

# Renovated Village Church sanctuary ready for Easter Sunday unveiling

By Karen Billing

It wasn't the Village Community Presbyterian Church's plan to open its new sanctuary on Easter Sunday, but Reverend Dr. Jack Baca said it might have been part of God's plan.

A May completion date had been projected for the church's \$17 million project but they finished two months ahead of schedule as well as under budget.

The church, which was founded in Rancho Santa Fe in 1956, needed the update to address a growing congregation, changes in worship styles and a lack of administration and education space.

The renovation took them from their old sanctuary of 300 seats in a long, narrow building to 592 sets in a circular setting, bringing people closer together.

"A church is not just a building, a church is also the people," said Baca "We wanted the building to reflect a sense of community and family, us gathering together."

The architecture of the new sanctuary recalls a "Lilian Rice Spanish revival," as it was important for the church to match the character of the Ranch.

"The Art Jury really saw this as an anchor for the other end of the village," said David Keitel, associate architect for Dominy+Associates Architects, who sat in more than 15 hearings with the Art Jury for an end result that everyone is pleased with.

A blue-tile water feature leads people into the church, echoing a water theme that is found in many passages of the Bible and in Christian traditions.

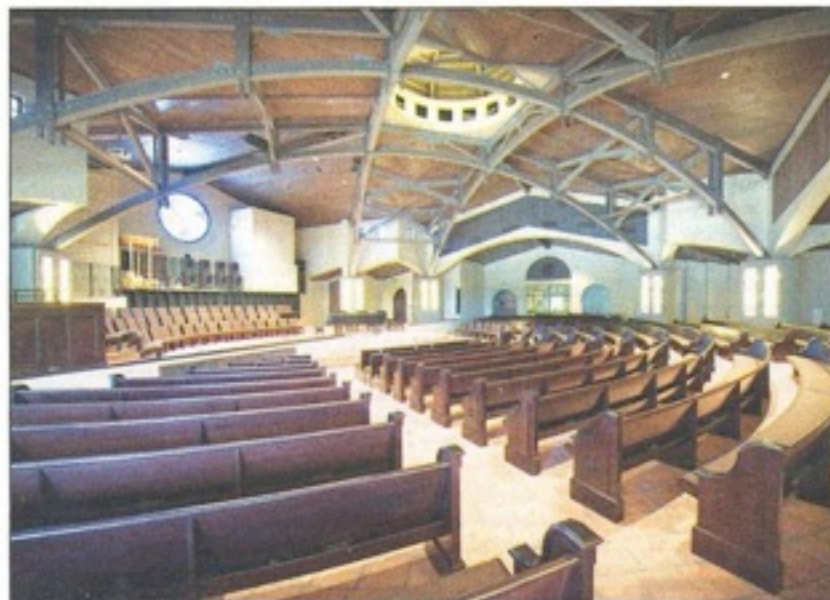
Rounded wooden doors enter into the sanctuary's narthex, or indoor gathering space, which the church never had before. The narthex features a "bride's room" used for weddings (it also functions as a "family room" for memorial services) in a space that can be closed off with screen doors. The room has its own fireplace and for extra privacy, opaque panels come down over the windows and doors.

The sanctuary building is striking, high ceilings with exposed trusses that Keitel said represent the Ranch's rural character. The dark espresso wood of the pews plays off the tile floor and tall alabaster light fixtures. A new Rose window features a stained glass of trinity symbols in blues, greens and light purple.

"You see something different every time you look at it," said project manager Don MacNeil of the window, which can be lit up at night from the outside and inside.

The original chapel was maintained to keep the historic flavor of the church—the old bronze nameplate from 1959 is installed in the wall and the stained glass window panels were kept and re-imagined into the chapel's new doors.

Outside there is a gathering space for coffee and juice after morning services and a beautiful, peaceful prayer garden.



The new sanctuary at the Village Community Presbyterian Church in Rancho Santa Fe was designed by leading church architects "domusstudio architecture" of San Diego. The new worship space has been completed in time for Easter services on April 4. Photo/Reed Kaestner.

Upstairs there are spacious administrative offices with a separate entry in the back of the church.

There are thoughtful details such as crosses everywhere, even some stamped onto the copper rain gutters outside.

MacNeil said in



Church administrator Bill Smith, Reverend Dr. Jack Baca, architect David Keitel, construction supervisor Vic Johnson and project manager Don MacNeil. Photo/Karen Billing

designing the new facility, he got input from everyone at the church to make sure all of his or her needs were represented.

With the old church, ministries and staff members were simply stuck wherever there was room—one woman had an office in a closet. For the first time in a long time, there will be designated places for everything: The children and youth ministry will move into the converted "Kid Village" and the choir has its own practice room with lockers and a flatscreen TV so they won't miss their cue. The woman who worked in the closet? She has her own office, with three windows looking out on the courtyard.

"We'll do everything that we did before only a whole lot better," Baca said.

The construction process, which broke ground in December of 2008, went pretty seamlessly with Roel Construction having several subcontractors working together at the same time, MacNeil said.

"The pride of the craftsman who have put this church together can't be overstated," Baca said. "So many have asked to come back and become part of our congregation."

The pews just arrived two weeks ago in a truck from Pennsylvania and the crew worked 14-hour days to get it done. The church's some-18,000 tiles were all hand-made, hand-laid, grouted and cleaned.

Roel Construction Supervisor Vic Johnson would work nine-hour days, feeling extra pressure from his wife who wanted to attend the new church.

He and his wife plan to be in attendance on Easter Sunday and the workers are all invited to the May 23 dedication service.