

CHURCH OF ST THOMAS MORE
Interior Design Team Meeting
Altar/Ambo Planning
January 10, 2012

Attending: Father Mike Ratajczak, Pastor; Robert Habiger, Liturgical Consultant; Kathy Arciero, Charlene Buhlert, Lorraine Doering, Ann Eriksson, Pat Goscienski, Phil Goscienski, Douglas Lynn, Sondra Parks, Chris Smith, Kathleen Quinn

Absent, excused: Mary Castle, Diana Diaz, Mario Diaz

The meeting opened with prayer at 7:00 PM. We reviewed the agendas for meetings in the coming months. Father Mike asked us to re-schedule the meeting of April 24 as it would occur in the same week as our Parish Mission. The meetings will address the following topics on the appointed dates: February 14, tabernacle; February 28, baptismal font; March 13, crucifix, corpus; March 27, Mary's shrine; April 10, Thomas More's shrine; May 8, Stations of the Cross and daily Mass chapel. (This may change if another April date is scheduled). Other items to be discussed after May 8 or as time permits: ambry; pews and chairs; presider's/associates chairs; candle holders; banners; sanctuary lamp; votive lights; donor recognition format, sacristy furnishings. This schedule agrees with Robert Habiger; he plans to attend all our meetings.

Robert Habiger asked us about our interview with the artisan Stephen Hirt. Chris Smith said he communicated very well with us and he is likable. He has a sense of the meaning of each item. Sondra Parks said she liked the fact he had no pre-conceived ideas. We talked about how he creates regional designs. We would have liked for him to be familiar with our design; he has not visited the site. Sondra Parks asked about his design for a baptismal font; would that be how our font would appear? We reviewed the design we had in mind and agreed that Stephen Hirt's ideas could be incorporated but were not at present part of our design. The consensus seemed to be that this artisan is easy to work with, very personable and cooperative. Father Mike said he was very comfortable with him. Robert Habiger said Stephen Hirt could make all the major pieces: altar, ambo, ambry.

Robert Habiger told us we may have more time than we anticipated. The drawings are not as far along as we had hoped. Douglas Lynn asked how important is it to have all the items work together. Robert Habiger replied he likes to have the building enclosed before fabrication of the items begins. Some of the smaller pieces like the candle sticks could be made and used in the present worship space. Pat Goscienski asked about the reference in the minutes about how Stephen Hirt works "regionally". It was explained that he works closely with the group that hires him and incorporates items in the design that reflects the local region. We talked about how our region, Oceanside, has many aspects: water, desert, and mountains, unlike the Seattle area where some of his work appears. This is an ongoing process. We need to avoid presenting our fixed idea to the artists; rather we need to collaborate with them.

Robert Habiger said he met recently with Renzo Zecchetto and Father Mike. He is recommending Stephen Hirt to Renzo. Robert Habiger reported that the structural design of the building is finished. The mechanical design is moving slower than anticipated. Renzo and Brian Leahy have met recently. The heating and air conditioning component will be installed in a plenum.

We learned that the design of some of the walls has been changed. There will be a new space available for the St. Thomas More shrine and it will be ideal for stained glass windows. We learned that we can expect to pay \$450 to \$600 per square foot for such windows. In addition the plan for the family rest rooms calls for them to be moved from the plaza area to the north side of the building.

Kathy Arciero asked if we need family rest rooms. We discussed the needs for families of small children. We may want such rest rooms on the side of the building opposite to where the larger rest rooms are located.

Father Mike told us that the painting of the crucifixion scene will not work because of the way the light falls on that wall. A three dimensional design would be a better choice for that location.

We looked at pictures of the sanctuary and asked about the finishes on the walls. Several of us said we do not want to have raw cement. Father Mike told us this new building should match the present building. He prefers cement over stucco but this discussion should take place with Renzo. We talked about hanging banners on the walls and Douglas Lynn reminded us that we need to consider the acoustics. We presently have ceiling banners year around because we know how they enhance the acoustics. We were assured that Renzo is aware of the acoustics and takes this matter into consideration. Renzo is working on the lighting design; there will be no chandeliers. The ceiling will be made of wood with lighting aimed at the pews.

Regarding the shrine for Mary, Robert Habiger told us the space above will be three stories high and he recommends a painting of Mary rather than a statue. At 8:05 PM we had a break.

After the break, Chris Smith read aloud the requirements for the altar and ambo from our Liturgical Program booklet of January 2011. This led to a discussion of how the altar and ambo will be designed. Phil Goscienski told us he received an email from Mary Castle who was unable to be at the meeting. She has a suggestion for how the altar may be designed. Following is the quoted text:

"I...suggest an altar that represents a modern version of a large, white tree trunk. The base would have 3 thick branches rising outward and supporting the altar top. The top horizontal slab would be marble or onyx in its natural, matrix, raw edge. It would extend beyond the base and be similar to an aerial view of tree tops. The base could have an interesting shape that would look good from all sides, with a semi-wavy pattern indicating the boles as they emerge into branches. It would be very symbolic and scriptural. I could put this idea into a drawing that might clarify it more. Then too, it

would carry the 'sculpted' concept along, which would complement a large corpus above it and be worthy of the offering of the Eucharist...I think."

In response, Robert Habiger told us to be aware of mixed symbols. The primary symbols are the bread and wine and the mensa. Beware organic symbols of nature as it evokes the idea of a "new age" design. We could use the idea as a "tree of life" in the chapel. We could use Mary's idea for the chapel; Father Mike is in agreement.

In a further discussion of the altar, Robert Habiger said he would recommend pure white granite. He does not recommend marble for the font. In a side note, he told us that Carrera marble is no longer available. Lesser grades can be found but the best Carrera marble has been quarried and used. Robert Habiger recommends that we incorporate bronze into the design of the altar. We could use stone and bronze for the altar and three components: stone, bronze and wood for the ambo.

The biblical reference for the altar is Matthew 27:51. ("And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split.") The top of the altar, the mensa, is lifted above the base. The proportion of the mensa is based on the "Golden Mean" and measures 72 inches by 39 ½ inches. The references for the ambo are 1 Peter 1:25 ("The word of the Lord remains forever. This is the word that has been proclaimed to you."), and Colossians 3:16-17 ("Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.")

Kathy Arciero asked if we could bring an historical concept, in particular the English Tudor era, into the design of the ambo as a reference to St. Thomas More. Sondra Parks remarked that the design of the ambo appears too smooth, almost Oriental. Robert Habiger asked if we want an organic look for the ambo. Pat Goscienski pointed out that the altar has rough edges on the side; can we use that in the ambo? We talked about using natural rock, perhaps a boulder from our own property. Maybe we could incorporate them into the design. Robert Habiger said they would work well for the Easter fire. Father Mike told us we have many large – three feet across – stones on the property. Father Mike told us the altar and ambo should resemble one another but not compete with one another.

Robert Habiger then showed us updated ritual maps. He will provide copies for all of us via email. He asked for a copy of this evening's minutes and we told him we would send them after Father Mike has reviewed and approved them. Father Mike asked about other artists we may interview. Next Wednesday, January 18 we will meet at the home of Sondra and David Parks to interview Elizabeth Devereaux, a stained glass artist. The meeting ended at 9:30 PM with a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Quinn