

NEWSLETTER

OF THE BASILICA HERITAGE FOUNDATION

FALL 2021



THE
BASILICA HERITAGE
FOUNDATION

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

8 November 2021

Dear friends,

I hope that this letter finds you well. For each of us, and for the Basilica Heritage Foundation, the past twenty months have been challenging. As the Covid-19 pandemic took hold and spread throughout our world, many ordinary daily activities ground to a halt. At the onset of the pandemic the Basilica Heritage Foundation saw an opportunity to be instrumental in livestreaming Daily Mass and other spiritual activities from our beautiful historic Basilica-Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Always visible on the hill overlooking St. John's Harbour, in the darkest days of the pandemic, our Basilica-Cathedral was fortunate to be able to shine as a beacon of hope into thousands of homes through your generosity. Thank you. Since our first livestreamed Mass in mid-March 2020, we have streamed more than 750 liturgies to over 750,000 viewers worldwide.

Right now, we're doing everything possible to sustain daily operations and build back our capacity to move forward with some vital restoration projects. As you know, the Basilica Heritage Foundation was established in 1998 as an independent registered Canadian charitable foundation. Our mission is to preserve, restore, conserve and interpret the Basilica Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in St. John's, Newfoundland as a National Historic Site of Canada, so that future generations may appreciate its sanctity and cultural and historic significance. The Foundation Inc. is a separate and independent corporate entity from the Archdiocese of St. John's and from the Basilica Cathedral Parish. We independently and regularly file our financial statements with the Canada Revenue Agency and post our annual reports on governance, expenditures and activities on our website www.thebasilica.net. Because the BHF is an independent registered Canadian charitable foundation, your donations are protected and are not affected by any ongoing legal proceedings involving the Archdiocese of St. John's, which is a separate corporate entity.

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Archbishop Peter Hundt says morning Mass.

The Basilica Heritage Foundation raises funds for the preservation, conservation and restoration of the Basilica Cathedral of St. John the Baptist and its associated heritage buildings and properties and their contents. Our current major project is the restoration of the Basilica’s collection of stained-glass windows. There are 28 of these in the clerestory and 35 smaller windows in the ambulatory surrounding the church. These windows tell the stories of those who built this marvellous building, giving “not some, but all, of what they had.” Through the Stained-Glass Window Restoration Project, we aim to stabilize and restore these marvellous Irish, French and English windows, so that we and future generations can be inspired, and continue to be part of the ongoing story that is our beloved Basilica.

I invite you to join us and become part of this project by donating to the Basilica Heritage Foundation. If you’re unable to donate at this time, there are many other ways you can support us! Give us a call or drop by the Basilica to purchase some of our stained-glass replica Christmas ornaments, or buy a packet of our note cards. They make excellent and reasonably-priced Christmas gifts. You can also advocate for us by sharing our mission with a family member or friend. Even a quick mention on your social media would mean the world to us. In times like this, we’re reminded of how interconnected we all are. Thank you for being part of our community. Without you, none of this is possible.

Stay safe and well,



Anne Walsh
Chair, Basilica Heritage Foundation Inc.



THE FOUNDATION BOARD

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(Executive Director)

The Basilica Heritage
Foundation needs
volunteers!

no experience
required. all training
provided.

staff the **visitors desk**

livestream **mass**

welcome guests to the **museum**

promote our **souvenirs**

guide tourists on a tour

bhf.inquiries@thebasilica.net | 754 2170



unique adventures & fun guaranteed!

HIGHLIGHTS

OF THE WORK OF THE BASILICA HERITAGE FOUNDATION, MARCH 2020- NOVEMBER 2021

DECEMBER 2019 - MARCH 2020

A major donor gave the BHF a remote-controlled pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) robotic television camera, as well as all the design and website programming for a new BHF website (www.thebasilica.net) which went online during summer 2020, as well as installation and unlimited free technical support for a year. The website had an online secure donate button located next to the livestream feed of Daily Mass from the Basilica. When the pandemic closed churches and shut down public gatherings in March 2020, Basilica Masses were livestreamed.

MAY 2020

The BHF board realized that the pandemic was here to stay and that it would be sensible to place livestreaming on a solid technological footing. The existing system using one camera and recording Mass uploaded daily to YouTube by remote control showed that the system was prone to Internet outages and a need to frequently reboot software and systems. Computer and network crashes often came in the middle of Mass, and particularly during funerals and weddings, which was heartbreaking for those watching live who were unable to be physically present. Advice was taken, a new system was designed, and quotes were obtained.

SUMMER 2020

The Basilica Cathedral was wired through the ambulatory attics around the perimeter of the church with 6 kilometers of Cat 6-E ethernet cable in preparation for the new system. Cable runs we made to the BHF server room on the second floor of the Sacristy Annex over the Marian Chapel, and back to a newly-fitted broadcasting room in the old 1853 Franciscan Cloister on the west side of the apse behind the Basilica's High Altar.



Come visit
Away in A Manger
Christmas Nativities
Through the Ages

Saturdays & Sundays 10am-4pm
from 13 November to 19 December 2021
at the Basilica Cathedral Museum
in the Episcopal Library
next to the Basilica Cathedral
of St. John the Baptist, St. John's.
Timed admission by appointment & freewill donation. Covid protocols apply.
Phone 754-2170 to book.

Our robotic cameras.



© 2021 Basilica Heritage Foundation



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The BHF acquired two NDI HX 30x optical zoom robotic PTZ cameras, powered over Ethernet, as well as a Pearl Mini Switcher/Recorder/Encoder, four monitors, and a BirdDog Key Controller for the cameras. Redundancy was built into the system with the capability to completely operate the system remotely using a virtual private network and remote controls.

SUMMER 2020 (CONTINUED)

Unsolicited, upon learning that the first camera wasn't talking to the newest cameras, another generous donor volunteered to cover the costs of a new PTZ Optics 30x optical zoom + 8x digital zoom robotic television cameras. This was installed in front of the organ console outside the railing in the organ loft, and gave the Basilica Foundation three broadcast-quality television cameras.



Our broadcast booth.

Once parts were ordered, the coronavirus pandemic delayed the arrival of parts and components for up to six months. By February 2021, a robust and reliable broadcasting system was installed, able to meet the demands of livestreaming over 500 liturgies a year, as well as talks, lectures, missions, concerts, and other events without crashes or the need for rebooting. Using the Basilica Heritage Foundation's YouTube channel and its Facebook page, as well as by web-posting masses daily on the Foundation website www.thebasilica.net, the Basilica Parish website www.thebasilica.church, and the Archdiocese website, by November 2021, over 750 liturgies had been livestreamed, and received over 750,000 views in over 20 countries, well beyond Newfoundland and Labrador.

An online English audio tour and online Matterport Virtual video tour of the Basilica were launched at www.thebasilica.net under TOURS. The tour was written by Board Chair Dr. Anne Walsh and the Executive Director, John FitzGerald.

In 2020, though no new stained glass work could be undertaken because the Coronavirus pandemic closed the Basilica, the Basilica Heritage Foundation completed payment on the stained glass restoration works begun in 2019.

WINTER 2020

The BHF applied for federal grants to hire tour guides for the Basilica. In July 2021, these grants were awarded but because tourism had virtually ended during the pandemic, and the Basilica was frequently closed, these positions had to be re-worked. The BHF pivoted. The guides worked in the Basilica Museum's collections, undertaking cataloguing, heritage recording, archival description, artifact photography, transcription of historical interviews, documentation of heritage resources, preparing a mailout to foundation donors, and the reorganization of storage rooms. One student worked with Board Chair Dr. Anne Walsh to sort all books in storage for the Episcopal Library, and reviewed storage conditions to ensure appropriate conservation measures were maintained. Another student completed a 400-page photo and text inventory of 150 Nativity sets in the Basilica Cathedral Museum's Artifact Collection.

SUMMER 2021

The BHF partnered with Gower Street United Church, St. Andrew's (the Kirk) Presbyterian Church, and the Anglican Cathedral to offer guided tours of the Ecclesiastical District National Historic Site on Thursday afternoons for six weeks. Though the pandemic required limiting capacity to 15 persons per tour, the tours were very popular and we hope to offer them again in Summer 2022.



SUMMER 2021 (CONTINUED)



ECCLESIASTICAL DISTRICT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

O F C A N A D A

Logo of the Ecclesiastical District National Historic Site, inspired by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board plaque designating the district, found on the stone wall of the Anglican Cathedral cemetery, Duckworth Street.

An online Spanish audio tour and an online English audio tour, using QR CODES, were created. Visitors coming to the Basilica can purchase for a small fee the guide brochure, and using their own smartphone and earphones/earbuds, they can take a socially-distanced, self-guided tour of the Basilica.



Example of a QR code in the brochure.

In winter 2021, the BHF again applied for federal grants with which to hire tour guides for the Basilica. In July 2021, two guides began offering summertime tours for eight weeks. Compared to visitor numbers in 2019 (essentially 35,000 visitors to the Basilica not including regular congregations) visitor numbers to the Basilica in 2021 were under 1000 visitors.

FALL 2021

As of the end of October 2021, the BHF has been belatedly awarded an additional federal government grant to hire part-time tour guides for the Basilica from early November 2021 until 31 March 2022. If you know someone under 30 interested in a part time job, encourage them to check the Young Canada Works website or contact the BHF.



*Need a gift for that special person?
Discover a unique heritage
collection of gifts inspired by
the incredible artistry of the
Basilica Cathedral*

At the Basilica Visitors' Desk
Before and after weekend Masses
13 Nov. to 19 Dec.



NOTABLE DONATIONS



Throughout the fall and culminating in December 2020, the BHF received an extensive donation of plaster mouldings, forms, artifacts, tools, photos, and a family history from the Conway Family. The Conway brothers were the Basilica's plasterers - the cathedral interior is a superb, internationally-significant example of Italianate plasterwork begun by the Conway family from Ireland in the 1850s and continued through 5 generations until the 1990s.



Mr. Noel Conway met with Msgr. Francis Puddister and Drs. Anne Walsh and John FitzGerald and gave an extensive recorded interview documenting his family's work in the plastering trade. In exchange for these priceless artifacts and information donation to the BHF, the Basilica Museum will mount an exhibit on the work and exceptional artisanship of the Conway family, in company with Gower Street United Church and St. Andrew's The Kirk for whom the Conways also did work.

During Summer 2020, the Newfoundland sculptor Morgan MacDonald began the process of restoring a corroded bronze lectern-podium used at the Basilica from 1955 to about 1990. Additionally, local carpenter T.J. Duffenais used a remaindered piece of white oak similar to those used in the Basilica pews to create a new solid oak top for this restored lectern, which was placed back in service in early 2021.



In 2020 Mr. MacDonald also restored a bronze Irish bell from the foundry of Matthew Byrne in Dublin which was removed from the Mount St. Francis Monastery and given to the BHF. Five Byrne bells may be already found in the Basilica's west tower. Mr. MacDonald made an iron mounting bracket for the bell so that it may be mounted just outside the Basilica's sacristy as an interior church bell to ring to signify the start of Mass, as is the custom worldwide at others Basilicas and cathedrals.



Mr. MacDonald also restored the bronze altar rail gates to the Basilica's marble Sanctuary Rail. The rail and gates were donated in 1914 by Mrs. Catherine Howley Morris, the sister of Archbishop Howley. In 1955 the bronze gates were removed and placed in storage. Recently rediscovered, they were restored by Mr. MacDonald who advised that they were the work of the Scanziani Foundry of Milan, Italy, the firm which later fabricated the panels and fittings of the bronze memorial plaques in memory of those killed at Beaumont Hamel Newfoundland Park, France. The decision was therefore taken to restore the bronze gates to the Basilica to acknowledge the exceptional donation of Mrs. Howley Morris and the close linkage with the Beaumont Hamel Memorial.



During summer 2021, a BHF donor was alerted by a sharp-eyed friend to the existence in a storage shed on Roache's Line of three stained glass windows of interest. Upon inspection it was discovered that while one of these windows (St. Bridget) had already been sold, the two remaining ones (Sts. John the Baptist and St. Francis Xavier) matched a portion of a window in storage in the Basilica Museum's storerooms. These three windows had been installed in the Basilica around the time of Archbishop Roche's installation as Archbishop in June 1915, but had been removed circa 1954 during renovations to the Basilica, prior to the installation of 35 windows from the firm of Gerard Earley in Dublin. The donor immediately purchased the windows and donated them to the BHF on condition that they be restored and placed in an appropriate location in the Basilica-Cathedral complex.



The Basilica Heritage Foundation presents
an illustrated public history talk:

The Amazing Things We Learned Restoring the Basilica's Stained Glass Windows

With speakers John FitzGerald, Anne Walsh
and Susan Chalker Browne. Thursday 18
November at 7:30pm in the Basilica.
Admission by free-will donation.

HERITAGE VIDEOS

Have a look under "LEARN" on the BHF website for our new HERITAGE MOMENTS videos. EPISODES INCLUDE: Hugh Dougherty, Dickie Ivory, and The Great Rose of the Basilica Ceiling.



FREE E-BOOK

The BHF & Memorial University Library have published online the full downloadable PDF text of the book *The Finest Room in the Colony*, a collection of essays documenting the books and history of the Episcopal Library next to the Basilica. Did you know that the Basilica Library was the first Public Library in Newfoundland and Labrador? Check it out under "LEARN" on the BHF WEBSITE.



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Sustained winds of over 170km/h from Hurricane Larry caused severe damage to this window in the Basilica's West Tower on 10 September 2021. When funds and weather permit, this window will need to be restored.

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