

CHURCH OF ST THOMAS MORE
Interior Design Team
Minutes of the Meeting of September 9, 2008

Attending: Father Mike Ratajczak, Phil Goscienski, Pat Goscienski, Mary Castle, Sondra Parks, Diana Diaz, Charlene Buhlert, Lorraine Doering, Chris Smith, Douglas Lynn, Kathy Quinn and Consultant Robert Habiger

Excused: Mario Diaz, Ann Ericksson

The meeting opened with the reading of the Prayer of Dedication at 7:05 PM.

Phil Goscienski welcomed our Liturgical Consultant, Robert Habiger to our meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.

Robert Habiger offered “thank you” to all for comments and feedback on the Liturgical Program drafts. This review was needed in a timely manner because of his meeting with Renzo tomorrow. He gave two copies of the updated Liturgical Program (Volume 1, Project Number 08-0017.001 dated September 8, 2008) to the committee, one of which was given to the secretary, the other to Phil and Pat Goscienski. He asked if we would like to have photos and/or more descriptions added to the Liturgical Program documents. We agreed that we would like to see more illustrations.

The first topic brought up by Robert Habiger was music. He said that “Sing to the Lord” is a revision to “Music in Catholic Worship”. The issue before us is the spoken word vs. singing. See pages 11-12 in the latest Liturgical Program document. There was a long discussion of acoustics. The main space is a live space for music with amplification for the spoken word. This is a matter for the acoustical consultant who is yet to be chosen.

Phil Goscienski asked how close we can come to the acoustical ideal. The answer lies somewhat in how the walls are designed. Douglas Lynn remarked that computer simulation can give a good approximation. He said we need good professionals and the design needs a target.

Robert Habiger remarked that we seek a silent space when there is no sound from the congregation or choir at which time there must be no noise from the air conditioners. This requirement raises the cost of air conditioning duct work. Noise coefficient is available from the manufacturers. Father Mike said it is our responsibility to hire the acoustical consultant and Robert Habiger remarked that now is the time to find the consultant. It would be good to listen to the spaces he/she has designed.

Robert Habiger said this discussion of acoustics should be included in the Liturgical Program document. After further discussion, the committee noted that it

would need to determine the “target” level of resonance for the acoustical environment in future meetings. With these considerations in mind, Robert Habiger urged us to go ahead immediately and hire the acoustical consultant. He and Renzo will put together a list of three or four consultants.

Robert Habiger continued with a discussion of the exterior “threshold” – will we want gates and fences or shrubbery? Is there a concern about security? People are to be welcomed. Father Mike said we should not be concerned at this time about security. There is a lot of open space around the parish center now.

Pat Goscienski said we should add reconciliation space in the Liturgical Program, under Building Space, page 9, General Comments. In addition change the wording from Program Considerations to Program *Requirements*.

The next topic was the narthex. Robert Habiger asked us if we consider this to be a space for lingering or simply as an entrance/exit to be walked through. The space will be approximately 20 feet by 60 feet in area. Will the plaza be the gathering space? Douglas Lynn said it will continue to be so. We could open the east wall of the narthex for special rites. This area now is “in flux”. Douglas Lynn commented that we currently use the covered space near the doors as a sort of narthex.

We considered that with our weather, we can be outdoors most of the year. Few people gather now after the 5:00 PM Mass. Robert asked if we would be setting up tables in the narthex and we will not. Will there be a separate crying room (children’s chapel)? Father Mike said we do not need such a room. We examined the current layout of the building. We looked at the layout of the rest rooms and discussed moving both of them side by side with a hallway separating them from the Eucharistic hall. This would isolate the rest rooms and eliminate the problem of noise. With the rest rooms side by side, we would have space for an exit door on the east wall.

Robert Habiger asked if we would consider having no narthex at all. We noted that St. Margaret Church does not have a narthex; instead they use different flooring and wall décor to mark that entry area from the Eucharistic hall.

Renzo may want to save building space. There could be an exterior narthex to be covered later. A small court yard space can be good.

Robert Habiger then turned to the topic of Music Ministry Space. See page 16 of the Liturgical Program. He asked Douglas if the space requirement is accurate and the answer from Douglas was “yes”. We need room to grow; there could be a 60 voice choir. He wants to be able to expand into the congregation. He needs room for the piano and not in the sanctuary as presently noted.

He asked if the Eucharistic Ministers have to be in the sanctuary. Robert Habiger replied they do not. Douglas asked if the sanctuary has to be raised or can it just be delineated. Father Mike said the Eucharistic Ministers do not have to be on the platform. When the area is not raised, we lose the symbolism or psychological idea of something special, sacred. Douglas asked about the area of the platform; the answer is four feet all around the altar for the purpose of incensing.

Douglas stated that the piano and instruments must be near the choir, preferably at floor level.

After a break, we viewed a series of photographs showing church interiors. In the first one we saw a sanctuary where the altar was two steps higher than the floor while the ambo was four steps higher. We discussed the materials that altars are made of and agreed that the mensa will be made of stone. The design of the altar must allow for the congregation to see the feet of the priest. We were asked if we would have a reliquary. There are no relics of St. Thomas More available but those of another saint could be incorporated. The question was left unanswered for now.

We discussed the possibility of having a multi-media system. Douglas would like to have projected images and words to help lead the congregation in song. Robert Habiger suggested we use the walls as projection screens. We discussed various methods whereby screens can be deployed as needed. Father Mike is not favorably inclined in using projection screens for words.

Robert Habiger asked what we envisioned for the large crucifix – how large should it be? Father Mike said it should be proportional to the space. What moment in the crucifixion are we thinking of, Christ suffering? Or Christ triumphant? Dark or light? Father Mike said that in our diocese the dark image is preferred. No decision was made for now. We will work with the architect on this matter at a later date. We saw a picture of an unusual image where the corpus (about nine feet high) was hung on the wall without the cross. The image of the cross was seen in the shadow from a special lighting effect.

We discussed the Book of the Gospels and how it is displayed after the reading. Robert Habiger asked if we would consider having a special display for the book. He showed us pictures of churches where the book is ceremoniously carried from the ambo to the special stand – a place of repose - where it remains on display during the Mass. Phil Goscienski asked if it would be visible in a setting where the seating covers 360 degrees. The reply was that it would not be entirely visible to all but that it may be acceptable in this design.

We discussed the desire to have a step incorporated into the altar to facilitate the Eucharistic ministers pouring of the wine into the cups. Short people cannot lift the vessel while standing on the floor. The altar should be 39 inches high (our

present one is higher). Robert Habiger said he has not tried such a design in the past but will work on the idea. Father Mike said the “step” should be incorporated into the design, not just added on.

We discussed the shrine for St. Thomas More. One idea is to have the current statue of St. Thomas More placed in front of a stained glass window. Robert Habiger said he is contemplating four windows that depict the four seasons, to bring to mind the symbol of a “Man for All Seasons”.

In a brief discussion of the baptismal font Chris Smith asked what it may cost. We were told to think in the range of \$75 to \$100 thousand. The pump alone may cost \$10,000.

In planning for the next meeting, we considered October 13 for a joint meeting of the Interior Design Team and the New Construction Committee. Renzo and Robert will discuss these dates. Alternatively we could meet on October 6 or 7 and then again on November 11. The acoustical consultant should be chosen before our next meeting. Father Mike remarked that there is no sense of urgency on our part; we are no hurry but he is sensitive to the schedules that must be kept by Renzo and Robert. We were told we would have an updated Liturgical Program within two weeks.

Robert explained that he and Renzo prefer that their work is to be done systematically – no stopping and starting up again. He said he likes to use two or three months for the planning process. He said they could present the design to the diocese in January. He added that his firm would be making a 3D model of the space.

The meeting closed with prayer at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Quinn