

The renovations of the church building have been revealing and have been a revelation. The building committee has had to struggle to make the many decisions that are required when such a project is undertaken.

The work on the sub-floor has progressed, but slowly. The original plan was to remove only parts of the sub-floor and then to install the new hardwood floor on top of what was there. However, as more and more of the existing sub-floor was removed it was revealed that the supporting joists in three areas were in need of urgent repair.

The south-east corner of the nave in the Lady Chapel was a real revelation when it was discovered that the joists along half of the south wall were not attached to the foundations but merely sitting on two by fours supported occasionally by a column of bricks. Accordingly the joists had sunk down. In the north-west corner to the left of the main entrance many joists were found to be rotten as well as a few in S. Joseph's chapel. For three days no work was done while the architect and contractor consulted a civil engineer. It was decided to reinforce the joists that could be; to replace joists that were too rotten and on the south side to reinforce and lengthen the joists and then with metal hangers to strap them to a board bolted to the foundations.

When the work on the floor was being planned it was assumed that the floor in the sanctuary would remain as is, but the architect persuaded the committee that the differences between the two floors would be too striking. It was decided to replace the floor in the sanctuary with new hardwood. This led to the decision to remove the epistle ambo or lectern. The assumption was that any future renovation of the sanctuary would involve the removal of this ambo and rather than patch the floor in the future it would be best to do it all now and have it one piece. This decision also has the advantage of allowing the sacred ministers finally to be visible to the congregation. In addition Catholic liturgy now calls for one lectern for all three readings and this brings us into line with the new norms.

The sedilia will be moved forward slightly to allow the clergy to be seen. There is some consideration being given to acquiring proper sedilia that would give the sacred ministers some back support.

Since the high altar is movable there is no problem with the installation of a new floor in the sanctuary. The same is not true at the Lady altar which is affixed to the wall. Adding a new floor on top of what is there now will shorten the altar by the thickness of the new hardwood. It is at the moment uncertain how we should handle this problem.

A similar problem has to do with the transitions between the floor level in the church and the different levels at the top of stairwells. This is still under consideration. The colour and composition of the tiles for the narthex still have not been decided upon.

The plan at the moment is to complete the installation of the sub-floor for the Patronal festival. We intend that the hardwood floor should be the last thing to be installed and finished in order to avoid having the floor damaged in any way. It also seems to be the case that there will be at least one or possibly two Sundays when we shall have to celebrate the Sunday liturgies in Hiscocks Hall when the hardwood floor is being refinished.

The building committee has finally chosen a stain for the floor that we believe will be quite beautiful. It will have slightly reddish tint to it to create a sense of warmth and reflect what we have had. The work that has been done was absolutely necessary work and will last another one hundred years, but it has unfortunately already added to our costs.

The committee is considering the replacement of the three short pews in the front of the Lady chapel with chairs, so that the folk mass musicians will find the space more flexible. If this happens, then we need to find spaces around the church to place the pews so that they will not be lost.

The windows in the sanctuary were the first to be removed with a dramatic effect on the light within the building. The wood frames seem to be in good shape, but do need some work. The cement sills are not and have to be replaced. Repairs to the sills as well as to the masonry around the windows still have to be carried out.

The new windows with darker yellow glass are now being made in the same pattern as the windows in the north aisle of the church.

The windows in the gallery were indeed a revelation. Few of us realised how very large they were – 18 ft 6 in. tall. They have flooded the church with light and now give us an idea of Frank Darling's (the original architect and brother of the first rector) concept of the church. The committee has received a proposal for the design of stained glass windows from Joshua Holmes, son of Frank Holmes, Fr Belway's "foster son" who took care of Fr Belway so very well. Mr Holmes has agreed to pay for the windows should his son's design, in some form, be accepted.

The design is very simple, but bold and contemporary. The committee has asked for some refinements including consideration of introducing more pastel colours and the installation of vents in the windows to allow for ventilation in the gallery. Once the committee is satisfied with the proposal we shall have mock-ups made for the members of the congregation to see and comment upon. We need to remember that while the windows will be in full view of the sacred ministers, the congregation will only have to view the windows when leaving.

While the church is torn apart, we have begun to investigate the possibility of lowering the lighting in the sanctuary which is high above the sanctuary on the inside of the chancel arch. Changing the light bulbs is extremely difficult and happens at most once a year. If these fixtures are moved to the inside of the columns of the chancel arch it would make the lights more accessible when they need to be re-lamped and we could install new fixtures to replace those that are now 45 years old and difficult to aim. At the same time we may be able to reduce our energy consumption since we would use more efficient fixtures and as well bring the lights closer to where they are needed. We are also planning to install a conduit under the sanctuary floor to link the Director of Music's office with the secretary's office for the internet line.

In addition since one of the primary goals of the new entrance doors is to allow people to see into the church, especially at night, we have to install two lights to illuminate the rood and sanctuary at night. One option would be to use the existing lights, but this would be costly in energy use. Accordingly two energy efficient units will be installed on top of the capitals of the first columns in the nave just for this task to be turned off and on by a timer.

The church sign on the east wall is also to have night time illumination installed.

This project did plan for the painting of the sanctuary and the west wall, but it is now thought that the whole church, possibly except for the ceiling should be repainted after 15 years. You may have noticed that the workmen have added their palm prints to our walls. We are awaiting estimates.

One of the original proposals was to have all the kneelers properly padded. This was removed from the project because of the cost. If anyone would like to be the donor for this, it would be a good time to have it done.

It had been hoped that we could re-use the carpets in the sanctuary, but that seems unlikely now given the difficulty it took to lift them and this will be another additional cost.

Our architect, Mr Ian McGillivray, has met with a committee at city hall and the committee agreed to the various encroachments that our plans make on city property, including our new sign at the corner of Manning and Ulster. He is also working with Mr René Petitjean, our blacksmith and co-donor of the wrought iron fence, on the final design. Our contractor, Savan Construction, owned by Mr Farshad Ketari, has been helpful.

The Building Committee is working hard to bring the project to completion within budget and on time. But it has to be noted that already more work had to be undertaken than planned and this will mean an increase in the costs. Joe Minialoff, a member of the committee, has agreed to attend the weekly site meetings and also to visit the church every day that he can to see that the work is being done properly. We are grateful to him for his time and expertise. While some changes to the plans have been made, the committee has tried, as far as possible, to stay true to the feelings of the congregations and to consult as much as possible and wherever practical. We hope that the congregation will feel free to share their comments and suggestions with the committee.