectory offices. Work on the church building at St. Michael's will have to be delayed commencing promptly following Easter (April 13) 2020. To meet the aggressive goal of completion by Christmas 2020, some site work (such as tree removal and stormwater drainage system) may commence earlier.

A financial positive to this new planned construction schedule is an anticipated reduction in borrowing costs. We had arranged for a line-of-credit bridge loan to finance the cash flow shortfall until pledge payments from our capital campaign are received within future years. With the delayed start date of the more expensive project at St. Michael's, more pledge payments should be received thus necessitating less drawdowns on the bridge loan.

Dates, place of service and times of liturgies will be published well in advance in the Bulletin. We thank you for your generosity and patience. Know that you are all in my prayers and we ask that you keep us and our St Michael Parish in your prayers.