

BUILDING CHURCH

— *while building a church* —

WORKSHOP REPORT • SESSIONS 5 & 6

“We are a pilgrim people, we are the Church of God,” sang the parish to open the fifth Building Church workshop on Wednesday, October 19, 2005.

Many familiar faces had attended previous workshops. Building Church While Building a Church committee chairperson Andrea Biske quoted Woodrow Wilson, who said, “I not only use all the brains I have, but all that I can borrow.” Added Andrea, “we need all your experience, your expertise and your prayers as we continue forward.”

Fr. Carl Scherrer led a prayer invoking the Holy Spirit: “May we be most aware that our planning and decision-making must be rooted in your holy wisdom.”

This thought was seconded by Bill Brown, AIA, NCARB, ACLS, liturgical design consultant and workshop instructor. “We must invite the Holy Spirit into our work,” said Bill. “It’s vital that we are God-connected tonight.”

Bill dispensed with some — though not all — of his trademark humor. There would be no prizes, no silly names this evening. “We’re down

to brass tacks,” he said, as he emphasized the seriousness of the decision process the parish was about to begin. He divided the assembly into ten small groups, each with a scribe, and all were given the task of discussing and reaching consensus on four different aspects of building a church.

The four themes were FUNCTION (quantity, as in number of seats, parking spaces, etc.); FORM (level of quality and sense of aesthetic); COST (balancing what we want with what we can afford); and TIME (how long should this take).

Following a warm October afternoon when honey bees worked late blooms, the church became a hive abuzz

with lively discussions. People shared ideas, opinions, feelings, concerns — “I like this...I don’t like that...” Youth and senior citizens talked and listened to one another. Heads nodded and hands waved about. Folks grew passionate about some issues or felt ambivalent about other matters.

Each group having reached some consensus, the scribes were asked to tell everyone about their group decisions.

Bill asked everyone to find time to pray, in hopes that tomorrow we could become “one body, one decision, one future.”

One of ten discussion groups shares ideas for building a church



A storm threatened the night of October 20. Intermittent rain fell — God weeping over the Cardinals' lost shot at the pennant, according to Fr. Carl. Without playoff distractions, people took their seats in church for one final session, the most important of all.

"We'll need our heads tonight," said Bill, "and we'll need the Holy Spirit with us."

"Tonight is not about what we personally need or want. It's about what we need as a parish."

Big issues needed resolution.

"No matter what we now think the future will be, *it will be different*," cautioned Bill. "Plan for growth and change."

A parishioner reminded everyone that these decisions would affect generations to come.

Volunteers worked at a large display in front of the altar. Signs read YES, NO, MAYBE, CHANGE. Bill read ideas written on cards. People raised hands to indicate preferences. The helpers moved cards from board to board, rewording ideas as necessary.

Heads nodded yes or shook no. People laughed, applauded, groaned, even booed; friends elbowed one another. Faces crackled with emotion — smiles, frowns, disgust, puzzlement, joy.

Immaculate Conception Church, Columbia, IL

FUNCTION

800 to 1,000+ seats

*Design worship space, chapels, offices and parish hall.
Plan for future school.*

FORM

Worthy and dignified

Will explore use of the finest affordable materials, with special emphasis on the sanctuary.

COST

6 to 8 million dollars

Based on probable outcome of fundraising and financing

TIME

**Fundraising: 2006
Construction: 2007
Completion: 2008**

NOTE: Variables make current estimates subject to change. This basic diagram only suggests the complex issues discussed in great detail at the workshops. The program specification will contain all the data.

Every idea had its due. Questionable items were questioned again and again. Hours wore on through points and counterpoints. Anyone could speak. Bill offered consensus-building suggestions, explanations and clarifications. Early decisions were revisited and revised.

It was past ten o'clock. Each issue had a plan. Bill thanked everyone for "all the nuances and colors that each of us have brought to this process."

Bill paused and looked on. October wind rustled outside.

"Is it your peace," he asked slowly, "*is it your consensus*, that Immaculate Conception Parish proceed in this matter?"

Affirmation. Then peace.

"We are at consensus. God bless you."

Applause. The assembly stood hand in hand along the walls, bowed heads and prayed. ♦

A program specification, with complete results of the workshops, will be developed. Next step: architectural design of YOUR NEW CHURCH!

One body, one decision, one future

God bless everyone who participated in the Building Church workshops.



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**DIDJA MISS
A MEETING?**

Workshop videos and handout materials are available through the Parish Office.
Call (618) 281-5105.

Refreshments courtesy of
The Market Place

