

# ACLS NEWSLETTER

ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTANTS FOR LITURGICAL SPACE

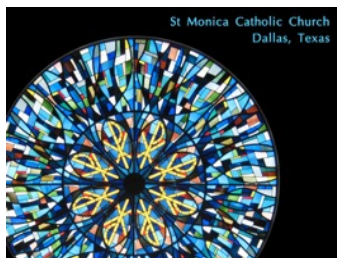
## Upcoming ACLS Activities

Please join us at:

University of Dallas Ministry Conference, Dallas, TX Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 2016

**ACLS General Meeting** at Cathedral Ministries Conference, Santa Fe, NM Jan. 9-12, 2017

Southwest Liturgical Conference, El Paso, TX, Jan. 18-21, 2017



## St. Monica Church Revised

*Fisher Heck Architects*

San Antonio, Texas  
by James Heck

### St. Monica Catholic Church

Dallas, Texas

Fisher Heck Architects

San Antonio, Texas

### Recipient of a 2015 Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art & Architecture (IFRAA) Award for Liturgical and Interior Design

The Catholic Church of St. Monica, the first church constructed in the Diocese of Dallas after Vatican II, had remained virtually unchanged for forty-five years. The church exterior is a modern, white square form with a circular worship space set into the square and featured walls of spectacular floor to ceiling stained glass. Over time, however, the church's dark-wood interior, lack of light and cramped auxiliary spaces led church leaders to desire some changes.

Among other concerns, church leaders wanted to increase the sanctuary platform's usable space and provide wheelchair access; open up the choir area and install a new pipe organ; and improve lighting, energy efficiency and acoustics. In keeping with current liturgical practices, leadership asked that the confessionals be replaced with reconciliation rooms and the font placed in a more visible and appropriate location.

The Bishop required the project stay within the physical limits of the existing building with the exception of an expansion of the narthex. Our task was to renovate this iconic, historic and beloved place of worship while retaining a sense of the familiar, yet breathe new life into the building. We incorporated familiar and appropriate elements from the pre-renovated spaces into the new design. It was important for us to honor the church's contemporary design and the feel of the space. We didn't want to force another style of architecture on the building.

## Webinars

Our webinars have been a wonderful success!

May 24th, Johannes ALBL presented a webinar on the history and origin of traditional woodcarving craftsmanship and how sacred art can support church architecture. Kudo's to Johannes for a very well done presentation!

This spring, Johan Van Parys presented on "Beauty that saves art and the Catholic Church". Regretfully, I missed the live Webinar, however I will be watching it online soon. Did you know that's available? Just log in to the ACLS website, the link is available to our members. It's that easy! Our webinars are posted a couple of months after they air to our members live.

**The next webinar will be Sept. 20 by Jim Heck.**

## ACLS

# Bi-Annual Membership Meeting

We are having our bi-annual membership meeting at the Cathedral Ministries Conference at the Drury Plaza Hotel in Santa Fe, NM in Jan. This will be a perfect location to meet - great food, great atmosphere, great information and great friends - we are looking forward to seeing you there! For registration and more information, check our website.

Inside the worship space, the renovation began with asbestos removal, which meant the space was gutted down to its concrete and steel structure and surrounding walls of stained glass and vertical mahogany strips. During demolition, most of the dark wood was removed, as well as the wood and steel enclosure that separated the choir from the congregation.

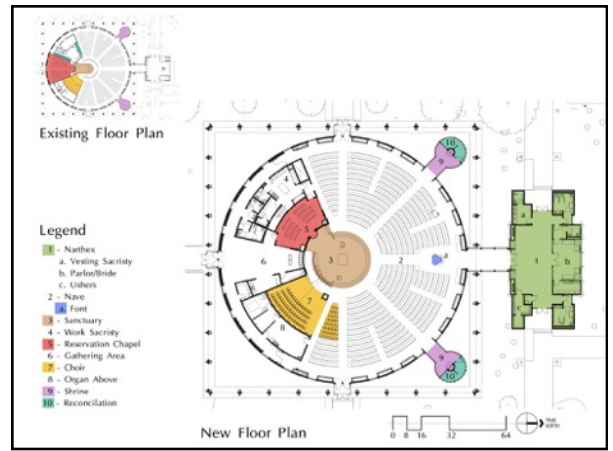
In the sanctuary's ceiling, the circular stained-glass installation above was given new life when a skylight was constructed over the window; allowing natural daylight to filter through and illuminate the colorful glass (formerly lit with neon tubes). New light fixtures were installed above the stained-glass window for nighttime illumination.



This oculus is the origin for the layout of the sanctuary. The ceiling "rays" emanating from the circular stained-glass window correspond with the aisle and pew configuration below. The pews, which seat 850, are in a semi-circular pattern, the new aisles align with the entrances focusing the parishioners' attention on the altar upon entry. We kept the reconfigured altar in its original location directly beneath the oculus.

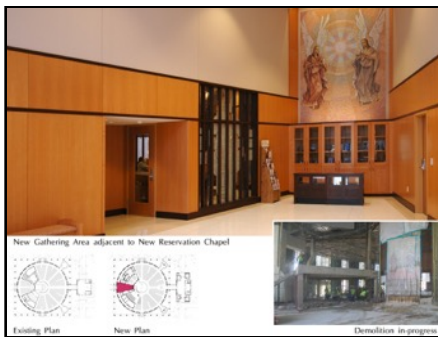
Behind and on either side of the altar, the church's original dark-wood paneling was replaced with lighter oak paneling and painted sheetrock walls. The Ascension mosaic, a feature formerly obscured by the dark wood paneling, is now highlighted by oak paneled columns on both sides and new linear lighting from above.





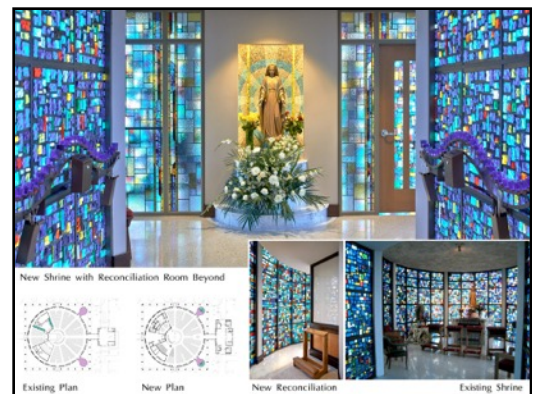
The baptismal font, formerly tucked into the narthex, was relocated inside the nave. We opened up the font’s trefoil shape by having a new bowl carved out of a single block of granite. A new terrazzo floor was installed throughout the church, while new acoustical enhancements were incorporated on the perimeter circular walls of articulated hardwood and cloth covered panels. Along with improved lighting and air-conditioning systems, technology enhancements included high-definition television monitors in the narthex for event announcements, and drop-down screens, projectors, and cameras inside the nave.

The renovation included replacing the traditional confessionals with two new reconciliation rooms. Instead of the small booths, we created new reconciliation rooms within the back portion of the two existing circular shrines. The reconciliation rooms are located behind new stained glass walls that separate them from the shrines where the existing statues rest on new marble bases with new Italian glass mosaics that shower them with light.



The church also has a new, more intimate chapel with glass depictions of St. Monica on one side and her son, St. Augustine, on the other. On either side of the narthex, the architects added space for an expanded vesting sacristy, new restrooms, and a new glass-walled parlor for brides before wedding ceremonies or families preparing for a funeral.

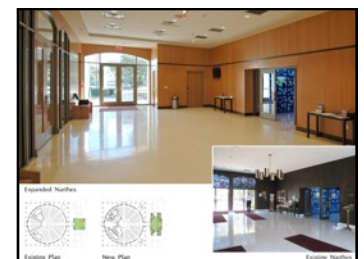
We wanted parishioners, when they returned to their church, to feel new vitality, to walk into a space that was fresh and uplifting, yet still familiar. What was once a dark and uninviting sanctuary is now a light and airy worship space that honors the architectural style and history of the original building.



**IFRAA Juror Comments:**

This response to a very difficult design problem resulted in a major transformation of what was there. A number of small interventions and moves have resulted in an environment that works better liturgically. There is a seamless union of religious art and architecture.

**Jim Heck, AIA, Principal  
Fisher Heck Architects**



**ALCS President's Letter**

June 2016

Dear Members,

Summer is upon us and life should take a slower pace. Or so the traditional model goes. Most of the members I have talked with recently however show no signs of a slow down in their busy pace of life and work. This is true for ACLS as well.

The webinar committee is one of the most active and important group of participants in the work of ACLS. Because of their hard work organizing and presenting relevant topics, we have had a full and active series of webinars presented this year and look forward to more to come this fall. Webinars are an important way that members share our collective wisdom with colleagues. They are presentations that enhance our knowledge base and can improve the work of each member. In fact I consider them to be one of the prime benefits of membership in ACLS. If you have topics you would like to see addressed or presentations you would like to give, please let us know. And stay tuned for future webinars – notices are emailed to each member. Past webinars are currently in the process of being archived with access through the members only section of the ACLS website.

In this newsletter you will find interviews highlighting members who have recently received national awards. I always look forward to getting to know our members and their work. There are some truly amazing people who are members of ACLS. And our membership continues to grow. If you know of a colleague who should be an ACLS member, do not hesitate to direct them to our website for membership information. There is always room for more.

This September we continue our ACLS associations with conferences that would benefit our members. The tenth annual Dallas Ministries Conference will be held September 29 through October 1 at the Dallas Convention Center. The conference organizers at UD are excited about the new art and architecture track with presenters from ACLS. We will also present an exhibition at this conference on the theme of art and environment for liturgical seasons. All ACLS members are invited to attend and may also wish to have their own booth in the exhibit hall. For more information please check the conference website [www.udallas.edu/dmc/](http://www.udallas.edu/dmc/).

Carol Frenning, ACLS President

*Do you have news?*

We would love to know what our members are up to! If you have any news or new projects you would like to post in our newsletter, please send your article and photos to:  
Shelley@ShelleyKolmanSmith.com