



Herald photo by David Rossiter

St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in the downtown remains shuttered even though the land deal for a new All Saints Parish mega-church on the corner of 43 Street and Highway 4 has fallen through.

# St. Patrick's marks 100-year anniversary

**CELEBRATION COMES WITH HOPE FOR RESURRECTION OF CHURCH, AS LAND DEAL FALLS THROUGH**

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For one century, St. Patrick's has been "home" to generations of Catholics in Lethbridge and area.

The landmark downtown church has been dark in recent years, closed by diocesan officials in Calgary. But more than 400 former parishioners will celebrate its life and witness here on Aug. 25.

"We want to celebrate such a happy event, and keep politics out of it," says longtime St. Pat's member Francis Noronha, one of the celebration's organizers.

But plans to replace St. Patrick's and two more Lethbridge parish churches with a "mega-church" near the Coutts highway have recently been stymied. Now many members of the downtown parish church hope Catholic officials in Calgary will reconsider their decision to leave St. Patrick's mothballed

indefinitely.

Noronha says about 450 members and guests are expected at the Saturday evening event at the Lethbridge Lodge.

"It was a sell-out a month before it's held," he reports.

Priests and nuns who've served at St. Patrick's over the years will be saluted, he adds, and the superior of the Oblate order — responsible for the parish's birth in August 1913 — will also attend. But Bishop Fred Henry, who ordered local priests to "shutter" the church, will not attend.

"Together with the churches of other Christian denominations in the downtown area of the city, St. Patrick's Church has stood as a great testament to the Christian faith of the founders of our fair city," Noronha says.

The congregation at Southminster United Church, half a block away, is also celebrating 100 years of worship and community service this year.

Walking tours and other events are planned as part of the St. Patrick's celebration, and organizers stress they're open to everyone in the city.

"This is a community celebration as St. Patrick's Church has played a role in and influenced the development of our city in many ways through its century of service," Noronha says.

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# ST. PATRICK'S

Over that time two smaller churches — Assumption on the city's southside, St. Basil's in the north — have also opened as the city grew. Under a scheme announced by the Calgary bishop several years ago, all three would be closed if he succeeded in his plans to build a new "mega-church" on the city's outskirts.

But earlier this year, local parish representatives learned land purchase plans for a site near 43 Street and Highway 4 have fallen through. So far, diocesan officials have named no alternate site or strategy.

But Noronha, a member of the Save

Our Churches group that sprang up after St. Pat's went dark two years ago, says many of the city's Catholics hope there's now an opportunity to revitalize their long-serving downtown parish.

Repairs will be needed, however, and he adds a new crack has been reported. Noronha says none of the eastside Catholic churches have been provided with adequate budgets for preventive maintenance.

But given the opportunity, he predicts many parishioners would contribute toward building restoration for all three.

"People would raise funds for renewal and repairs, and to get St. Patrick's in good shape again."