

St. Sophia's Ukrainian Parish one step closer to having a home

St. Sophia's Ukrainian Catholic Parish is one step closer to having a permanent home.

Parishioners came together July 8 as Bishop David Motiuk led the blessing of the site of their new \$3.2-million church in Sherwood Park, which is expected to be completed by April 2019.

It will be home for a parish that has spent years worshipping in Sherwood Park schools – and at one point, even in a funeral home.



Philip HnatiukChris Berthelot, Grandin Media

“It’s nice to know you have something permanent. We were never sure that we may have to move again, there was always that question,” said Philip Hnatiuk, vice-chair of the St. Sophia parish council.



Ellen YakimyshynChris Berthelot, Grandin Media

Ellen Yakimyshyn, a former parish council chair said: “Having a home of our own will allow us that opportunity to continue to grow and be active members of this Sherwood Park community.”

The new 12,500-square-foot building, north of Baseline Road and west of Range

Road 224, will allow St. Sophia's Parish to finally have a permanent home.



Father Rendy Yackimec Chris Berthelot, Grandin Media

"It's fantastic. We can celebrate life, in our own style and in our own traditions," said Father Rendy Yackimec, the pastor of St. Sophia's Parish, which was established in 2002.

"We've been like Moses wandering around in the desert."

Complete with a multi-purpose room and several classrooms, the single-storey church will incorporate traditional Byzantine church features – such as domes – with the latest in modern architecture.

"The architecture will be readily recognized from passersby on Baseline Road, (with) the traditional Byzantine church. However, those domes will have a bit of a modern flavour to them," said Bishop David Motiuk. "A little bit of a tradition of the old, but a little bit of looking into the future as well."

With 150 registered families, St. Sophia parishioners currently celebrate the Divine Liturgy at Madonna Catholic School in Sherwood Park. Each Sunday, parishioners set up folding chairs, icons, and even an altar on wheels – and there's no shortage of help to do that.



Artist's rendering of the future St. Sophia church building on the east side of Sherwood Park. Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton

To fund the build, St. Sophia's Parish has received a loan from the Eparchy of Edmonton, to be paid back by the parishioners over 30 years.

The parish has already raised more than \$600,000 by selling perogies and by hosting a fall dance, a golf tournament, and a traditional Ukrainian New Year's 'Malanka' celebration. More of these activities will also fund the rest of the repayment.



Bishop David Motiuk Chris Berthelot, Grandin Media

St. Sophia's Parish also has a "buy-a-brick" fundraising campaign, where donors are recognized with wall plaques on the new building.

"This was very much a grassroots movement, (and) the faith means a lot to them," said Motiuk.

"For passersby, to see this witness of faith in their own community, to know

that people are praying for them and their families and their wellbeing, it's huge."



Linda Osinchuk Chris Berthelot, Grandin Media

Linda Osinchuk, the original chair of St. Sophia's parish council, agrees.

"It took a lot of work in regards to making sure people believed that this should happen," said Osinchuk, a former mayor of Strathcona County.

"We moved around a lot, but it was the families that stood fast."

Father Yackimec joked that the new building will provide a more appropriate place for parishioners celebrate the sacraments, especially marriage.

"We had to book another church, because no one wants to be married in a funeral home or a school!"