

# COUNTDOWN TO BISHOP LOPES' VISIT AND THE CONSECRATION OF OUR NEW ALTAR: 5 WEEKS!

*Each week we will look into the details of one of the aspects of our sanctuary renovation.*

**THIS WEEK:**

## THE TRIPTYCH GOSPEL AND EPISTLE PANELS

Above our new altar in the sanctuary will be a triptych reredos. A reredos is a large altarpiece placed behind the altar in a church. Our reredos incorporates a triptych (a three panel artwork) with the painted wooden carvings called "reliefs" in each section portraying elements of salvation history. The center panel depicts the Crucifixion and was described in last week's bulletin insert. The Gospel (left) and Epistle (right) panels depict the Annunciation and the Harrowing of Hell, respectively, which we will look at this week. **The carving in the Gospel panel of the triptych closely resembles the center panel of the triptych behind the altar in the church of St. Mary the Virgin in Kettelbaston, England. The carving in the Epistle panel of the triptych was designed specifically for our church rather than attempting to replicate an earlier work.**

### The Gospel Panel - The Annunciation

It is very common to find depictions of the Annunciation in English churches, particularly those with medieval roots. The Annunciation was one of the most consistently depicted subjects in medieval English iconography. Prior to the 16th century, the Annunciation was integrated into almost every decorative layer of an English parish church - in stained glass, painted directly onto chancel or nave walls, incorporated into rood screens, or carved into stone. While the Annunciation was everywhere in the Middle Ages, much of this art was systematically targeted during the English Reformation and the subsequent English Civil War, because reformers rejected the veneration of the Virgin Mary. If you see a perfectly intact, vibrant depiction of the Annunciation in an English church, it is likely from the Anglo-Catholic and Gothic Revival movements of the 19th century.

The Kettlebaston triptych was designed in the late 19th century by Rev. Ernest Geldart, an Anglo Catholic priest/architect. The history of depiction of the Annunciation in the church at Kettlebaston goes back much further, however. In either the 1860s or 1880s (accounts vary), fragments of carved

alabaster were found in the walls of the Kettlebaston chancel. The four scenes depicted in the fragments are the Annunciation, the Crucifixion, the Ascension, and the Coronation of Mary. The fragments are believed to date to between 1340 and 1400.



*(Left) Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Kettlebaston, center panel of triptych;*

*(Right) Artist's Rendering of our Triptych*

## The Epistle Panel - The Harrowing of Hell



The carving in the Epistle panel of our triptych was designed after the review of medieval images depicting Jesus descending into Hell to [get] Adam and Eve. Viewed as a whole, our triptych displays salvation history from the Annunciation - the Incarnation of Christ as man - through his Crucifixion and Resurrection.

*Artist's rendering of the Epistle panel of our triptych, left*

The carving and painting of all the woodwork and artwork in our chancel seek to be faithful to our **English Gothic** patrimony. In the last few hundred years, Western art, including religious art found in many Catholic Churches, has evolved to emphasize a “realistic” approach; that is, art should look as “exactly real” as possible. Early Christian art represents the other end of this spectrum - **it was not meant to look realistic but rather to convey a theological message**. Early Christian iconography also had this sense of **heavenly realities rather than attempting to depict an exact representation of earthly realities**. Finally, the colors used in our triptych come from the **rich medieval color palate**, which like the Slipper Chapel triptych will have a generous amount of 24k gold paint.

## TRIPTYCH CARVING AND PAINTING BY ALBL OBERAMMERGAU REREDOS CONSTRUCTION BY LITTLE WAY CONSTRUCTION

Our triptych relief figures were carved and painted in Germany by ALBL Oberammergau, Germany. The triptych frame itself is being made by Little Way Woodworking in Katy, Texas. Little Way is completing the final sanding on the triptych in preparation for painting. They are also in the midst of all the carving of panels for our altar rail, pulpit, and large arch pieces for the chancel screen. Below is a picture of the reredos frame into which our triptych will be incorporated.

