

## Youths draft 'blueprints' for design of new church

By Barbara Ann Homick  
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — When the building committee at Church of the Transfiguration asked members of the youth group what it wanted in a church, the young parishioners never thought their ideas would be taken seriously.

They were pleasantly surprised.

Transfiguration is planning to build a new church so parishioners can finally have their own place of worship. According to Mary Presutti, minister of Christian formation and coordinator of education ministries, the seven-year-old parish has held its Masses in a local barn, the Jo-Mor Theaters in Victor, and Christ Clarion Presbyterian Church.

Presutti said the parish did not have the money to build a church a few years ago so parishioners used a temporary structure on West Bloomfield Road. They plan to use that building as a Faith Enrichment Center once the new edifice is built. Long-range planning of the church began two years ago, and groundbreaking is scheduled for July, 1991.

Presutti noted that Father Gerald J. Appelby, pastor, wanted to get everyone in the parish involved in the process by allowing them to express their views about the design of the new church.

So the parish's youth groups, Kaleidoscope and Destiny, were asked about what they wanted in a church during Bible School last July. The continuing instructional theme for this year is "Building the Church the Transfiguration Way," which

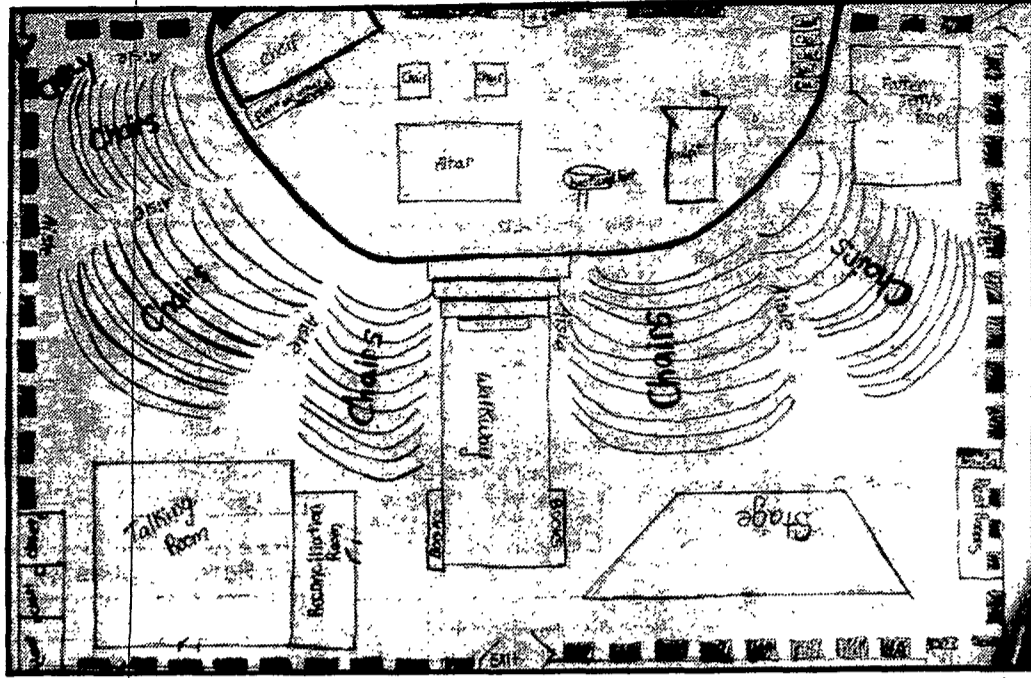
tries to teach the young people about a journey of faith — not just a journey across the parking lot to a new building, but a faith that takes them through the rest of their lives.

When architect Dave Miller attended a meeting to discuss young people's needs for a church, he heard various replies. Older children tried to convert abstract ideas such as sharing and warmth into concrete possibilities such as a large meeting room and music. Pam Ford, parish art director, said she noticed that all of the children's blueprints emphasized an open — rather than an austere — atmosphere for the church.

Members of every age group expressed different opinions on what they wanted in the church. Several 3-year-old children said they wanted harmonicas and a room for babies. Five-year-old parishioners suggested air conditioning and comfortable chairs, while 7-year-olds said they wanted a balcony and lots of color in the church.

Jenna Wallace, a 13-year-old member of Kaleidoscope who attends Victor Central School, suggested the idea of a choir warm-up room, and actually got her wish. Wallace noted that her summer group was encouraged to draw blueprints of how they thought the church should look. The daughter of choir director Sue Wallace, Jenna knew the importance of a choir room so her renderings placed the chamber behind the altar.

When she was told that Miller took her suggestion to heart and incorporated it into his plans, Wallace said she was shocked.



Transfiguration parishioner Carly Smart submitted this 'blueprint' in response to a call for suggestions regarding the new church building.

Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

"I was pretty surprised that they took me seriously," she said. "I thought they just wanted to make us feel like we were important and made a difference — but we really did. They really needed to know what the people wanted, not just what they thought the people wanted."

Wallace said parish youths are still voicing their needs during the planning process through their parents, who can pose their children's questions and present their suggestions at committee meetings.

Megan Brent, 12, included a seating arrangement for the new church in her blueprint. According to Brent, the pews will be set up diagonally — facing the altar in the shape of a "V." She also included a choir and baptismal area in her drawing.

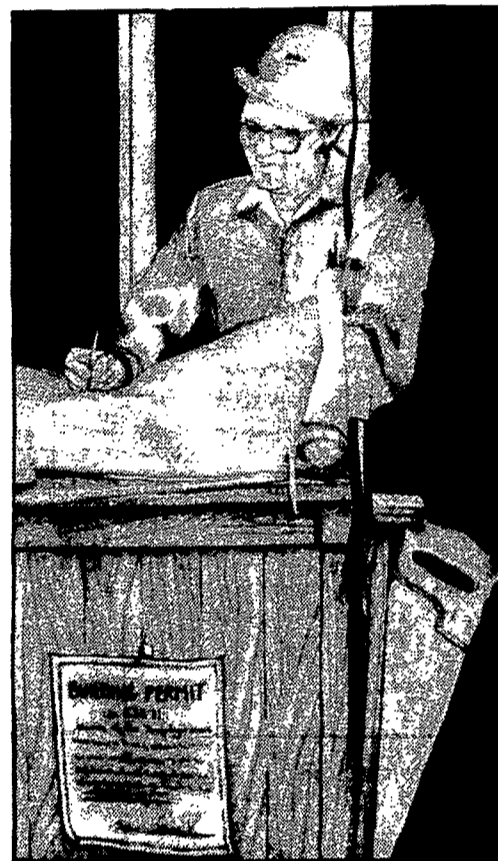
Last summer, Jerry Welch, 15, and Kevin Fagan, 16, volunteered to be youth representatives for the committee planning the teen area. Welch and Fagan, who both attend Pittsford Mendon High School, took ideas from the youth group to committee meetings. They presented their suggestions and were surprised when almost all of their ideas for the youth center were implemented.

They asked for an open area that looked like a living room, with couches, a TV and a pool table — a comfortable place that they can go to whenever they want. And knowing that they would only use the space in the evenings and on the weekends during the school year, they suggested that their area be used as a senior citizens' recreation room during the day.

"We wanted a place that we could feel comfortable going to, instead of going out on the weekends," Welch said.

He noted that the best thing about the project was watching several small groups work together for a common goal. The youth center will be warm and comfortable, Fagan said, and a good place to get together with friends.

"It's a place where you can say or do anything, and it really doesn't matter."



This drawing of architect Dave Miller by Pam Ford, parish art director, decorates a wall of the religious education center.

That's what I like about it," Fagan said. "When we got our room, I really knew we had a say in the church."

Ford said that adults sometimes get "hung up" on details, whereas kids simplify things and can see the larger picture. The children realize that building a church is like building a home, said the director.

Youth minister Jeanette Sens agreed with Ford that the youths are an integral part of the church community.

"The church is like home to them," the youth minister said. "They (the youth) are as important as anyone else in the church, and they are treated that way."

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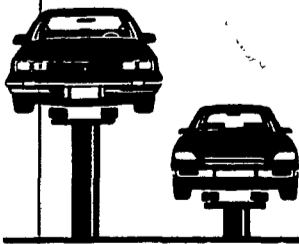
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