

# New Church Project Status – June 15

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The New Church Project is nearly complete. Our latest additions are the icons of Mary, Mother of God and Jesus: Alpha and Omega. These were hung on the lattice work on the front of the Reservation Chapel. These two beautiful pieces were acquired in December. The icons were designed and painted by Christina Dochwat, a self-taught iconographer, in 1967. They are profoundly spiritual images of exquisite beauty and striking colors in an ornate edging. Some of Ms. Dochwat's other icons hang in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C.

It has taken much work to frame and hang them. Special thanks go to Jon Brander, Alan Smith, John and Peggy Serth, Rit DiCaprio, and Pat Herron for their efforts. They worked diligently, using hand tools to repair and frame these beautiful works of art.

**MARY, MOTHER OF GOD:** Besides Christ, the basis of all iconography, no other subject has been more depicted than Mary, the Theotokos, (Greek for "Mother of God", literally "God-Bearer"). It shouldn't be surprising: no human being resembles Jesus Christ more than His Mother. We can certainly look to her as an example of what it means to be "Christ-like".

The tradition of the Orthodox Church maintains that the first iconographer was the evangelist Luke, and that the first icon he painted under divine inspiration was of the Mother of God holding the Christ-child. Icons of the Son of God with His Mother are powerful testimonies to the reality of God's incarnation as a human.

Mary is shown wearing a veil typical of Jewish women of the period, a historical fact no doubt, but which also reveals to us her humility and piety. The veil is blue, the color of humanity. Also, upon her veil are stars, which represent her eternal virginity. On this icon, and many more, Mary looks directly at us, yet with her hand she directs us to the Infant she is holding, Jesus Christ. Even as a child He is shown with a scroll, embodying all the wisdom of the true God, and even as an infant His right hand is shown giving a blessing.

The title Mary, the Mother of God, tells us more about the nature of her Son, Jesus, than about Mary herself and so once again leads us back to Christ. This is what we know about Mary and why we love her: through her we receive her Son, the Savior of humankind, God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. The icons of Mary embody this teaching and this love.

**JESUS: THE ALPHA AND OMEGA:** One of the meanings of Jesus being the "Alpha and Omega" is that He was at the beginning of all things and will be at the close. It is equivalent to saying He always existed and always will exist. It was Christ, as second Person of the Trinity, who brought about the creation: "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3), and His Second Coming will be the beginning of the end of creation as we know it (2 Peter 3:10). As God incarnate, He has no beginning, nor will He have any end with respect to time, being from everlasting to everlasting.

A second meaning of Jesus as the "Alpha and Omega" is that the phrase identifies Him as the God of the Old Testament. Isaiah ascribes this aspect of Jesus' nature as part of the triune God in several places. "I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last I am He" (41:4). "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me

there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6). “I am he; I am the first, I also am the last” (Isaiah 48:12). These are clear indications of the eternal nature of the Godhead.

Christ, as the Alpha and Omega, is the first and last in so many ways. He is the “author and finisher” of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), signifying that He begins it and carries it through to completion. He is the totality, the sum and substance of the Scriptures, both of the Law and of the Gospel (John 1:1, 14). He is the fulfilling end of the Law (Matthew 5:17), and He is the beginning subject matter of the gospel of grace through faith, not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). He is found in the first verse of Genesis and in the last verse of Revelation. He is the first and last, the all in all of salvation, from the justification before God to the final sanctification of His people.

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the beginning and the end. Only God incarnate could make such a statement. Only Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

Our large screen and projector in the Gathering Area came in handy for our Easter services. The Church was crowded and so was the Gathering Area. Over 500 people watched the Mass being live streamed on the screen in the Gathering Area. We also used the Gathering Area for our Super Bowl, Cabin Fever, and Cinco De Mayo parties. These events hosted up to 300 people and were terrific successes. We will be adding movie nights for kids and parents, Faith Formation training, etc. over the course of the next year.

We again want to thank all of the dedicated Parishioners who continue to devote their time and talents in the variety of committees that have been involved with the New Church project over the past 10 years. Most importantly, we again want to thank all of our Parishioners for their patience with us. Through all the construction you kept coming, helping, and giving. Thank you. We couldn’t have done it without everyone’s support. **Thank You!!!!**

As of May 31, 2019, 1,259 Parishioners have pledged or donated an average amount just under \$3,000, and we have \$6.932M designated for the project. **This is approximately 93% of our goal.** We’re not quite there yet, but continue to make progress and are pleased to report that new pledges and donations still continue to come in each month! **If you would like to make a pledge or donation the forms needed are available in the Gathering Area. You can also call the Parish Office and assistance will be provided. Memorial Gifts are also still available.**

**Thank you again to all who have pledged, who have donated without pledging, who have continued to donate after your pledge has been reached, and who have prayed for our success. Your generosity and support are very much appreciated.**

We will continue to update you periodically on our progress, but if you have any questions, please review the materials on our parish website ([www.stedwardsny.org](http://www.stedwardsny.org)) or contact a member of the Master Planning or Capital Campaign Committees.

Yours in Christ,

Father Patrick Butler

Sue Martin – Co-Chair

Chick Cairo – Co-Chair