



Father Khanh Pham-Nguyen, Sts. Peter and Paul's pastor, and Bishop Larry Silva untie a maile lei at the front door of the parish's newly purchased building. The bishop then blessed the new building (inset) inside and out.

HCH photos | Anna Weaver

Expanding the parish footprint



Sts. Peter and Paul finds room to grow after years of hope and effort

By Anna Weaver
Hawaii Catholic Herald

On July 3, Bishop Larry Silva blessed a newly purchased three-story commercial office building next to Sts. Peter and Paul Parish. The urban Honolulu parish near Ala Moana Shopping Center had been in need of more space for some time.

The bishop inaugurated the "new to them" building, formerly owned by ProPark, untying, with the pastor, the maile lei draping the front entrance and sprinkling holy water on the walls within.

About 145 people attended the Mass that followed, spaced out in the pews by ushers following pandemic protocol and

into overflow space in the vestibule and outside.

In his homily, Bishop Silva drew a comparison between the parish expansion and St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians in the second reading for that Sunday.

"We will find our greatest joy in accepting the hardships of the Gospel, giving witness to Jesus, and letting people know that he is alive and well and wants to continue his ministry of forgiveness and charity," the bishop said.

At the end of Mass, Father Khanh Pham-Nguyen, Sts. Peter and Paul's pastor, thanked all who made the building purchase possible. He especially thanked Bishop Silva, who had encouraged the

pastor even when it seemed the chance to buy the neighboring structure had disappeared.

As a thank you, Father Pham-Nguyen presented the bishop with a basket of his favorite snacks.

Bishop Silva in turn told the congregation, "I think you would not have that building if not for Father Khanh."

After Mass, there was a program outside in the parking lot by the new building including a lion dance, comedy routine from local entertainer Frank De Lima, music and bentos to go.

Half century of history

Sts. Peter and Paul Church celebrated 50 years in September 2019. Bishop

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Sts. Peter and Paul Parish expands its footprint after years of effort

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John J. Scanlan created the church community in 1968 to serve Honolulu's Kewalo, Kapiolani, Ala Moana, McCully and Ala Wai districts. Msgr. Francis A. Marzen was the founding pastor, and Masses were celebrated at nearby hotels until the completion of the semi-circular parish church on Kaheka Street in 1969.

In the 1980s, the pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul, Father Anthony Bolger, bought a nearby condo for the priests' residence so that the space attached to the back of the church could be used for offices and meetings. Father Pham-Nguyen said the condo is in the process of being sold to help cover the new building purchase.

For years, the parish has needed more room to expand its programs and ministries. With its own space so limited, it looked at adjacent or nearby buildings. A few earlier attempts at purchasing other spaces fell through.

But in December 2020, the parish finally was able to purchase the three-story building at 771 Amana Street.

Brian Hayashida, a previous Sts. Peter and Paul capital campaign chairman, said that buying the property was a necessity for the parish. With more residential buildings going up in the surrounding area, Sts. Peter and Paul will be seeing more parishioners as new residents move in nearby.

"To extend the footprint, it's critical for us," Hayashida said.



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At left, Father Khanh Pham-Nguyen gives closing remarks and thanks at the end of the July 3 Mass celebrating the parish's new building.

The parish will rent out the top two floors to ProPark, a parking management company, and other current tenants to help cover the cost of the purchase. It will use the bottom floor for parish programs. There's also a plan underway to construct a walkway between the church and the three-story building to make it safer to cross the parking lots between the two.

After initial capital campaign work, \$3 million remains to be

raised to cover the \$5.2 million purchase cost. To help, the parish has started a fundraising brick wall where people can purchase bricks with their name on it for \$1,000 to support the capital campaign.

"It's a blessing," Father Pham-Nguyen said. "But now we have to find a way to secure the building for the future of our parish and our mission and to service the debt."

Father Pham-Nguyen said



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Parishioners wait for the Mass to start inside the circular Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

buying during the pandemic was a difficult decision because "it's risky to invest at a time like this when people are suffering and there is economic uncertainty."

But there were very few other options to expand the parish's workspace if the building purchase had been passed up. In the end, the parish was able to buy the property for less than it had offered on previous purchase offers.

Father Pham-Nguyen told the

Hawaii Catholic Herald that at one point in the back and forth of offered and failed or withdrawn property negotiations, he had been fairly disheartened. But Bishop Silva encouraged him, saying, "Khanh, just keep the hope; you can never know."

"He was exactly right," Father Pham-Nguyen said.

The priest said of the Amana Street property, "We hope it'll secure our parish and mission for the next 50 years."