

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Concerning the Feasibility Study and Renovation Project

St. Christopher's Church, January 2010

Why did it take so long to get the Feasibility Study results? The Feasibility Study was conducted by Kevin Shaw in the spring of 2009. Kevin is not nor ever has been a member of St. Christopher's. At the time of the survey, Kevin was employed by the Diocese as a marketing consultant. Initially, results were expected in time for the June vestry meeting. Completion of the study and compiling of the results encountered several unanticipated and major hurdles. Several people selected at random to be interviewed for the study refused to acknowledge or respond to calls and letters from Kevin. Without any information from these people, Kevin waited over a month before selecting others. About this time, a series of serious family matters cut into Kevin's time and attention. Before these issues were settled, budgets cuts at the diocese eliminated his position. Though his position at the diocese ended in August, his family issues continued. It was late November before Kevin was able to compile the raw data, create graphs and write the narrative.

After hearing the results of the Feasibility Study, what was the vestry vote on the renovation project? Vestry members received a written copy of the Feasibility Study on November 16th, 2009. They had a week to read and study it. All 14 members of the vestry were present to hear the feasibility study report presented by Kevin Shaw on November 23rd. Following the report, Kevin answered clarifying questions. A vote was taken on whether to proceed or not. The vote to proceed with the project was unanimous in favor of proceeding.

Why are we not changing the scope of the project at this time? The vestry approved that at this time the scope remain the same. (This vote was 11 in favor, two opposed and one abstention.) The reasons for this are several. First, we do not know exact or current costs. The builder has indicated the costs could be less than bid a year ago. Next, we do not know exactly how much can be raised through pledging or how much may be needed for a construction loan. There are some dedicated funds already in hand, but this amount could change. In addition, Kevin Shaw felt that changing the scope at this time would be premature. Any changes in scope should wait until the financial questions can be revisited and updated. The Renovation Committee is on gathering updated cost information.

Why are we planning this project? Why is it necessary? There is nothing wrong with the pews. The choir is fine where it is. People who can't handle the steps to the altar can receive communion at the bottom of the steps or at their seat. There are three main focuses to this project: current and future liturgical modeling; the need for congregational sustainability through growth; and physical concerns surrounding accessibility and personal safety, enhanced lighting and sound capacities, energy conservation, and an overall updated general appearance and functionality of the worship space.

Liturgical modeling as indicated by the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* rubrics encourages inclusiveness and placement of the Word amongst the people. To do this, a different configuration of St. Christopher's worship space needs to be achieved. This includes relocation of the altar to be amid the people, removal of barriers between worshippers and the holy table, a prominent and accessible location for the baptismal font, and a location for the choir and clergy so they are an integral part of the congregation, not separate and removed as they are currently (that is chancel, nave, and choir loft).

In the 1978 book Prayer Book Renewal by William Pregnall, he states: “{We seek a} liturgical space usable for a variety of movements, whether passing the peace, having a wedding or receiving communion..(and to use traditional architecture) is to miss much of the spirit of freedom and congregational participation implied in the new rites.” See Appendix A for additional passages selected by Fr. Michael from Pregnall’s book.

Growth is essential to sustain the congregation. Attracting and retaining new members requires the ability to embrace current liturgical practices as well as up-to-date basics such as excellent lighting, accessibility and acoustics. New members often are first attracted to accessible and vibrant worship spaces, a liturgy that invites them to participate, provides a welcoming environment, and activities which encourage their ongoing engagement and participation.

The physical issues surrounding the renovation project are varied but all aimed at achievement of a liturgical space that provides a variety of seating options, is accessible for all, incorporates the choir as an integral component of the worshipping congregation, and has a welcoming and up-to-date appearance. It also provides fine acoustics, even lighting, and reduces overall energy consumption.

The challenge of the steps to the altar was recognized over 40 years ago when hand railings were installed. Relocation of the altar to the north wall and its placement on a one-step platform makes it available to all.

The asbestos tile floor is a recognized health hazard. Removal of the asbestos tile requires removal of the pews. Each pew is affixed to the floor by 6-8 bolts. Once the pews are lifted from the bolts, the bolts must be broken off below the surface level. Beneath the tiles is concrete which will be refinished. (Additional information on the floor can be found under “Why will we have a cement floor?” and on the pew chairs in the next section)

Nearly all of our congregational surveys in the last 10 years have indicated the need for more light in the sanctuary. The current pendants consume 900 watts each. We have 10 of them. These will be rewired to provide more light while being much more energy efficient. The proposed dormers will bring in ambient light that is presently virtually absent. Painting the ceiling a light color will lighten the room as well as provide an energy-loss sealant and a more sound resilient surface. With the lighter ceiling, the side soffit lights will give better up lighting than is presently possible.

Most current surveys indicate a need for a better sound system. The new system is designed to properly amplify the spoken word as it comes from a wide range of voices. (The music does not require amplification.)

Why do we need dormers? Dormers will provide the missing ambient light that we seek. Their location midway in the sanctuary will give the feel of our missing transept. Their placement above the new altar and above the new baptismal font is intentional to bring light and focus to those two most important features of the sanctuary. They will also bring a feeling of continual vibrancy and welcoming to the sanctuary even when it is not in use.

Why replace the pews? The pews and bolts will need to be removed to redo the floor. To reinstall them would be counterproductive and sabotage the purpose of attaining a worship space that can be configured for a variety of types of worship and events. The pews cannot be refinished to lighten them up as they are a veneer construction that does not refinish easily. Many are in shabby condition.

Pew chairs provide flexibility to change the look and feel of the space. Reconfiguration of pew chairs promotes emphasis of different types of liturgical seasons and services. These can be ordinary time, penitential seasons (Lent and Advent) and feast days such as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Pew chairs accommodate all types of events such as for brides who want a center aisle, Sunday School or other performances like special musical events. Moveable pew chairs make cleaning the floor easier.

When placed side by side in straight rows, pew chairs look like pews. Special removable hooks keep them together and prevent slipping around. The pew chairs will have book racks and kneelers. A few will have arms. Research studies show that people are more willing to sit next to a stranger in a pew chair than on a long pew. Thus more people can happily be accommodated in pew chairs than straight pews. Note; Remember the controversy surrounding the removal of the pews from the chapel? It is hard to imagine that space without the new pew chairs.

Can pew chairs be moved and stored? Pew chairs can be moved into new arrangements or pushed to the sides of the sanctuary. They cannot be readily stored out of the sanctuary. Pews, however, can be neither moved nor stored.

Why do we need to move the choir to the current chancel area of the church? The choir is an integral part of a liturgical worship service. It moves the service along as well as enhances the worship experience. The current location of the choir excludes it from belonging to the community. Anyone who cannot climb the stairs is unable to participate in the choir. All choir members want to be where they can see the at least some of the faces of the congregation as well as feel they are part of the worshipping community, not a displaced adjunct. Moving the choir to the space vacated by the altar allows it to be seen and be a true part of the worship experience. For members who cannot manage the steps, there will be a small lift placed near where the current pulpit is located.

Currently, the music director is unable to adequately see and receive cues from the altar area nor can the processional or recessional party members be seen from the organ console.

If the choir moves to the current chancel area, what will be done about an organ? There are several self-contained pipe organs available in the metro area which can be rented. The existing organ is in extremely poor condition. Given its age and heavy use over time, it can neither be repaired nor successfully moved. Playing it is akin to driving a car with power steering and power brakes when neither of those systems is functioning. Purchase of a new organ is a separate project from the current renovation project. Further information about organ replacement is in the Organ Committee Report available in the parish library.

If the choir and organ move from the choir loft, what will be done with the area? The choir loft floor is currently in five levels. This will be reduced to three levels. A few of the current pews in the best condition will be lifted to the loft to be used for overflow seating.

What about the current cross above the altar? There is no plan to move the cross. It will stay where it is. Note: the cross is not wood but cast aluminum.

What are we going to keep? The hymn boards will be refinished and remounted. We will keep but move the sanctuary light, the candlesticks, the altar lectionary book and processional cross. Altar linens that can be appropriately resized for a new altar will be retained. We will have the same hymnals and prayer books. Additional information about liturgical furnishings is in the renovation notebooks in the library.

What about heating and air conditioning costs and other energy saving measures? An energy audit was conducted by Xcel in the summer of 2009. A copy of the audit is in the renovation notebooks in the library. The renovation plan addresses the issues of lighting inefficiency and warm or cold air escaping through the soffits. The pendant light fixtures can be rewired for dimmable fluorescent bulbs and the soffits will be closed and sealed.

Do we really need a new altar? Yes, definitely. The current one is 9' long and made of plywood. It has chipped in a number of places. These have been hidden by the Altar Guild using black markers. The current one is much larger than necessary even in its present location. An altar the size of our current one would overwhelm the newly configured space. Currently, altar linens of sufficient size are extremely costly and very difficult to clean, store and place properly on the altar. A new and smaller altar will look much more like a table that invites us to gather around it together.

Why will we have a cement floor? There's already cement beneath the asbestos tiles. Cement floors of today are nothing like your garage floor, driveway or sidewalk. Now they are available in a variety of colors and visual textures. They are easy to clean and require a minimum of maintenance. Many malls, restaurants, grocery stores and medical facilities have cement floors. As ours is not on grade, it won't be subject to Minnesota's wide temperature fluctuations. Cement floors do not buckle, wrinkle or crackle. Creating a lasting and pleasing cement floor finish in our worship space will enhance the ambience and up-to-date appearance being sought.

Will we still have a communion railing? Yes, there will be some railing for those who wish to kneel to receive communion.

What's an ambo? An ambo is a piece of liturgical furniture which serves as both pulpit and lectern. In keeping with current liturgical modeling, it allows all the Word to be delivered from one place. An ambo is not a new idea. Ambos have been in use for centuries throughout the Christian world. In some cases, these evolved into two "ambos" – pulpit and lectern. Liturgical churches are now moving away from that idea and back to the much older practice of just one. In our chapel, we have an ambo.

We saw some plans and prices about two years ago. Are we still using those plans and prices? No, not at all. Most people were not excited by those plans and the costs were well beyond our means. In the summer of 2008 we severed our commitment with the architectural firm that presented them. The new plans are entirely different. We are also working with a different builder. The overall costs are less than half of what was presented two years ago.

How long will the project take? The builder believes all the work can be done in four to five months. The builder prides himself on keeping the worship space available as much of the time as possible. We should expect some additional minor disruptions for an additional two or three months.

What will this cost? How will we pay for it? Since all the bids we have are nearly a year old, we are in the process of obtaining new cost figures. We will pay for this with pledges spread out over several years, gifts, use of dedicated funds, and if necessary, a construction loan.

Given the current state of the economy, is this the right time to do this? Yes, definitely. Builders are eager for work, the price of materials is lower than in recent times, and interest on loans (should we need one) is near record lows. This is actually an ideal time rather than when the economy is booming, prices high, construction workers backed up for months, and interest rates steadily rising.

Does a yes vote on May 2 mean construction will start? No, not at all. The May 2 vote is only to approve that we proceed with the process.

Are other approvals needed to proceed with the process? Yes. First, we needed approval from the Diocesan Standing Committee. We obtained this in the fall of 2008. We needed vestry approval to proceed after a feasibility study was done. This study was complete November 2009. The vestry voted unanimous approval to proceed with the process on November 23, 2009. We will need 50% approval to proceed with the process from the congregation in a vote on May 2, 2010. If the congregational vote is favorable, we can request approval from the bishop in the form of a letter called "a faculty." This faculty will give us authorization to begin raising funds. The eventual scope of the project will be based on the success of the fund raising program.

Can we have a capital campaign and a renovation project without a rector? Yes to both. There is nothing in canon law that does not allow this to occur. An example of a successful renovation project without a rector in place was done at Messiah in St. Paul.

Were all the current furnishings consecrated? Can they be de-consecrated? The building was consecrated in 1966. Chalice and paten sets have been consecrated over time. All the furnishings were dedicated or blessed at one time or another. When the time comes to begin the construction, we will have a service of closure and thanksgiving for all the time we have used the sanctuary as it is, and a blessing for the work about to begin.

I didn't find the answer to my question. Who should I contact? Contact any member of the Renovation Committee:

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APPENDIX A

Liturgical Change

In the book, Prayer Book Renewal, published in 1978 William Pregnall states: "The Book of Common Prayer demands a free-standing altar table; a visible font; a credence table in the congregation; and liturgical space usable for a variety of movements, whether passing the peace, having a wedding, or receiving communion...(to use traditional architecture)... is to miss much of the spirit of freedom and congregational participation implied in the new rites. Our interior architecture and furniture, as much as any other factor, has locked us in liturgically. To exchange the peace is very difficult physically and spiritually when high-walled pews say "stay apart", "don't allow yourselves to be drawn together in that peace which passes understanding." If the offertory procession is only an acolyte picking up a little round silver box off a shelf in the sanctuary and moving three or four feet with its contents of unreal 'wafers,' that obscures the offering of my life and labor to the Lord, which offering I desperately need to be lifted up and transformed with his life once offered for me. A credence table in the congregation from which my real bread and wine are taken to the altar table better imparts the meaning of what's happening."

"Pews and altar rails are liturgical curse and should be removed. They are late in origin and they need not remain. Movable chairs and standing to receive Communion are more ancient and practical in usage. They promote the notion of a festive gathering, a foretaste of a heavenly banquet. Sitting in rigidly placed rows and kneeling quietly at the altar rail reinforces our passivity and individualism in worship rather than our active membership in the corporate body."

"The altar against the 'east' wall forces the celebrant to turn his back on the people. It becomes only an altar and not a table in that position. Whereas we have too long forgotten the sacrificial aspect while sentimentalizing the family meal aspect of the Eucharist, we can no longer fail to recognize that we are involved in both sacrifice and meal. The last supper makes no sense without the cross of Calvary. But the cross of Calvary is an isolated moment, detached from my existence without the responsive act of the Lord's Supper to the command, 'do this in remembrance of me!'" The altar table must be free-standing, preferably in the midst of the people, not spatially or psychologically removed by distance, rood screen, or altar rails."

OK, the language is a bit strong but considering the strong nature of the conversation around the new prayer book, it is understandable. I present it here to remind us of what we are seeking in the current discussion of renovation at St. Christopher's. We seek a *"liturgical space usable for a variety of movements, whether passing the peace, having a wedding, or receiving communion...(to use traditional architecture)... is to miss much of the spirit of freedom and congregational participation implied in the new rites."* (see above.)

We can argue about the particulars of how to achieve this result but the result is essential.