

Before the holidays began, many of you participated in **“From Reflection to Inspiration,”** a series of workshops lead by the *Art and Environment Action Team* for ***Building Church While Building a Church.*** All in all, this was an extensive process of listing our wants and ideas, as well as statements about our parish identity, and then merging this with national and diocesan guidelines for church interiors

and furnishings. The end result is an “art program,” a document that will guide the decision-making process as we move forward from the outer design of our new church to begin addressing the interior design.

The Building Church committee is pleased to share these results with you now, which were created “through consensus and in peace, with reverence and respect for all.”

## Art Program: A Guide for Art & Environmental Elements in our New Church

**A**t Immaculate Conception Church in Columbia, Illinois, we believe the environment in a worship space should be a reflection of the congregation, providing a familiar, comfortable, welcoming focus for its sacramental activities. But as with any tool for prayer, art and the environment can and should serve as an inspiration to that congregation to grow in faith. In fact, a truly timeless worship space will call generations to further their relationships with God.

We have come together as a parish to continue to define our new spaces with the following guidelines, and are looking forward to soliciting proposals from artists and artisans to see how our dreams may be realized.

Our parish was founded in 1846 at the center of a primarily agricultural community made up of European immigrants, many of them German.



Today our parish continues to enjoy a rural setting, with several of our members still running working farms. However, this evolving community is experiencing tremendous growth as our original families have stayed and prospered, and new families continue to migrate to Columbia to enjoy the quality of life offered here. Our parish now includes more than 1400 households, and grows significantly each year. We would like our new church to reflect our family-oriented, multi-generational culture, and the successful blending of old and new that is a part of our daily lives.

As designed by LePique and Orne Architects, our new church is sited alongside the bluff of the Mississippi River, the great body of water which has shaped our landscape and our livelihoods. The structure will be eight-sided and features gothic influences, and natural light will flood the interior.

Spiritually, the eight-sided octagonal structure has a long tradition in the Catholic Church, representing the Resurrection of Christ. The octagon can echo in the interior design, along with representations of the other two elements at our spiritual core: life-giving Water and Light.

Regarding interior furnishings, parish consensus has determined

that a new Altar and corresponding Ambo are only fitting for a new church, as well as a full-size Baptistry. To reverence the Body of Christ within our church interior, we will also commission a new Tabernacle and new permanent Crucifix. For practical purposes, our congregation will be seated in fixed wooden pews radiating from the altar, with additional padded, flexible seating to be available. We would also like to note that seasonal décor enhances our worship experience, and look forward to incorporating elements that may change with the liturgical calendar.

Our new church will also feature a Marian Shrine and appropriate furnishings. Newly commissioned artworks and icons will include a piece commemorating our Patroness (possibly as a mosaic or statue), as well as Stations of the Cross, and stained glass designed especially for the worship space.

By parish consensus, we are planning to repurpose the wooden carvings of Pe. Augusto Alves Ferreira on our new campus (although not in the worship space), and have plans to eventually move the Emil Frei stained glass from the old church.

In conclusion, our hope and our prayer is a parish and church that will provide a meaningful, prayerful and liturgically appropriate worship space that will help everyone who joins our community — for an hour or a lifetime — to grow in faith.