

St. Mary of the Assumption parishioners see the fruits of their generosity

It was a windy Sunday morning in String Prairie when parishioners realized St. Mary of the Assumption Church itself was swaying during Mass, not the chandeliers overhead.

“The building shifted,” said James Page, a member of the mission parish of Sacred Heart in Rockne. Although the wooden church had been “state of the art” when it was built in 1901, and designed to withstand inclement weather, modern engineers and architects were concerned about its structural integrity.



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The parish was overdue for a construction project. Over the last 10 years, the congregation has changed from a graying community to one bursting with young families. “We need more space to seat parishioners,” James said.

Thankfully, the parish began saving 50 years ago and started a capital campaign just prior to participating in the Pilot Phase of *Encountering Christ*, raising 110 percent of its \$120,000 goal.

The community was in agreement to honor their spiritual home’s original design — not build a new structure. “The church is a major part of where we came from and who we are today, and we wanted to keep that,” said Michael Goertz, who served with James on the parish’s Campaign Executive Committee during *Encountering Christ*.

“It was always, ‘We’re going to bring our church back and put it the way it was,’” Michael said. “And the people were excited.”

Last October, with approval from the diocese, parishioners began worshipping at Sacred Heart and the parish launched the “renovation-expansion” of the church. The goal is to increase the seating capacity by 50 percent to accommodate today’s 175 families and provide modern, accessible amenities, but have the church look as it did in 1901, Michael said. For example, the beadboard on the walls and ceiling, long covered with acoustic tiles, has been revealed once again; the original hardwood floors refurbished; and the rose window, bell tower and steeple lost during a storm are being replicated.

Both Michael and James are grateful to parishioners for responding generously to their pastor, Salvatorian Father Dariusz Ziebowicz, during *Encountering Christ*, especially given the campaign’s timing on the heels of another fundraising initiative. “They made more sacrifices to enable the wants and needs of the diocese to go forward,” Michael said. “When we finish with the construction and get the church back, they’ll really see and reap the benefits of their generosity.”