

Episcopal Megachurch Betting \$27 Million on New Growth, Missions

The Church of the Incarnation, an Episcopal congregation in Dallas, will break ground on a campus expansion on Sunday. Of the \$27 million raised in the capital campaign—more than six times the parish's annual budget—\$1.5 million will fund future and current missions and outreach.

As befitting a congregation with roots in the Church of England, the groundbreaking ceremony will begin at 10:20 a.m. with a classic English hymn, "Lift High the Cross," also the name of the capital campaign.

The expansion will add three buildings to the campus—another worship facility seating more than 500, a welcome center and an education facility—all matching the gothic-style architecture of the existing buildings at 3966 McKinney Ave. Construction is expected to take two years.

"This is a historic time in the life of our parish," says Bishop Anthony J. Burton, rector of Church of the Incarnation. "We have been growing quickly, both in numbers, faith and commitment to the poor in the neighborhood around us."

The Church of the Incarnation, which has grown 35 percent since 2008, averages more than 1,200 in Sunday attendance. But church leaders believe it could reach 2,000 within a decade.

With commitments of approximately \$27 million, the capital campaign is one of the largest by an Episcopal church in recent history. Parish families will make their contributions over a three-year period.

"This campaign isn't about buildings and money but rather the

lives that will be impacted in those buildings and outside of them," Burton says. "We believe God has opened the door and is calling us to a place of deeper ministry, both to those who belong to our parish and also to those who live in our community and around the world."

The parish spends approximately \$1 million a year on a wide variety of ministries, both local and abroad. Of the \$1.5 million from the capital campaign earmarked for outreach, a significant portion will be used to set up an endowment for future ministry. The money will also help build a church in Belize, where parishioners frequently go on mission trips.

Locally, the funds will be used to support a variety of ministries that focus primarily on the Church of the Incarnation's neighborhood, Uptown. The church helps feed the hungry, runs programs for the working poor and low-income elderly, and ministers to people living with HIV/AIDS and the homeless. At the request of the Dallas Independent School District, the parish created a pilot program for homeless students at neighboring North Dallas High School.

"Serving the poor is a vital part of our mission," says the Rev. T. Gregory Methvin, vice rector of the parish. "This capital campaign also will enable us to continue to worship God in the great tradition of the church, make disciples of Jesus Christ and train leaders as we continue to grow."

As part of its commitment to training Christian leaders, the parish operates the Beecherl Corrigan Fellows Program for recent college graduates, helping connect them with mentors within the Dallas business community. The parish also is involved in the cultural life of Uptown, hosting classical and contemporary music concerts and organizing "Theology Live: Ale and the Almighty," with prominent Christian thinkers leading discussions on timely topics on Monday nights in June at Ginger Man Pub.