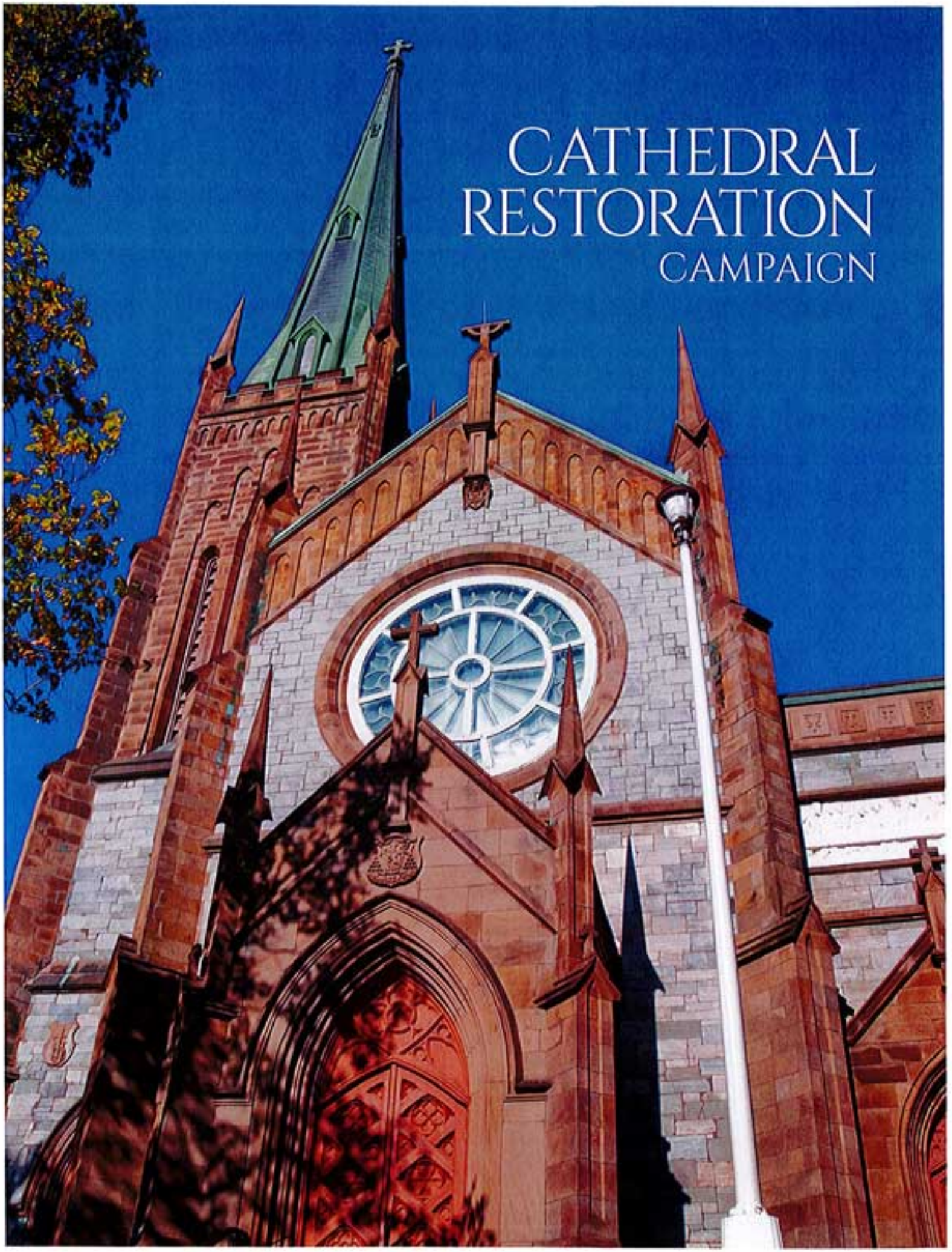

CATHEDRAL
RESTORATION
CAMPAIGN

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

A campaign to preserve the legacy of a great Cathedral and one of the finest examples of sacred architecture in Atlantic Canada.

Spring 2022

BEGINNINGS

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, located on Waterloo Street, Saint John has been ministering to the people of New Brunswick and beyond for almost 170 years.

Between 1845 and 1847, approximately 30,000 Irish arrived in Saint John, more than doubling the population. During this period, Saint John was second only to Grosse Isle, Quebec as the busiest port of entry to Canada for Irish immigrants.

The first stone of the Cathedral was laid in 1853 thanks to the work of over four hundred volunteers, many of whom were Irish immigrants who made Saint John their new home after escaping the great famine of their country.

In just two years the Cathedral held its first Midnight Mass on Christmas, 1855. Despite the fact that the church had no heat, lighting or seats, three thousand people attended. Bishop Connolly dedicated the Cathedral to Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception. It would take another 30 years for the Cathedral to be fully completed.

RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

The Cathedral is the mother church of the Diocese of Saint John, which is comprised of 28 parishes representing three regions: Saint John, Fredericton and the Miramichi. The last census showed 115,400 anglophone, francophone, Indigenous and immigrant Catholics.

As the mother church, the Cathedral is the most visible symbol of our diocese and the seat of the Roman Catholic Bishop for almost 170 years. This is the church where all the diocesan faithful are at home, experience spiritual renewal and growth in the Christian life and where solemn liturgical celebrations mark our lives as a diocesan family. Such important celebrations include ordinations, pilgrimages, and the Chrism Mass, in which the holy oils used in the Sacraments throughout the year are blessed and given to the parishes in the diocese.

Led by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, we are called to raise up disciples who are joyfully living out the mission, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and making disciples of others. This is the mission of the diocese, and the Cathedral parish embraces it as a model of Christian faith and outreach. Like all parishes, the Cathedral, in all its activities, strives to be a parish that, "encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach." (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, par.28)

In its efforts to live out Catholic social teaching, the Cathedral's missionary outreach is especially crucial as it is located in one of the poorest areas of the city. In keeping with the images of a mother's love, the Cathedral parish ministers to some of society's most marginalized people.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

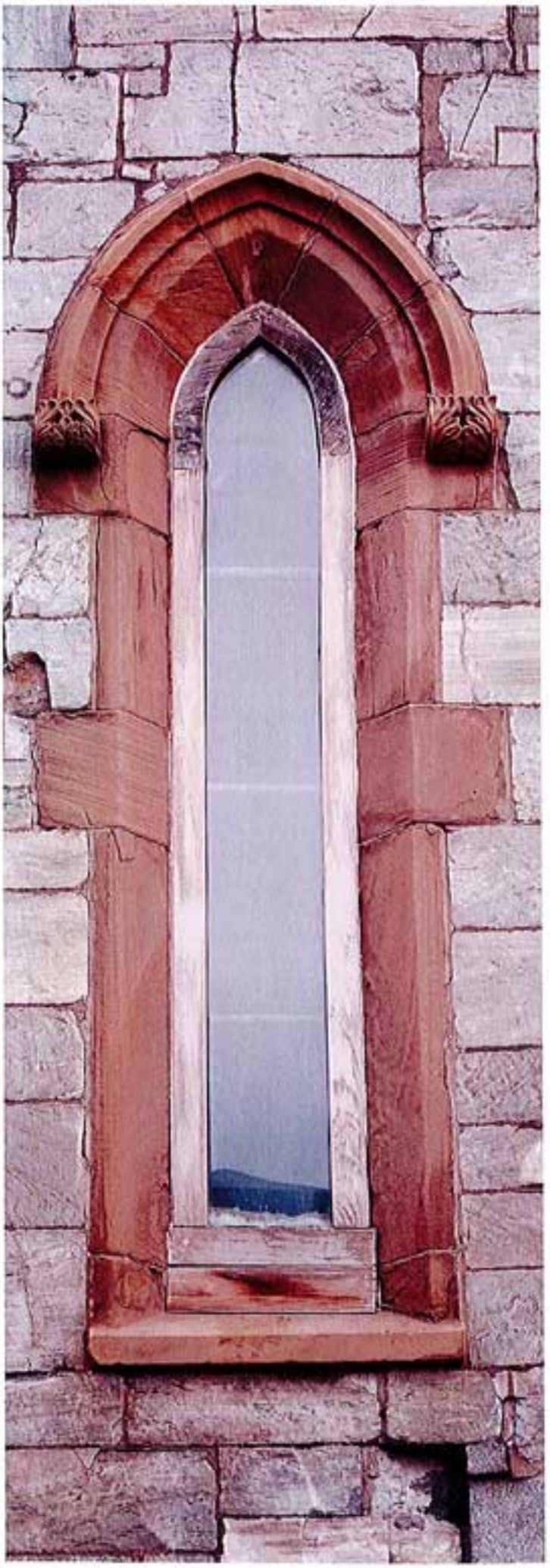
The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is one of the finest examples of sacred architecture in Atlantic Canada. The Cathedral was recognized as a historic place in 2008 by the province of New Brunswick and later added to the Canadian Register of Historic Places in 2009. The statement of significance from the Register as it pertains to the Cathedral is as follows:

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception located on Waterloo Street in Saint John consists of the stone, Gothic Revival cathedral and the stone, Gothic Revival/Italianate Bishop's Palace, which serves as a residence for the bishops in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saint John.

Heritage Value

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is a designated local historic place for its historical and religious association with early Irish Catholic immigrants to Saint John and for its architecture.

The Cathedral has architectural value as a major work of Saint John architect Matthew Stead (1808-1880). The Cathedral is an excellent example of a place of worship in the Gothic Revival style that serves as a city landmark. Built on a cruciform plan, it features English Gothic style massing, elements and ornamental detail. The interior of the church includes arcading between the nave and side aisles with a niched statuary, a clerestory above, a Cassavant organ consisting of some 3,000 pipes, 14 magnificent stained-glass windows, richly carved woodwork furniture in the sanctuary and an ornate Virgin's Chapel in the north of the main altar. Commemorative and liturgical furniture and ornamentation dating from the full range of the history of the diocese also adorn the interior. With its 230-foot spire it remains one of the highest points on Saint John's skyline. To this day, it continues to be a beacon for many in our city and province.



CATHEDRAL PRESERVATION

From 1855 to 1885, work continued on the most magnificent aspect of construction, both interior and exterior. Upon completion in 1885, the Cathedral was consecrated in one of the biggest events in Saint John history, with thousands of people attending the grand celebration.

Over the following twenty-five years a number of renovations took place on both the Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace to upgrade and maintain this magnificent building. On the 100th Anniversary in 1955, the Cathedral closed after Easter to allow for new wiring, lighting, terrazzo floors and pews.

Almost 30 years later, in 1983, a major restoration project was again underway to modernize the Cathedral with emphasis on energy conservation. Work was conducted on the exterior stonework, windows, doors, painting as well as flood lighting. A section of the existing roof was replaced.

Interior work included the ceiling insulation and repainting. The stained-glass windows were re-leaded, and the floors were stripped and revealed.

Other updates included adding a wheelchair-accessible entrance and washroom. This work was all done within a seven-month period at a cost of $1.4 million.

In 2013 the diocese recognized that the Cathedral was once again in need of major work, with a priority on complete re-roofing. A fundraising campaign was conducted raising $1.5 million, covering the cost of the new roof which was completed in 2016.

Although the roof remains in excellent condition, a new problem presented. In May 2017, a section of the ceiling fell during Sunday Mass. It was immediately realized that a structural assessment was required. Engineering and heritage restoration specialists determined many problems areas.

- The ceiling has suffered water damage over many years and is very unstable
- The bell tower's heavy stone masonry is in poor condition
- The exterior walls have deteriorated stone
- New storm windows with wood frames are required
- Heritage wood doors are in poor condition
- Attic safety and insulation require upgrades

Estimated Cost of Repairs - $12 Million

OUR CATHEDRAL TODAY

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception's history stands as a tribute to immigrants who sought refuge in New Brunswick so many years ago and who worked diligently to establish this special place of worship. Close to 170 years later, the Cathedral remains true to its roots of serving the poor, the marginalized and those who seek spiritual guidance and reassurance, particularly through the celebration of the sacraments, prayerful encounters and devotions.

Restoration efforts will enable the Cathedral to continue the important mission of the Church, spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ to the peripheries and serving Jesus in the poorest of the poor through many outreaches, including:

Responding to Immigrants:

A 2019 UNB study shows that immigration has been steadily increasing in Saint John since 2005, with the largest numbers from China and the Philippines. The Cathedral parish operates a number of outreach programs for immigrants and they in turn play an important part in the life of the Cathedral, and many individuals assisted through our Immigrant and Refugee Support Center become Cathedral parishioners.

Supporting the Poor:

St. Vincent de Paul Society provides food, clothing and household goods to those in need in the neighborhood and beyond.

Supporting the Sick:

The Cathedral parish offers a nursing outreach program comprised of a Parish Nurse working in collaboration with the priest, the parish, and the community to see patients on a weekly basis at the St. Vincent de Paul Center.

Supporting Housing:

The Cathedral is a partner of the Steepleview Project which is in the process of building non-profit housing for low-income and marginalized people.

Supporting Parishes

10% of each dollar raised will be used to establish a diocesan endowment fund to serve youth, seniors, religious education and leadership formation needs in all parishes of the diocese.

GIFTS OF SUPPORT

Gifts to the Cathedral Restoration Project may be made in many ways, including:

- Multi-year pledges • Securities • Bequests
- Life Insurance • One-time gifts

Donations may be made by cheque or email money transfer, see https://dioceseofsaintjohn.org/donations for more information. We encourage you to speak with your financial advisor or lawyer to discuss significant financial decisions.

CATHEDRAL RESTORATION BOARD

Ann-Marie Tingley, ONB | Chair
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James Snow, CPA, FCGA
Nicole Arseneau Sluyter
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CATHEDRAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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THE PROJECT

Under the management of Stantec Inc., the work will be done in phases, based on the most critical needs.

CATHEDRAL RESTORATION
SPRING 2022

PHASE 1 | Roof - Completed

PHASE 2 | Ceiling and Exterior Doors

Ceiling: Resulting from the previous damaged roof, the ceiling plaster is very unstable and represents a safety concern.

Doors: The exterior doors are in poor condition with peeling paint, exposed wood and rot.

PHASE 3 | Masonry and Windows

Bell Tower: The bell tower's heavy stone masonry is in poor condition and exhibits cracked and missing mortar, broken and missing stone, separation and out of plane movement as well as the separation of stone buttresses from the tower.

Spire Windows: Glass pane replacement required

Storm Windows: Replacement required

Limestone and Sandstone: Removal of mortar repairs from face of the stone, replacement of deteriorated stone, crack repair and stabilization. This situation occurs on all four sides of the Cathedral.

PHASE 4 | Foundation and Asphalt Repair

PHASE 5 | Interior Painting and Upgrades

Remaining Estimated Project Cost – $12 Million