

‘Spiritual home’ improvement

Holy Trinity Church parishioners to get first look at renovated church

Church

By ANITA FRITZ and CHRISTIAN YAPOR Recorder Staff GREENFIELD — When Holy Trinity parishioners step into their church for the first time in eight months tonight, they’ll greet familiar faces, and their Monsignor will be standing at the altar, flanked by one of their deacons, but their surroundings will be very different.

Holy Trinity Church on Main Street has received a \$500,000 makeover of its nave, which included painting, insulating the walls and ceilings, replacing the floor, extending the sprinkler system, refinishing the pews, and replacing the ceiling, so acoustics are better than ever.

“This renovation was paid for by the parishioners,” said Monsignor Ronald G. Yargeau. “This is their spiritual home. I hope they really like it when they see it for the first time.”

Yargeau said the makeover was prompted by the renovation of the parish hall downstairs a couple of years ago.

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Members of the congregation as well as Monsignor Ronald G. Yargeau, admire the interior of the Holy Trinity Church on Main Street in Greenfield, which has been completely renovated.

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“That renovation prompted the church to have to bring things up to code — we needed to put in a sprinkler system,” he said.

Longtime parishioner Pierre Belhumeur, who was the architect for the project, led the renovation of the church 30 years ago, and said he was happy to do it again.

“I had a lot more anxiety 30 years ago,” said Belhumeur. “It was my first time.”

He said this time the church went with a much bolder color scheme. The wall at the back of the altar, for instance, begins dark blue and as it rises to the ceiling, gets lighter.

“It’s an exciting and interesting color scheme,” said Belhumeur. “It brings out the stained-glass windows during the day when the sun is shining in. It’s amazing and brilliant.”

Belhumeur said the colors that were chosen, which include red, blue, gold, brown and cream, hide the sprinkler system and other necessities, unlike before.

Above and beyond the \$500,000 parishioners donated in just four months from late 2014 to early 2015, the church received \$15,000 from Berkshire Gas Co. toward insulation and \$5,300 in rebates from Eversource electric company to convert all of the lighting to LEDs.

“The fact that we are in a green community, we were awarded money toward insulating the church and switching to LED lighting,” said Gary Longley, office and facility manager. “This is absolutely beautiful. The church is extremely vibrant. The change in the lighting made a huge difference.”

So far, only a handful of people have seen the results of the renovation, which began in mid May and was just recently completed. Masses were held downstairs in the parish hall during that time.

“We can’t wait to see people’s faces,” said Belhumeur.

Deacon “Joe” Bete said the nave holds about 400 people. He said he’d love to see it filled this weekend.

“The first mass will be held Saturday night,” said Bete. “Then, we’ll have two Sunday morning masses.”

Bete said the renovation was “absolutely worth the wait.”

“I’m so excited for parishioners — and the town,” he said. “Many people have been in this church over the years, whether they are or were parishioners, came to a wedding or a funeral or a baptism. I hope they come back and see it now.”

Bete said the building, windows and structure are the same, but there’s a completely different feeling when you enter.

“The largest single change is the sound,” he said. “It’s magnificent now.”

Bete and Belhumeur explain that the new plaster ceiling will allow the deep tones of the church’s new electronic digital organ, which the parish paid \$50,000 for late last year, to travel through the entire church.

They said before, the ceiling was made of a material that absorbed sound, so it didn't do the organ justice.

"We'll have music and the choir at all of the masses this weekend," said Yargeau.

Several of the parishioners, including the two deacons, who have followed the progress of the renovations, said this week that all they could think was, "Wow!"

Phyllis Pierce, who worked as the church's office manager for 27 years until she retired about four years ago, said she thinks it looks wonderful.

"When Monsignor Yargeau retires someday, he's going to leave a wonderful legacy," she said. "I'm so proud of my church."

Deacon Paul DeCarlo, who attended the church in the 1970s and then came back to it when he moved back to the area in 1998, said the nave is "just beautiful."

"This breathed life into the stained-glass windows," he said. "The church is so vibrant now. Parishioners are going to love the space, so fresh and clean."

DeCarolo said parishioners should be proud of their investment.

"This is theirs," he said.

Cathy Butterfield, who is a parishioner and former custodian of the church, said she loves the colors the church chose, but more than that, loves the look on the monsignor's face when he admires the end result.

Jim Foley, who is a parishioner and the church's new custodian, said he can't believe how nicely the renovation came out.

"It's beautiful," he said. "These are more like a European church's colors. It's got a really cozy feel now."

John Peters Jr. said he was married in the church 32 years ago and has had two grandchildren baptized there. A third grandchild will be baptized on Sunday.

"What a huge difference the dark pews and bright colors make," he said. "Everything is so livened up. The organ will just top it all off."

He said Greg Martiros, a representative of Allen Organ Co., told church leaders that Holy Trinity's organ sits in one of the top five spaces he's ever seen in his career.

Holy Trinity was established as the mother Catholic church of Franklin County in 1868, said Yargeau. All other Catholic parishes located within the county were established after The last was Blessed Sacrament on Federal Street in the 1960s.

"We're getting ready for our 150th anniversary in a couple years," said Yargeau. "We're very proud of our church in so many ways. We offer community meals and try to do what we can for the community."

“The Second Vatican Council defined people as the church, and our people certainly are our church, but now they have a great place to worship,” he said. “It’s a magnificent house of worship.” Yargeau said the church will be rededicated the last Sunday of January, when Bishop Mitchell Thomas Rozanski attends.

“We’ll hold a reception that day,” he said.

Yargeau said he has been with Holy Trinity for 16 years and has seen a lot of changes and projects completed.

“I can’t help but think what our ancestors would think and how they built this in 1868,” he said. “It’s an amazing building.”

Yargeau said those who worship there today are blessed to have the time, money and talents to complete a renovation like the one just completed.

“And, I’m grateful to God to help us leave such an amazing legacy to our parishioners, the community as a whole, and to the people who will join us down the road,” said Yargeau.

“This wasn’t just a renovation of the building,” said Yargeau. “This was a restoration of all of us — our hearts and our minds.”

Holy Trinity Church is located at 133 Main St. Mass will be held on Saturday at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday at 8 and 10:30 a.m.

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The altar of the Holy Trinity Church on Main Street in Greenfield, which has been completely renovated.

Recorder Staff/Matt Burkhartt



Freshly painted columns at the Holy Trinity Church on Main Street in Greenfield.

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