



8-17-26

## **Final decision made regarding former St. Stephen Church building**

Following the Diocese of Erie's Aug. 9 update concerning the emergency removal of the tower at the former St. Stephen Church building in Oil City, St. Joseph Parish has completed its initial consultation regarding the future of the property.

After prayerful and emotional discussion, the parish Pastoral and Finance Councils unanimously supported the decision to demolish the remaining building and clear the property for a potential future sale. The decision was made in consultation with Father Dan Hoffman, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, parish leadership, Bishop Lawrence Persico and diocesan officials.

The former St. Stephen Church building sustained additional damage to its roof and front entrance during the emergency removal of the severely deteriorated tower. After considering the condition of the remaining structure and the parish's options, parish and diocesan leaders determined that demolition is the most responsible path forward.

The timeline is still being finalized, but demolition and site clearing are expected to take place within the next four to eight weeks. The parish continues working with contractors to safely remove and preserve stained-glass windows, statues and other remaining sacred and historically significant items.

The Diocese of Erie and St. Joseph Parish recognize the deep spiritual and emotional connection generations of parishioners and community members have to the former St. Stephen Church building. This decision was not made lightly, and the parish remains committed to supporting its members as they mourn this loss and move forward together as one Catholic community in Oil City.

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