

Why a Circular Design for the New Worship Space?

This continues a series of inserts that will address the concerns, questions, and suggestions that have been raised by Parishioners after reviewing our Master Plan. All of the inserts that we prepare will be placed on our website (www.stedwardsny.org), feel free to review them and other information about our Master Plan there and forward any additional comments, questions, and suggestions.

When we began the Master Planning process, we called on leaders of the parish community and ministries to provide us with input. Input was also sought from the parish community at large in workshops and questionnaires. This input was a critical part of the planning process and guided us in developing the list of parish needs and preferences. That input from both parish leaders and parishioners indicated a preference for the following:

- The altar needs to be the central focal point of the worship space, with seating being in good proximity to the altar and having an unobstructed view
- Incorporate the choir into the community

The circular design of the new worship space was determined to provide the best physical space to make the altar the central focal point. No pew is farther than 12 rows back from the altar at any point in the church. This design allows the parish community to be in fairly close proximity to the altar and fosters greater active participation. Our current worship space is nearly circular, with the exception of the “cave” area. Father Pat has often said that it is almost impossible to provide good liturgy to the parishioners in the “cave” area. The circular design also provides a better location for the music ministry within the body of the worship space. This will allow the choir to be a more integral part of the liturgy, as recommended by both parishioners and members of the music ministry.

As the architect for the new worship space project, Sean Reilly, of the Kerns Group, considered the circular design of both modern and ancient churches in designing a space that allowed for “full and active participation” of the parish community in the liturgy.

The primary concern expressed as the reason not to use circular seating was that some parishioners would be sitting behind the priest during services. This is accurate. There will be a small number of parishioners that would be sitting in seats that are behind what our current seating plan allows. Approximately 70 seats (out of 1,150) would be sitting further behind the

priest than those people who sit in the southwest portion of the current worship space. The choir, which currently sits behind the priest, would occupy the remaining seats behind the priest.

The seating circumference of the church is identical to what we currently have. As a result we are able to reuse the existing pews. We will need to add more pews to accommodate the extra seats, but all of our current curved pews will be utilized.

If you have any further questions regarding the circular seating or would like to review the seating plans again, please view the plans on the parish website (www.stedwardsny.org) or contact a member of the Master Planning Committee.