

Episcopal Megachurch Reports 'Miraculous' \$25 Million Fundraising Campaign

Church of the Incarnation, one of the nation's top 10 largest Episcopal congregations, has raised \$25 million to increase the church's capacity for growth.

Bishop Anthony J. Burton, rector of Church of the Incarnation, told a jam-packed lawn full of parishioners that the three-year-long planning process and three-week commitment period for the capital campaign, titled "Lift High the Cross," exceeded its goal. Commitments from the congregation surpassed \$25.2 million.

"This morning marks an historic milestone," Burton said, commending church members for their commitment. "God has been doing so many extraordinary things here, we were forced to respond."

Burton equated the congregation's recent growth to the account in Scripture of the miraculous catch by Jesus' disciples of more fish than their nets could contain. "We needed to build a bigger boat for a bigger catch. ... Given the scale of what God was doing, we were conscious of Jesus' further instruction to His disciples, to 'push out into the deep,'" he said.

Burton further explained that the normal benchmark for a church capital campaign would be twice the annual budget, but the building committee knew it wouldn't be enough and set an extraordinary goal of \$25 million, more than five times the current operating budget.

"We knew it was a great act of faith, because we were getting into miracle territory," Burton said, noting the last capital campaign of \$5.5 million didn't reach its goal. "But I trusted

you and I trusted God and trusted God in you. Thank you for your sacrifices; God is good and so are you.”

At a time when attendance is declining at churches around the country, Church of the Incarnation’s membership has grown 35 percent since 2008. Besides Uptown, the church draws parishioners from across the DFW Metroplex, especially the Park Cities, Lakewood and surrounding areas. The average Sunday attendance is more than 1,300, which church leaders believe could reach 2,000 within a decade.

As a result of its planned campus expansion, the church is poised to become one of the most prominent Episcopal parishes in North America. Incarnation will nearly double its worship space, constructing a new sanctuary to replace the dining-hall type room that is now being used for the contemporary Sunday services. The congregation also needs more common areas and fellowship space as well as an education building to accommodate Sunday school classes, which the new campaign will accomplish.

Finally, \$1.5 million from the capital campaign has been designated for an endowment fund to ensure future success in a variety of missions and outreach initiatives both locally and internationally, such as assistance with a much-needed church for a small sister parish in the mountains of Belize, where Church of the Incarnation members serve in missions each year.

The church says it spends around \$1 million of its annual budget helping the needy, both near and abroad. In its local community, the church provides food through long-term partnerships with the Austin Street Shelter and Meals on Wheels, as well as a ministry to people living with HIV/AIDS and the homeless. Incarnation has programs for the working poor and the low-income elderly. The church also actively works with North Dallas High School in mentoring students, and because of its success, has been asked to develop a pilot program for homeless students.