

Trinity's Architectural Classroom



Trinity Presbyterian Church
Owasso, Oklahoma



“

**Architecture speaks.
Let's tell the gospel.**

”



WELCOME TO TRINITY HALL

The design of buildings—especially church buildings—communicate what we believe about God. The materiality of wood and stone, the way they are arranged, is meant to call to mind the permanence of God’s presence among His covenant people and invite all who enter her doors to believe the Story behind all stories—the gospel, the Story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration in Jesus Christ. This is the Story that speaks to the deepest longings of the human heart: the reality that we are more broken and sinful than we dare imagine, and yet at the same time more loved and accepted than we ever dared hope—at the same time through faith in Jesus Christ.

Christians, of course, understand from Scripture that God’s presence is not confined to a building. The Church is His covenant people. As the writer of 2 Chronicles tells us, “*heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him*” (2 Chronicles 2:6). Stephen, in his final sermon, reminds us that “*the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands*” (Acts 7:48). The fact that God’s people didn’t erect a permanent building until the reign of Solomon underscores two crucial realities: first, the vitality of a community on mission for the Kingdom does not depend on a church building; and second, God’s presence is with His people through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So, the marks of the church remain, even without a permanent space.

Nevertheless, architectural spaces are formative. The architecture of Trinity—its interplay of light and shadow, its colors and proportions—shapes on our imagination, attuning our affections

and orienting our hearts toward the beauty of our Triune God and the good news that His grace changes everything.

When we planned the design for Trinity Hall, we desired the building to express the beauty of God's holiness and warmth of His welcome to sinners saved by grace. It is our prayer every interaction at Trinity lead you to ask, "Who do I say that Jesus is?"

As you explore Trinity's architecture, we invite you into the Bible's Redemptive Story and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple how you might know Him more deeply and enjoy Him forever.

Grace changes everything,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B Altman". The signature is stylized, with a large, bold "B" and a cursive "Altman".

Rev. Dr. Blake Altman
Lead Pastor

Advent 2024

STONework

Take a moment to notice the stones that clothe this church. Each was hand-chipped with care, its edges carefully shaped to fit seamlessly together—a testament to craftsmanship and intention.

Stone speaks of permanence, endurance, and beauty. Trinity Hall's 800 tons of Texas Creme limestone, sourced by a company just a few miles from here, ground this building in God's creation. But more than that, the stonework point us to Christ, our cornerstone.

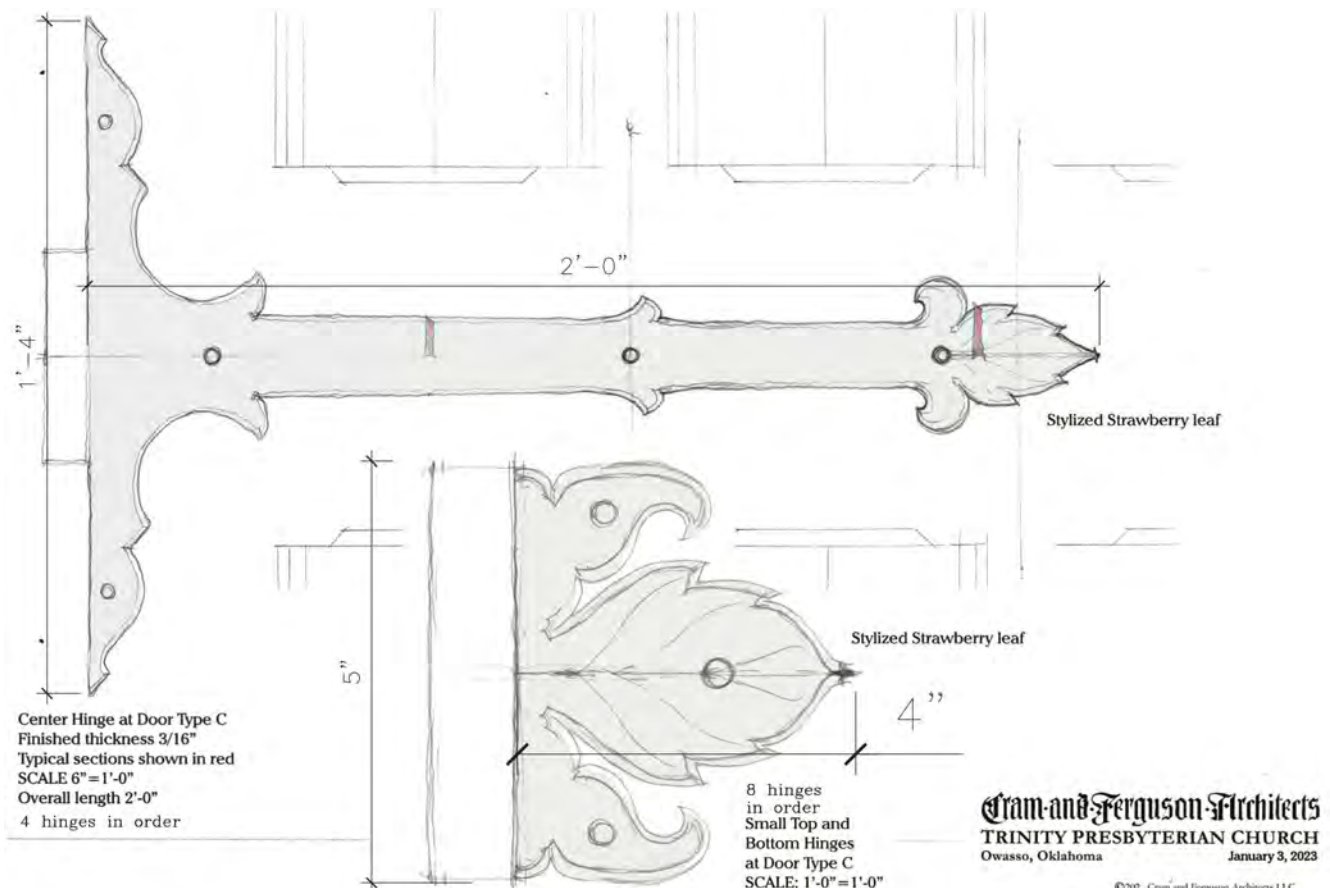
Peter tells us that Jesus, the living stone, was rejected by men but chosen by God. Like these stones, each of us is uniquely shaped and fitted together to build something lasting for His glory. As you run your hand over their rough edges, let them remind you of the One who is building His church—one living stone at a time.



DOORS

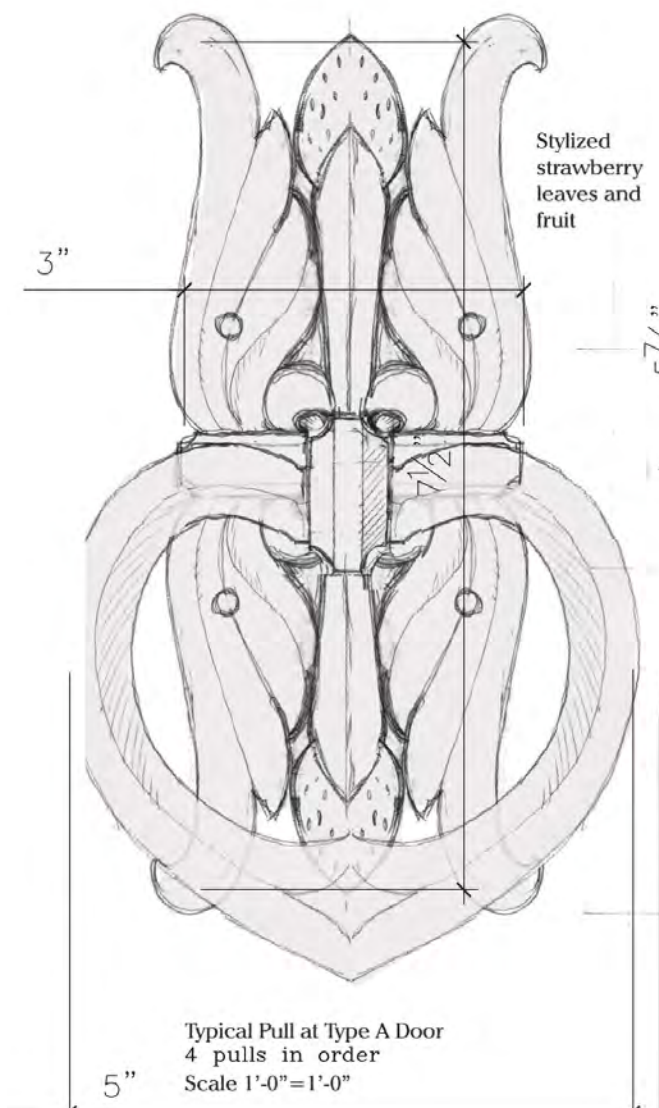
As you approach the doors, pause and reflect on God's invitation—to come with honesty, to come as you are, and to expect to meet with the One who calls sinners to Himself (Matthew 9:13). We regularly reflect on these words in our preparation for worship:

To all who are spiritually weary and seek rest;
to all who mourn and long for comfort;
to all who struggle and desire victory;
to all who sin and need a Savior;
to all who are strangers and want fellowship;
to all who hunger and thirst after righteousness;
and to all who will come,
this church opens wide her doors and offers welcome
in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

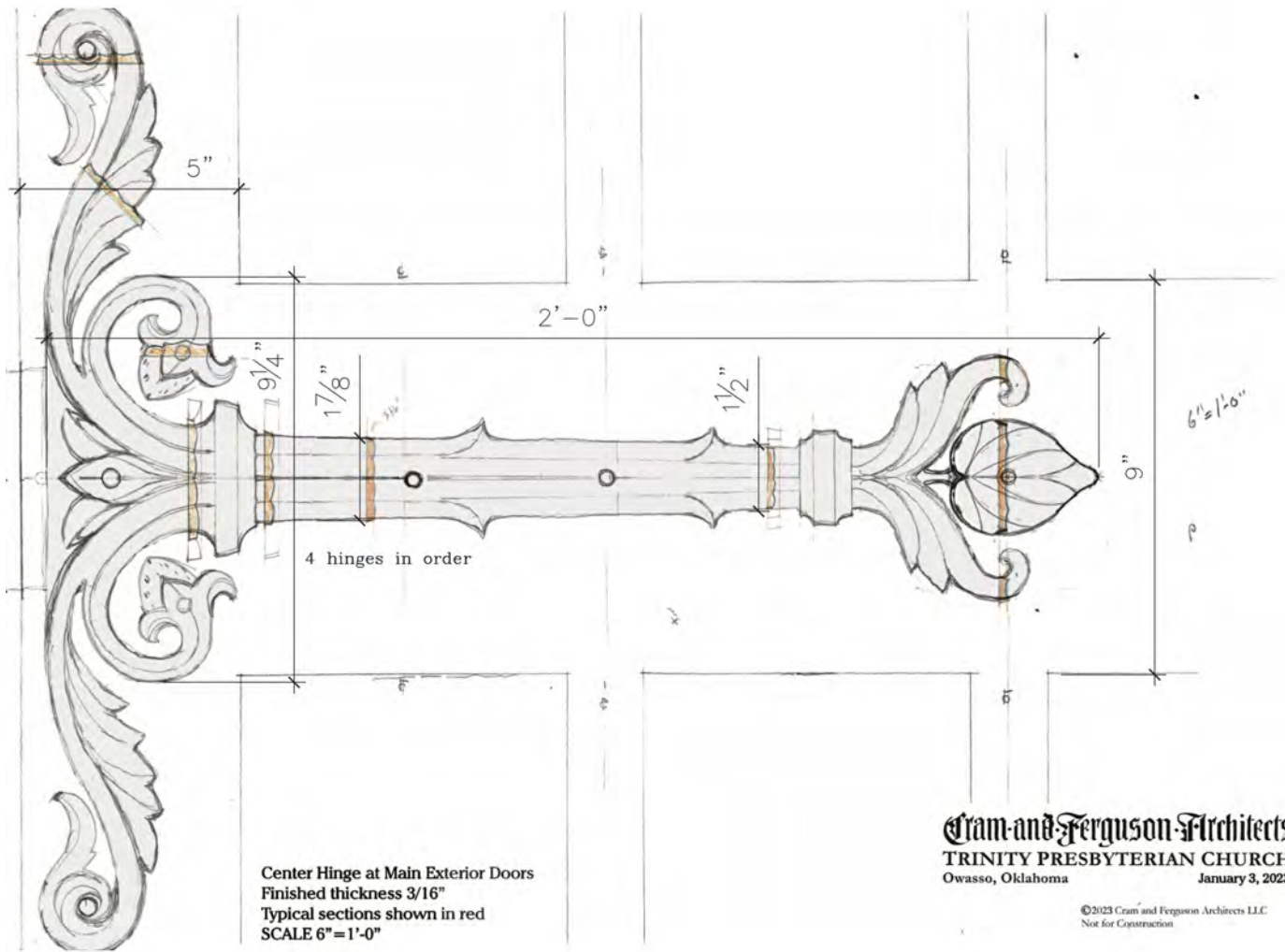


Notice the mahogany doors, adorned with strawberry vines and redbud leaves—subtle reminders that God calls us to bless Oklahoma, for His glory (Acts 17:26). Each week, as you walk through these doors, may your life bear the fruit of the gospel in this place.

The wrought iron pulls tell another story. Forged by blacksmiths in Indiana, they resemble aspects of John Calvin's seal: a hand holding a heart, inscribed with his prayer—"I offer my heart to you, O Lord, promptly and sincerely."

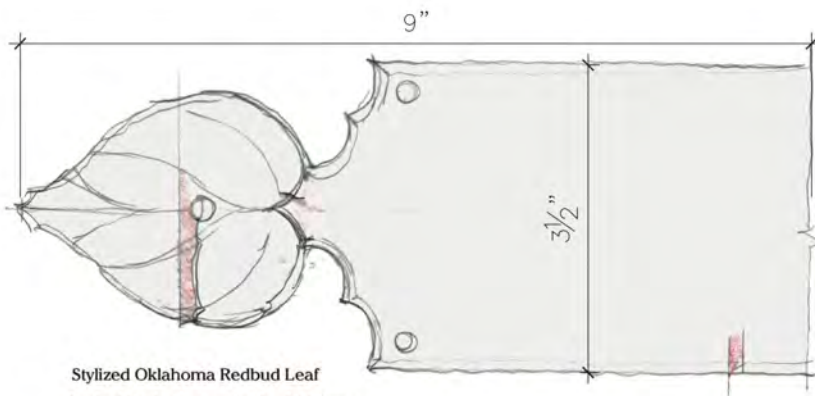


So, as you reach for the door, make that prayer your own. With a heart in hand, step inside, ready to worship the One who first offered His heart for you.

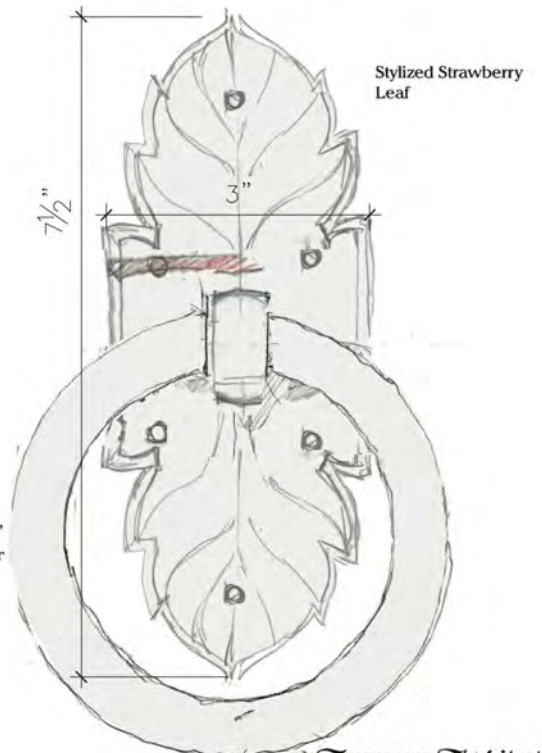


Cram and Ferguson Architects
TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Owasso, Oklahoma January 3, 2023

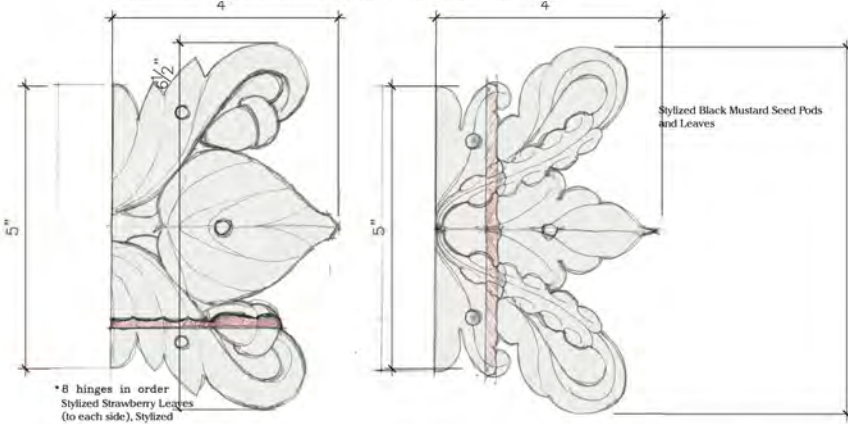
©2023 Cram and Ferguson Architects LLC
Not for Construction



Typical Push-Plate at Back of B1 Doors
Half of plate shown, symmetrical, overall total length 1'-6"



8 C
1'-0"
order



*8 hinges in order
Stylized Strawberry Leaves
(to each side), Stylized

Cram and Ferguson Architects
TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Owasso, Oklahoma January 6, 2023

NARTHEX

As you step through Trinity's doors, you enter what now serves as our narthex. In the late early church, adult catechumens—those preparing for baptism—would stand in this transitional space to worship before receiving baptism. Only then could they enter the sanctuary. For us the narthex is more than an entryway—it's a threshold, a place to leave behind distractions and prepare to meet with God.

Look closely at the wooden chair rail. The carved olive branches recall Noah's dove, signaling that the flood had passed and rescue had come (Genesis 8:11). Among the branches, Oklahoma's state animals journey two by two, reminding us of the ark—God's provision for both His people and creation. Can you find each one?

- **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** (State Bird)



- **Collared Lizard** (State Reptile)



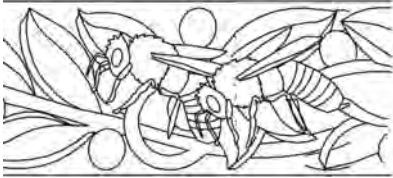
- **Buffalo** (State Mammal)



- **Common Raccoon** (State Furbearer)



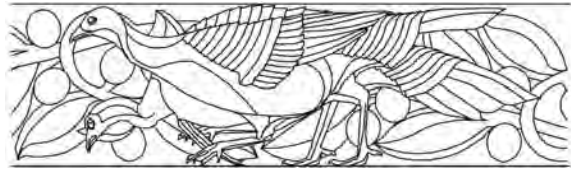
- **European Bumblebee** (State Insect)



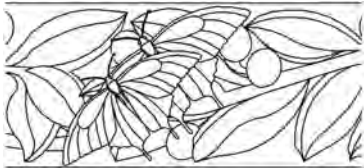
- **White-tailed Deer** (State Game Animal)



- **Wild Turkey** (State Game Bird)



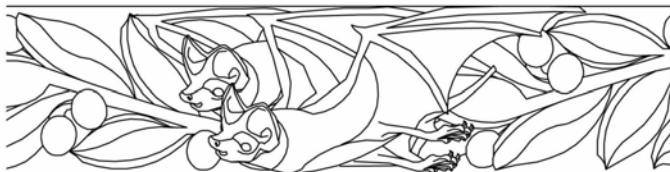
- **Black Swallowtail** (State Butterfly)



- **Bullfrog** (State Amphibian)



- **Mexican Free-tailed Bat** (State Flying Mammal)



- **Red-tailed Hawk** (State Raptor)



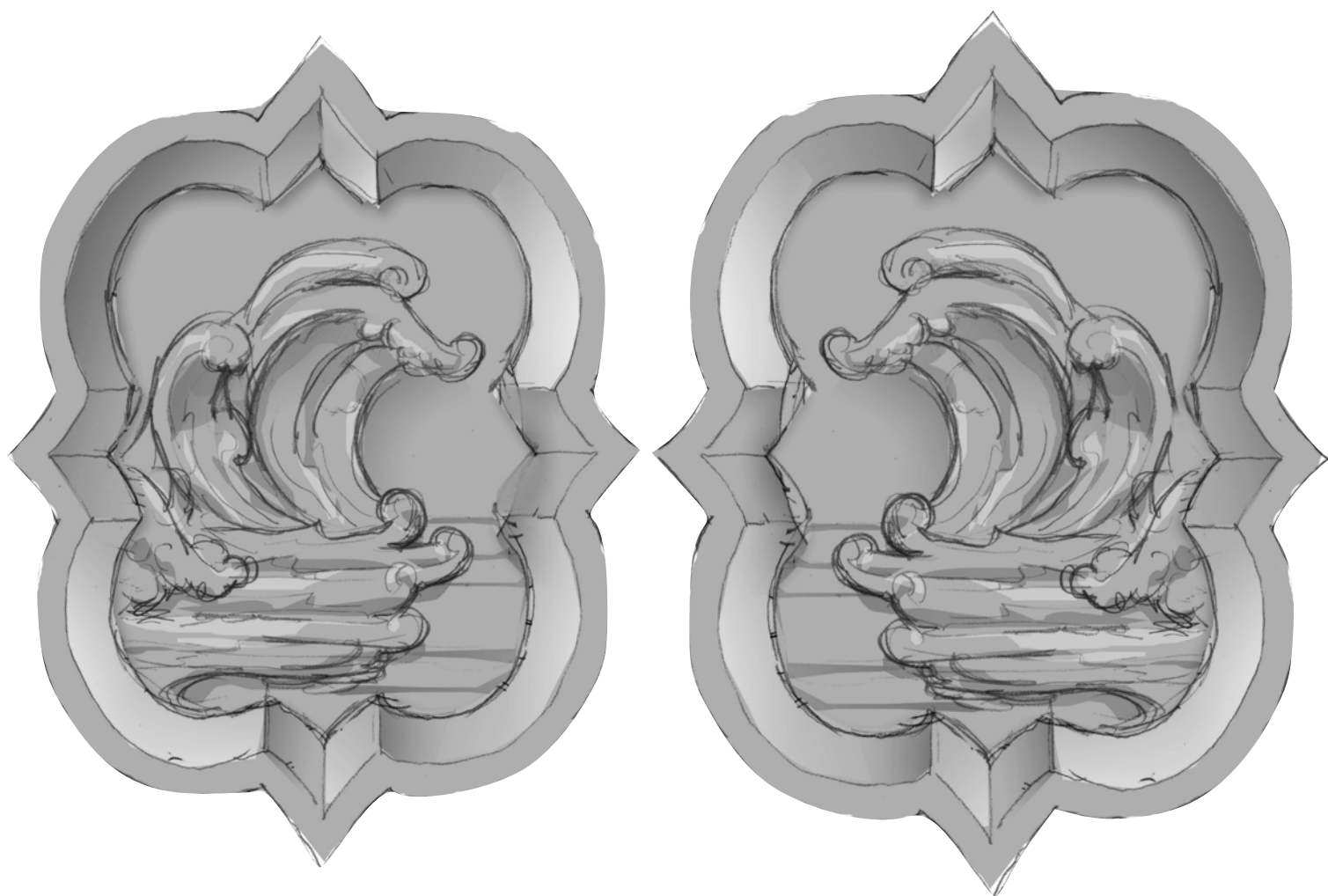
Just as Noah's ark carried life through the flood, the church carries God's people safely through sin and death in Christ. He endured the flood of God's wrath so we might find refuge in Him.

PREPARATION

At the entrance to Trinity Hall, carved waves rise and curl to recall the Red Sea, where God led Israel through towering waters on dry ground, delivering them from slavery by His mighty hand (Exodus 14:21-22).

Each week, these waves remind us: the same God who parted the sea rescues us from sin and death. The Exodus foreshadows a greater deliverance—Jesus, who calmed the waters, walked upon them, and ultimately parted sin and death through His own.

As you pass into Trinity Hall, remember: God is still delivering His people. Step forward in worship, trusting the One who makes a way where there appears to be none.

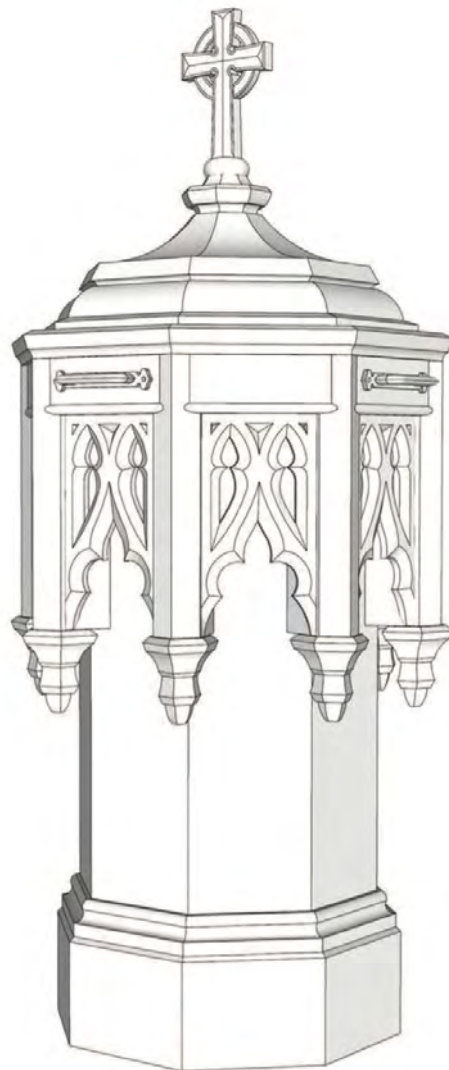


BAPTISM

The baptismal font awaits the entrance to worship—a reminder that we enter the visible church through the waters of baptism. Baptism is a sign and seal of His promises, marking us as His own.

But baptism is not just a past event—it is an ever-present reality. The Westminster Catechism calls us to “improve” our baptism, remembering its grace in times of temptation and renewal. It reminds us: we are called to live as Christ’s own.

As you pass by the font, reflect: Have you claimed the promises of your baptism by faith? Are you living in light of them? Step into worship, grateful for the God who saves and sustains His people.



NAVE

Raise your eyes to the ceiling as you enter Trinity Hall. The great beams frame a ceiling shaped like an inverted ship's hull—an ancient design reminding us that the church is a vessel, carrying God's people safely through life's storms. This is the nave, from the Latin *navis*, meaning “ship.”

Like Noah's ark, the church is a refuge. Through the waters of baptism, we are brought into Christ's covenant community, sheltered by His promises. No matter how fierce the storm, Christ is our captain, and He will bring us safely home.

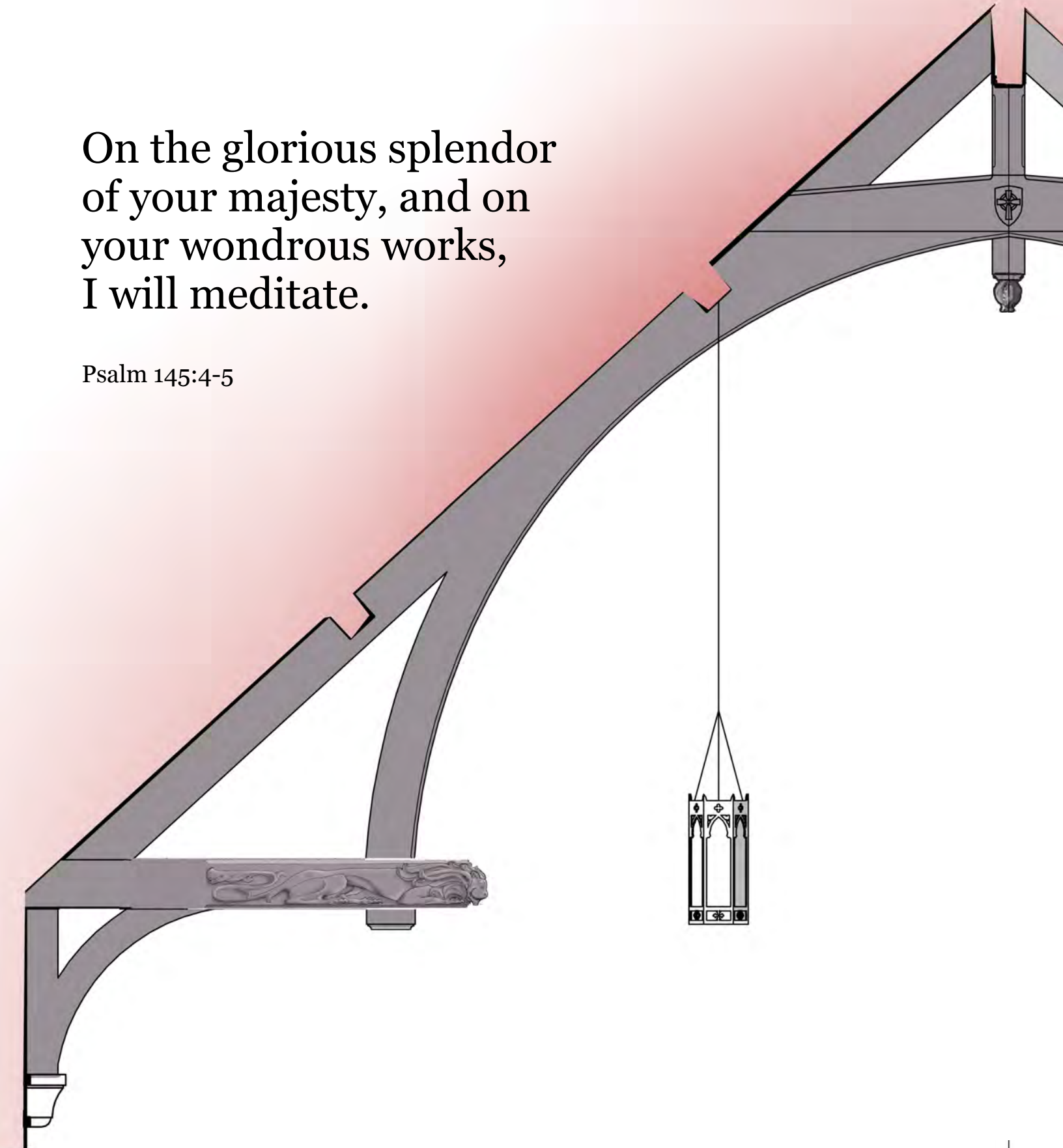
As you stand here, take heart—you are part of His covenant family, secure in His care, journeying together.



HAMMER-BEAMS TELL THE BIBLE'S STORY

On the glorious splendor
of your majesty, and on
your wondrous works,
I will meditate.

Psalm 145:4-5



At Trinity, we worship under the authority of God's infallible and inerrant Word. The twelve hammer-beam trusses don't just hold up the ceiling—they point us to Christ, telling the grand, unified story of Scripture from creation to consummation. The south wall unfolds the Old Testament; the north wall proclaims the New. And at the center, framing the pulpit, stand the cross and resurrection—reminding us that every sermon must lead us here, to Christ's finished work, His atoning death, and His victorious resurrection.

OLD TESTAMENT:

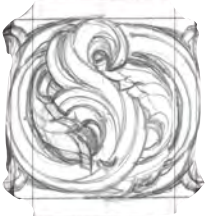
Adam & the Garden (Genesis 1-3)



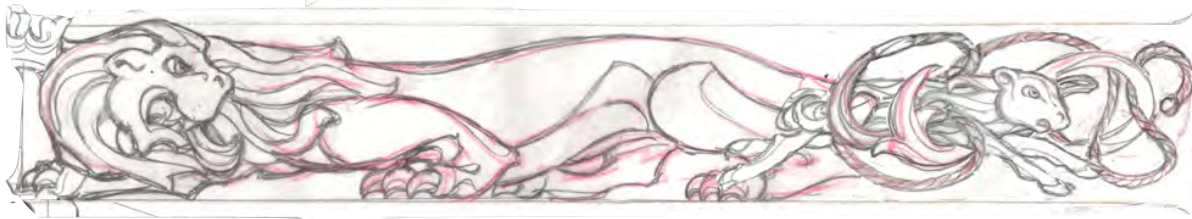
Abraham & Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22)



Moses at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3)



King David & The Monarchy (1 Samuel 17 & 2 Samuel 7)



The Exile, Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel 6)

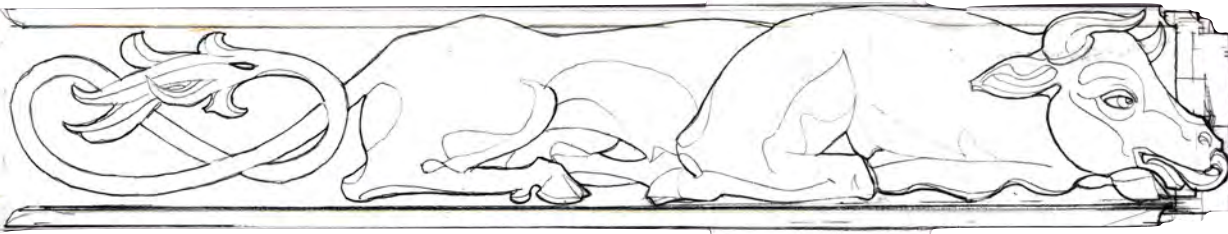


Return from Exile (Ezra & Nehemiah)



NEW TESTAMENT:

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1, Luke 2)



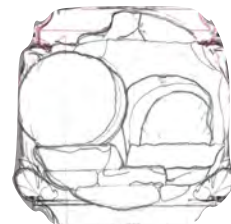
The Ministry of Jesus (First Miracle at Cana) (John 2)



The Crucifixion of our Lord (Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19)



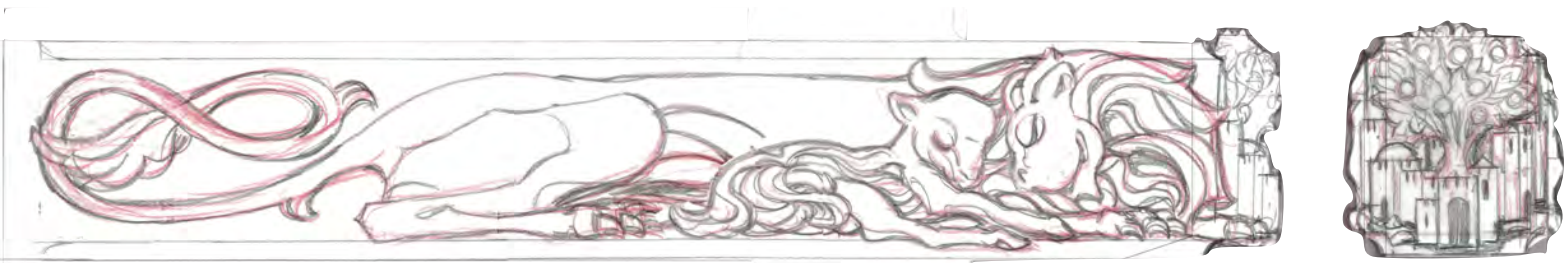
The Resurrection of our Lord (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20)



Pentecost (Acts 2)



The New Heavens & New Earth (Revelation 20-21)

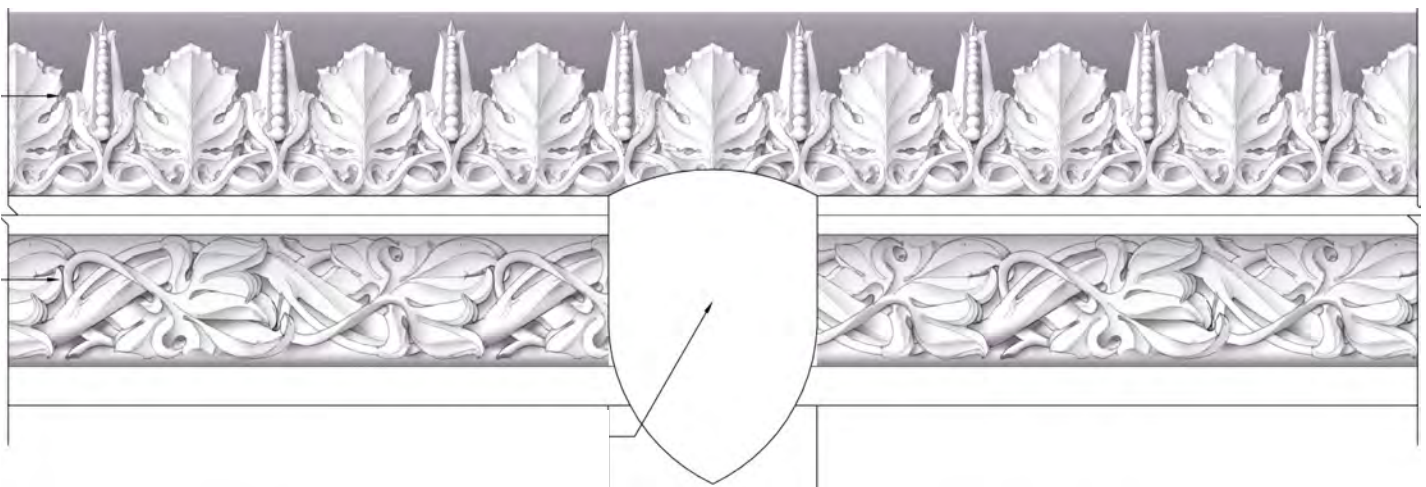


WAINSCOTTING

Carved grape vine relief ties the entire room together, symbolizing each Trinity member being grafted into Christ's Church.



Oklahoma redbud leaves and mustard seed pods alternate on the top.



Shields on the east wall recount the days of creation, while shields on the west wall depict ways the church has illustrated the doctrine of the Trinity.

TRINITY HALL FIREPLACE

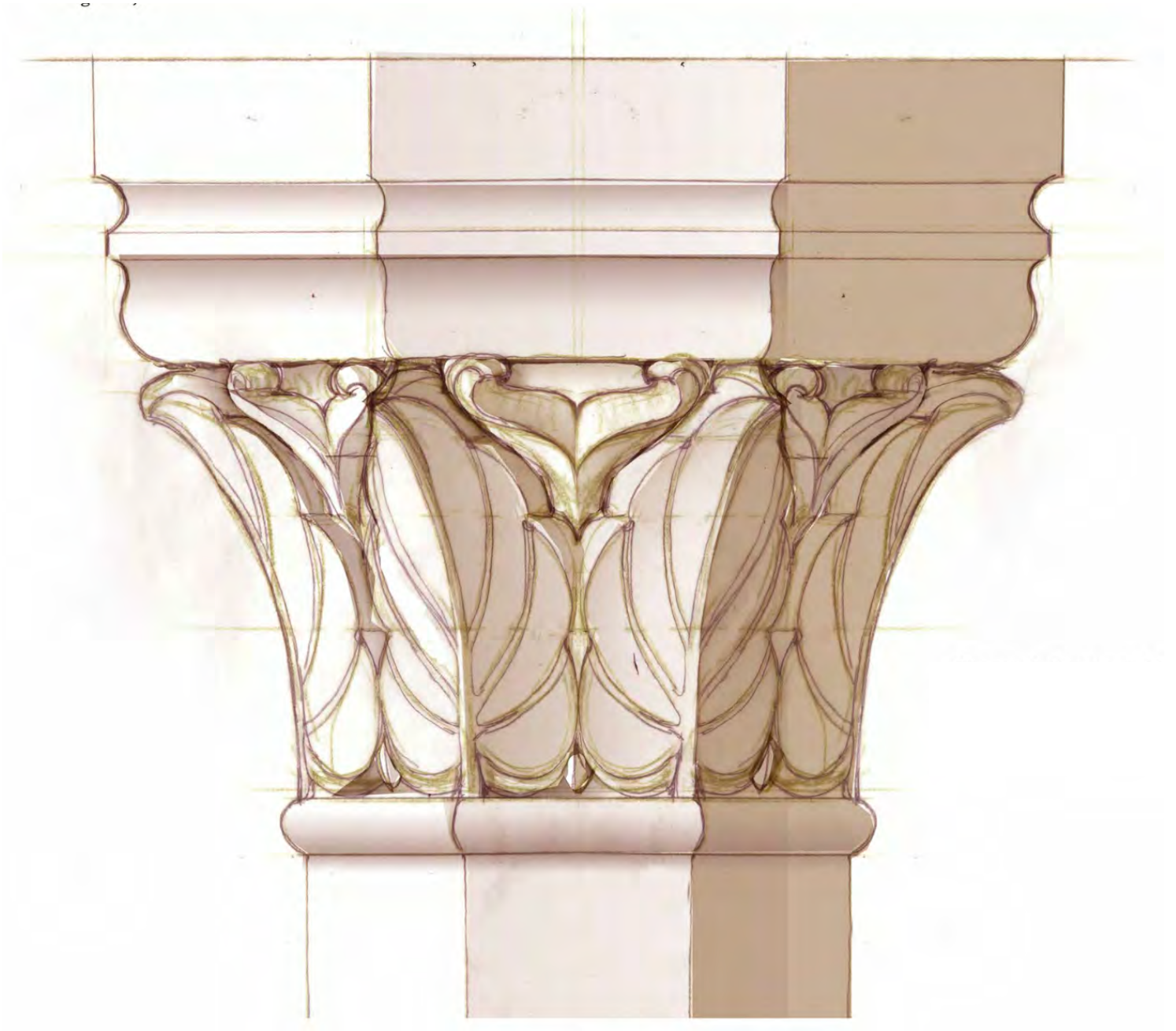


At the heart of Trinity Hall stands the fireplace, offering warmth and welcome to all who enter. Above it, a triquetra—an ancient symbol of the Trinity—is carved in stone, a quiet reminder that we gather in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Just below the mantle, the words of Jesus from Matthew 11:28 are inscribed: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*

It’s an invitation that runs counter to the spirit of our age—and even to the Oklahoma state motto, *Labor omnia vincit* (“Work conquers all”). The gospel tells a different story. Before we work, we rest. Before we strive, we receive. This is the heart of our first core value: to rest in worship. We do not come to prove ourselves but to be renewed by the One who has already done the work on our behalf.



Look closely at the fireplace capitals, and you'll see them adorned with carved redbud leaves—a tribute to Oklahoma's natural beauty. Designed by Matthew Alderman of Cram & Ferguson and meticulously carved in Spain along with the rest of the stonework, they remind us that beauty matters. Every detail, even in stone, tells a story—one that connects us to this place, to creation, and ultimately to the Creator Himself.



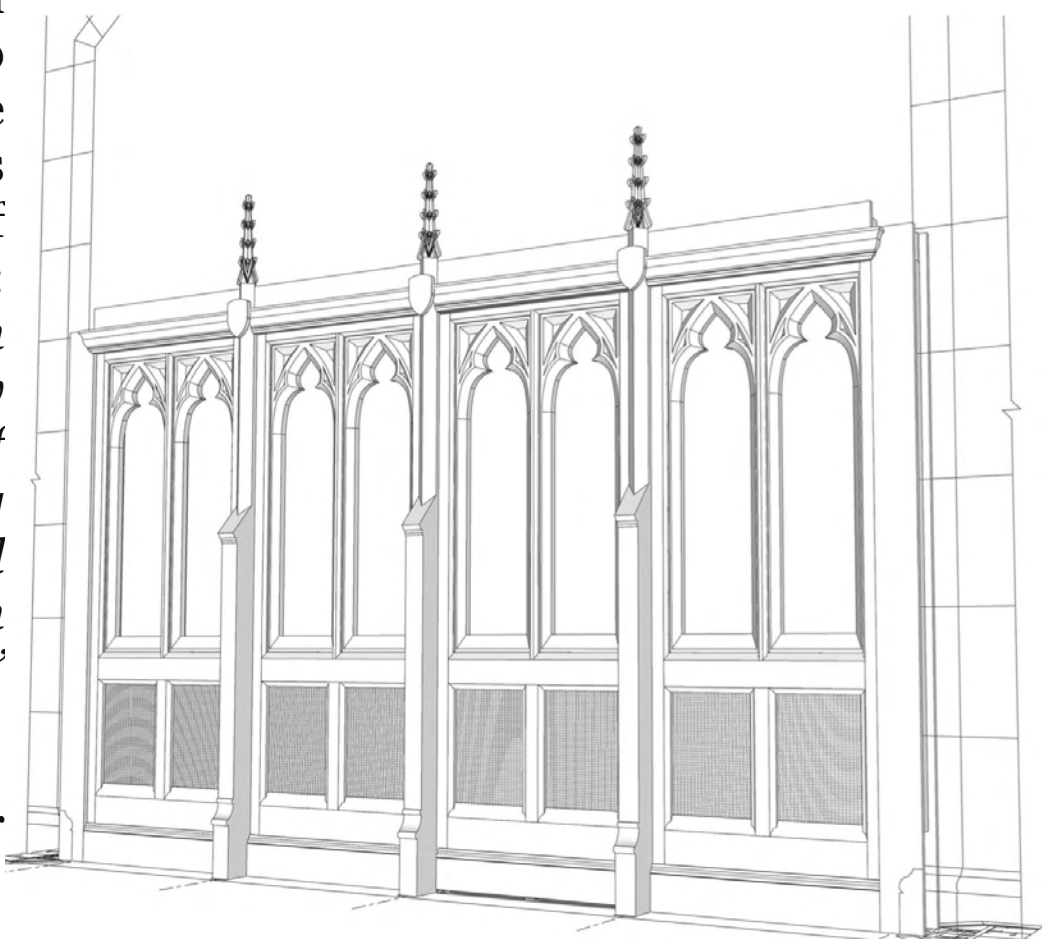
ROOD SCREENS

Rood screens are architectural features that originated in medieval church design, serving as a physical and symbolic barrier between the nave (the congregation's space) and the chancel (the clergy's space). Their name derives from the Old English word “rood,” meaning “cross,” as these screens typically held a large crucifix or “rood” at their center. These flourished during the Gothic period as elaborately decorated structures that emphasized the mystery of the Eucharist and the separation of earthly and heavenly realms.

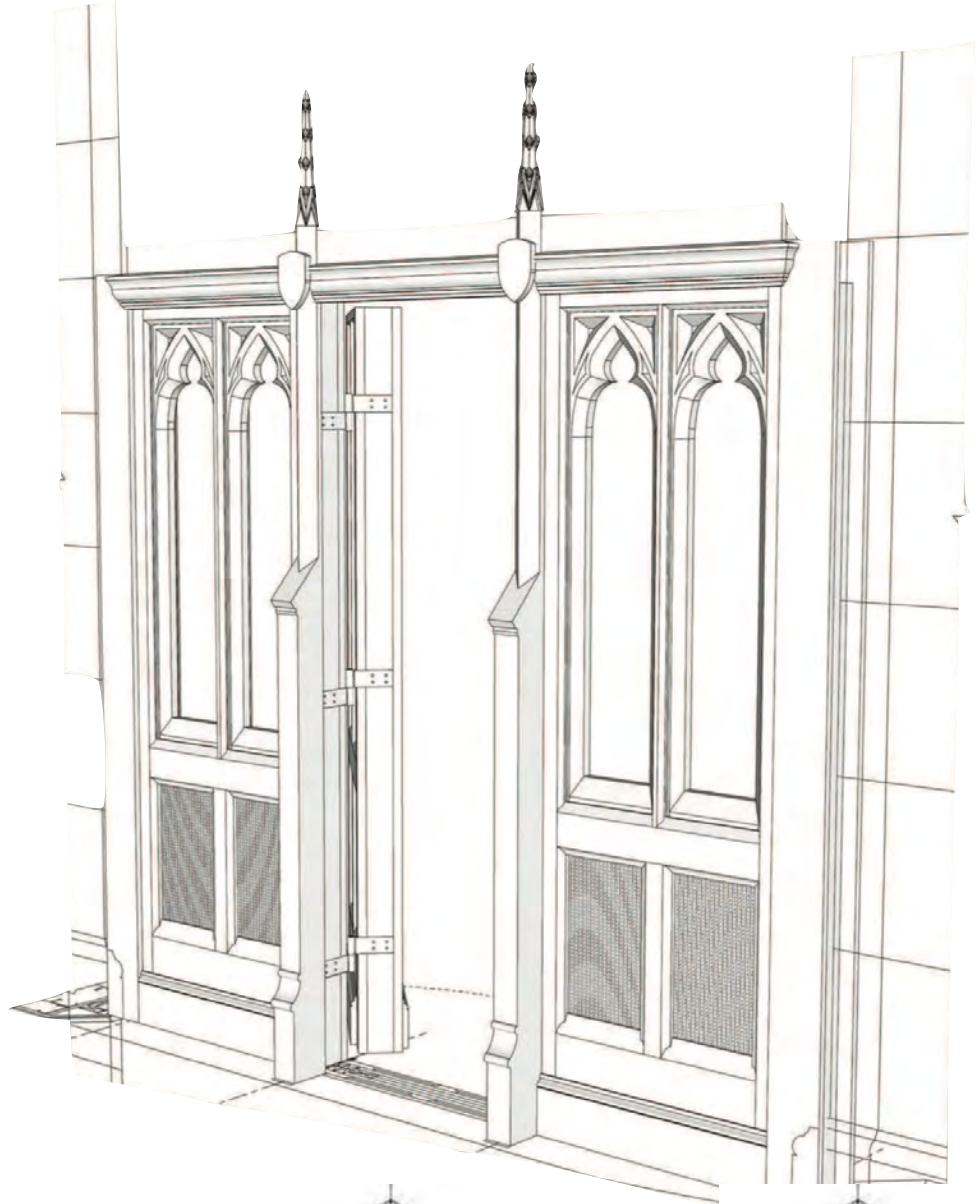
However, in the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation the reformers dismantled or repositioned rood screens in a way that promoted greater accessibility and visibility between clergy and laity.

Trinity's rood screens are pushed back against the windows to remind us that all believers worship together before the throne of grace. As the author of Hebrews exhorts us: *“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

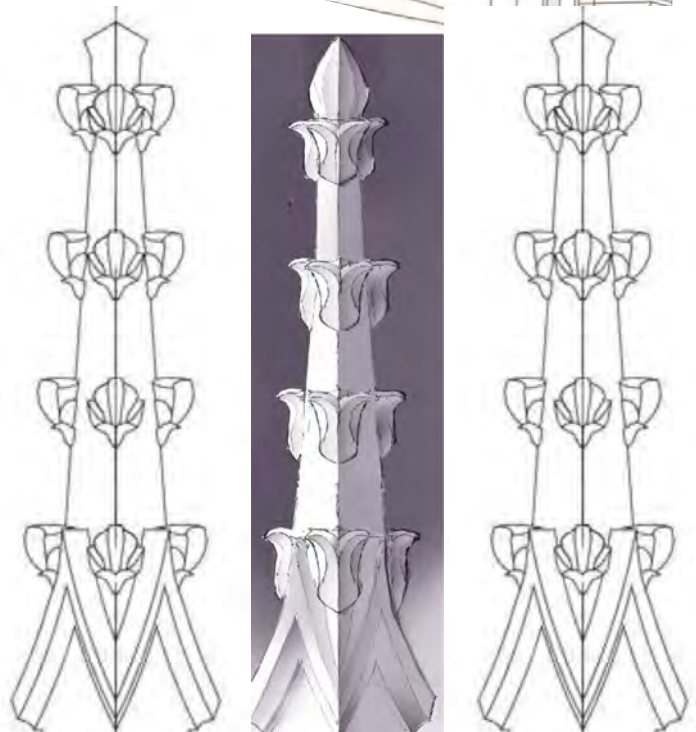
These screens, rather than dividing us, now



draw us together, inviting us to see the world through the lens of God's covenant promises.



Tulip bulbs blossom on the finials of the rood screens, a reference to the five points of Calvinism developed by the Dutch Reformed Church in the early seventeenth century and popularized into the acrostic T.U.L.I.P. in the early twentieth. Can you list the five points and defend them from Scripture?



Adorning the screens are a series of wooden shields, each reminding us of the progression of God's covenants.



The first shield proclaims the covenant of grace, captured in Latin: *gratia omnia mutat*—grace changes everything, Trinity's motto.

Noahic Covenant is marked by the rainbow (Genesis 9), a sign of God's promise to preserve creation and never again destroy the earth by flood, demonstrating His faithfulness even in judgment.



The Abrahamic covenant is symbolized by the smoking fire pot and burning torch (Genesis 15).

The Mosaic Covenant is represented by the giving of the law (Exodus 20).



The Davidic Covenant follows, where God promised to establish a throne that would endure forever, fulfilled in the reign of Christ (2 Samuel 7).

New Covenant is signified by Augustine's seal—a burning heart—reminding us of God's promise to write His law on our hearts, forgive our sins and point us to the fulfillment of the law in the Messiah (Jeremiah 31).



The final four shields connect us to the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Trinity's denomination, which is built around three commitments: "Faithful to the Scriptures, True to the Reformed Faith, and Obedient to the Great Commission."



The shield of God's Word declares our commitment to be *faithful to the Scriptures*, Old and New Testament.

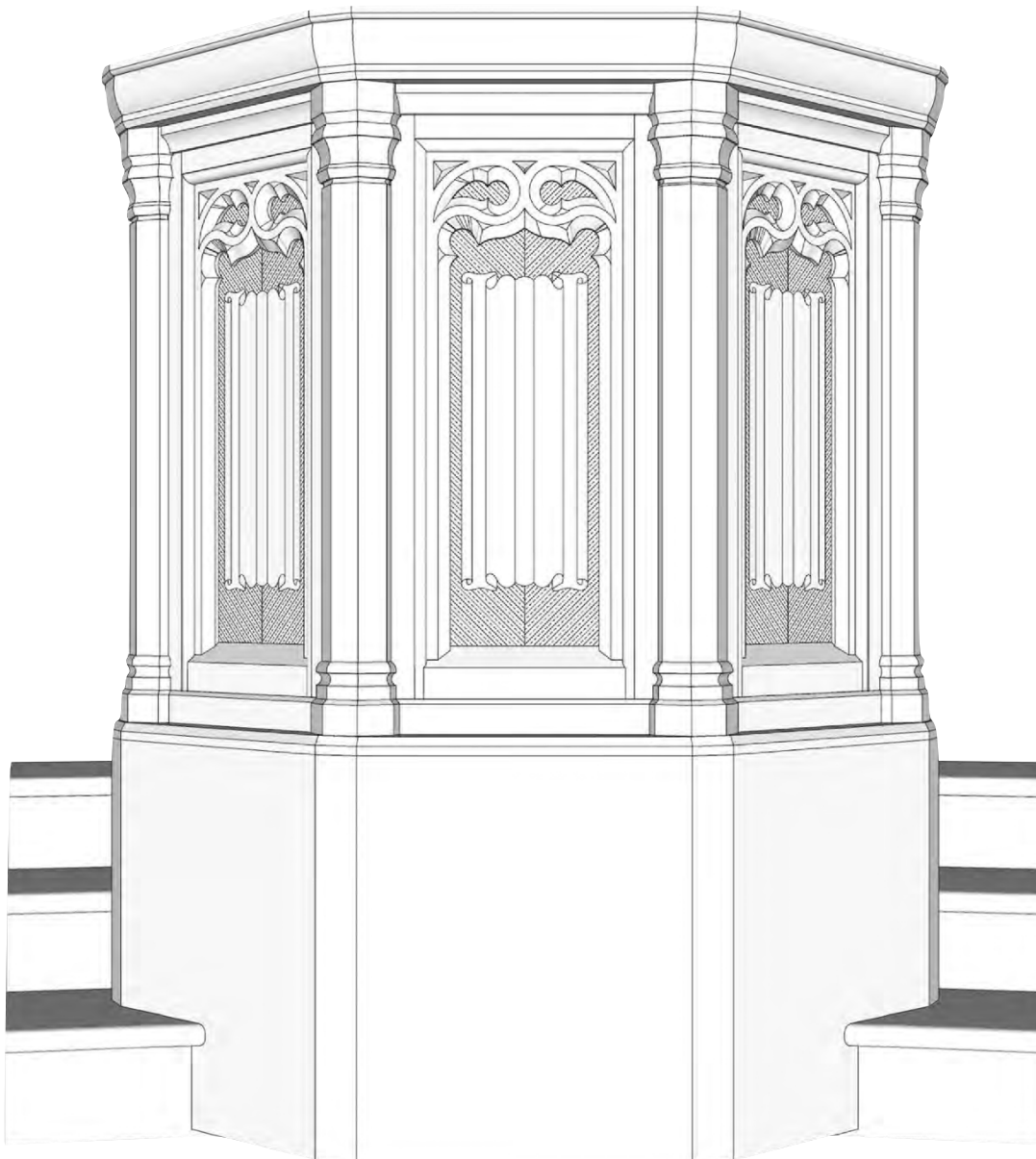
Calvin's seal—a hand holding a heart—reminds us that we stand *true to the Reformed faith*, offering our hearts to God, "promptly and sincerely."

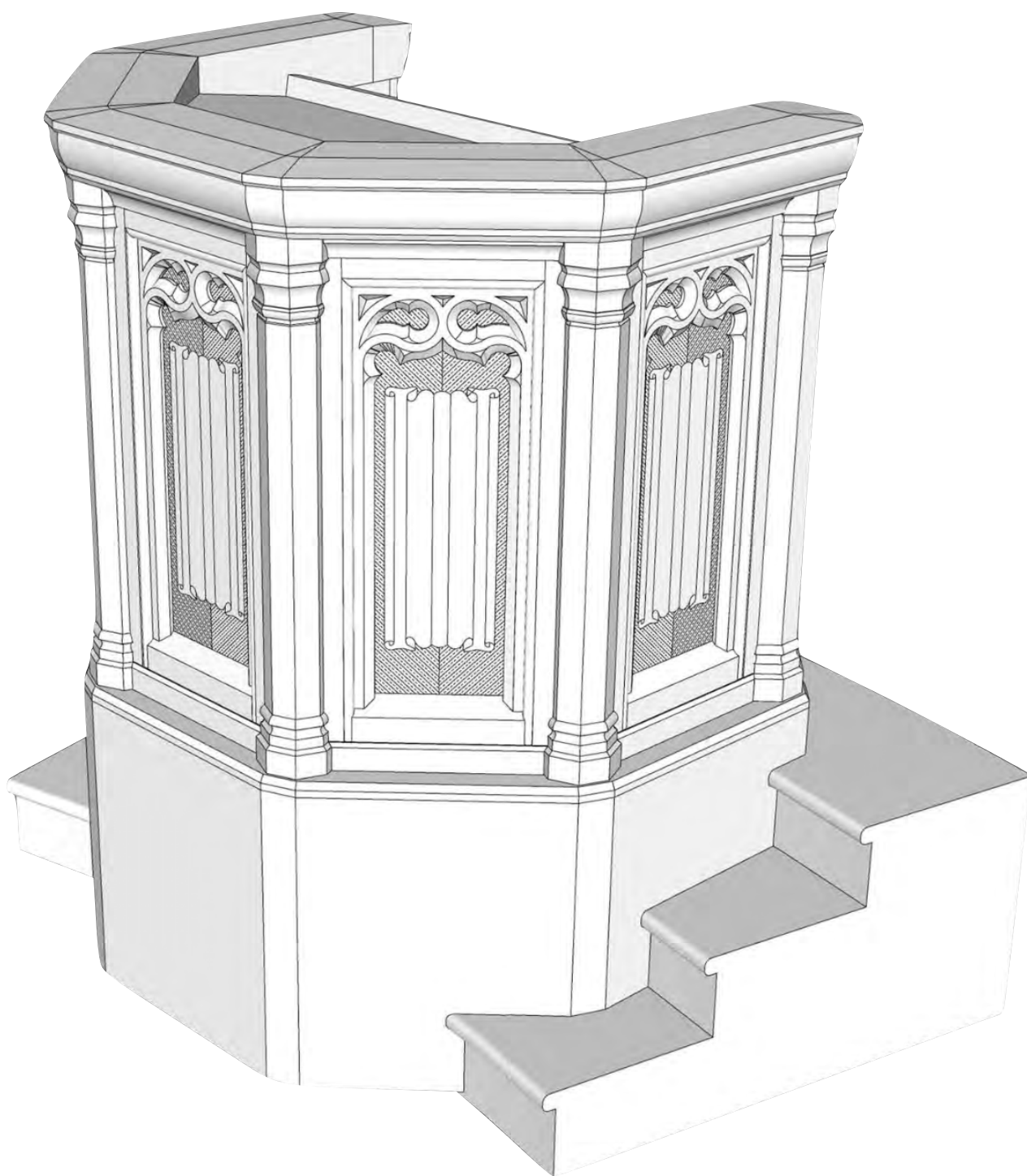


The shields of Oklahoma and the world call us to be *obedient to the Great Commission*, praying and laboring for the day when "*the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*" (Habakkuk 2:14).

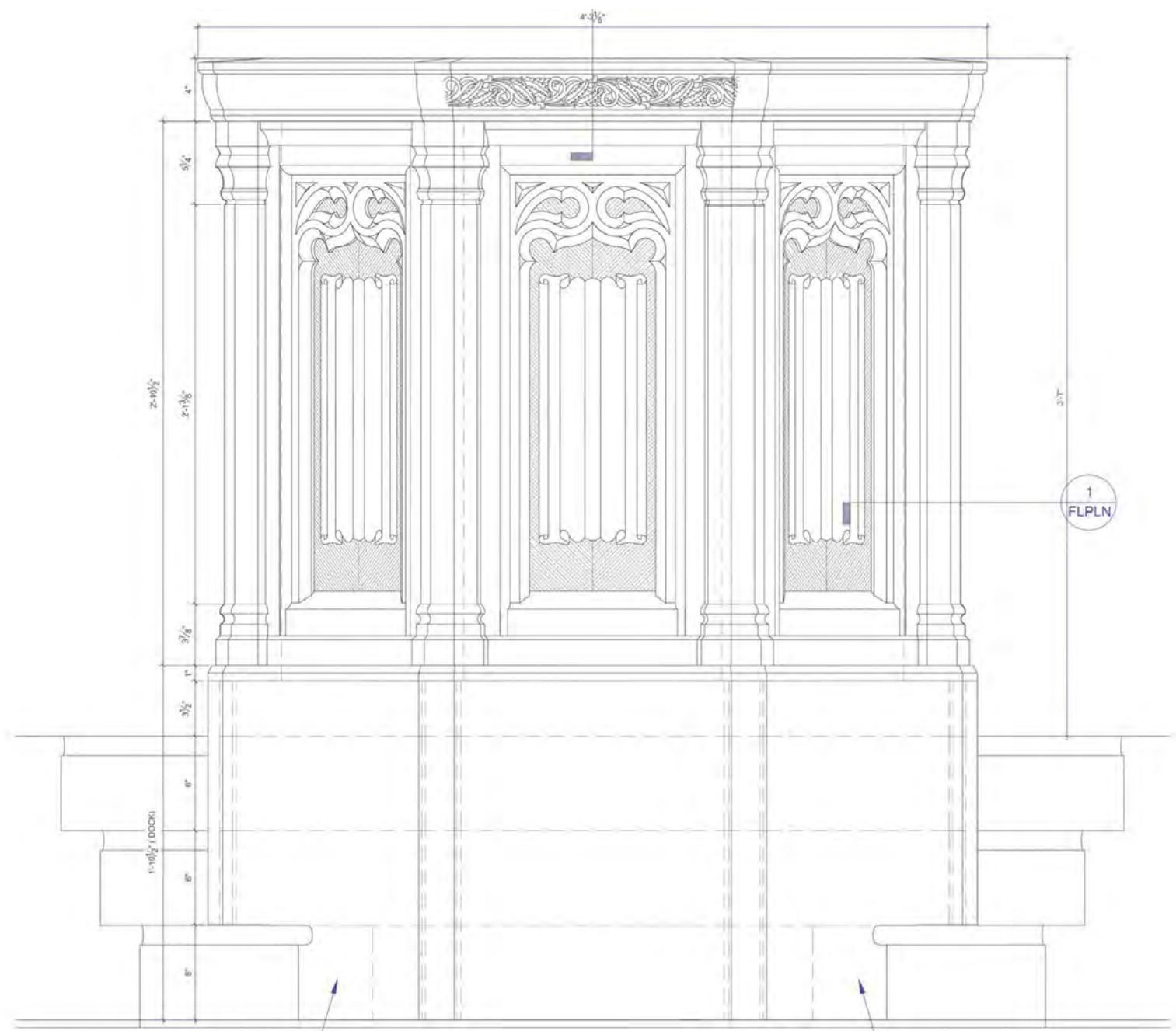
PULPIT

Look to the pulpit—the place where the gospel is proclaimed. Here, the preached Word stands at the center of worship, calling God’s people to faith and repentance. One of the great recoveries of the Reformation was the pulpit’s central place in the sanctuary, displacing the altar. Christ’s sacrifice has been made once for all, and now we proclaim His finished work. Worship is no longer centered on an altar of sacrifice, but on the Word preached and the sacrament administered—inseparable in their witness to the gospel.



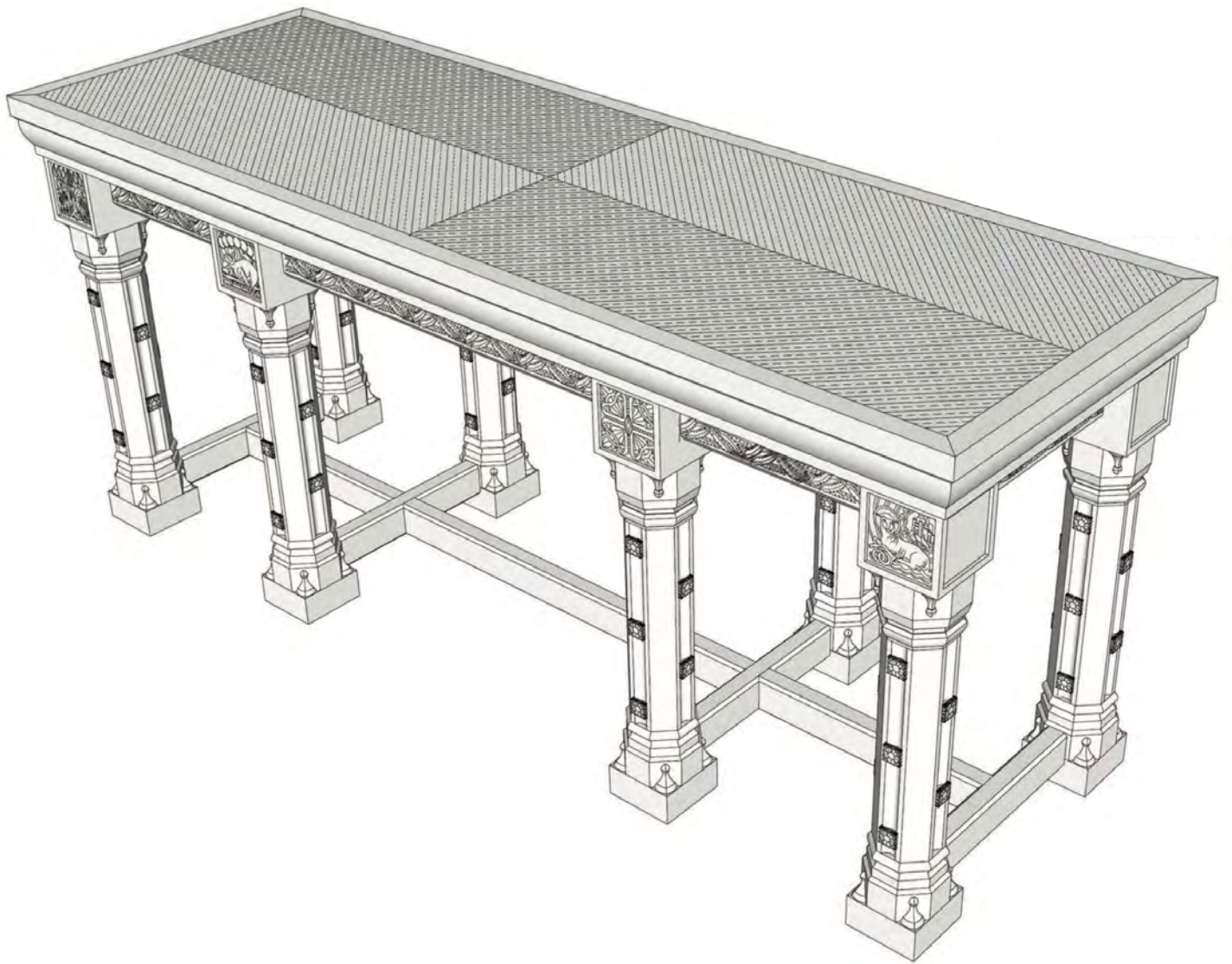


The wheat carved into the pulpit tells a story—the Sower scatters the seed, and the Spirit waters the soil. For those with hearts made ready, the Word takes root and grows.



COMMUNION TABLE

Beneath the pulpit sits the Lord's Table—a reminder that Word and Sacrament belong together. The Word proclaims Christ; the Table invites us to feast on Him. The pulpit lifts our eyes to the gospel, and the Table makes it tangible—bread broken, wine poured, His body and blood given for us.

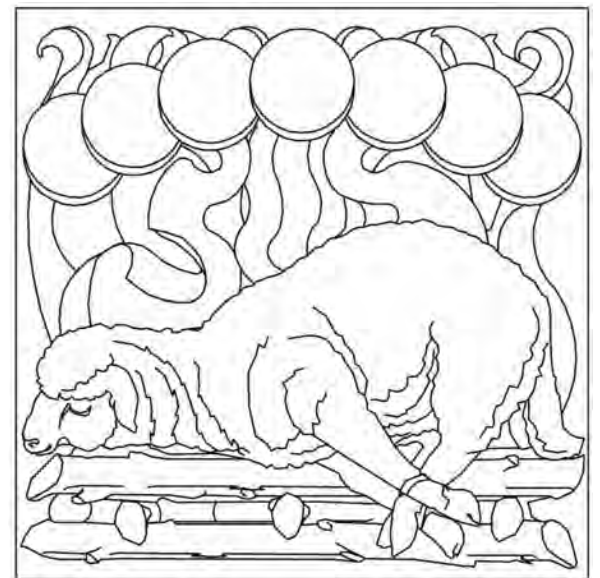


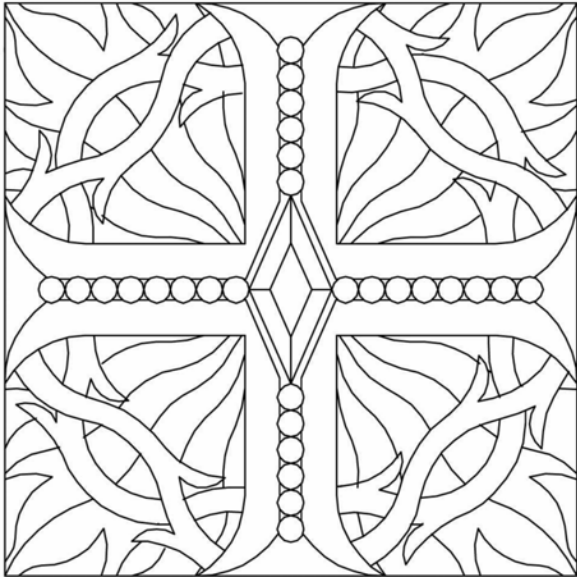
The four square capitals above the legs on Trinity's communion table reflects God's invitation to His people to come and feast.

From the very beginning, God has drawn His people to Himself through a meal. In Eden, He offered Adam and Eve a feast of abundance—with one tree set apart as a reminder that life comes from trusting His word. But they took instead of obeying, and in that act, fellowship was broken.

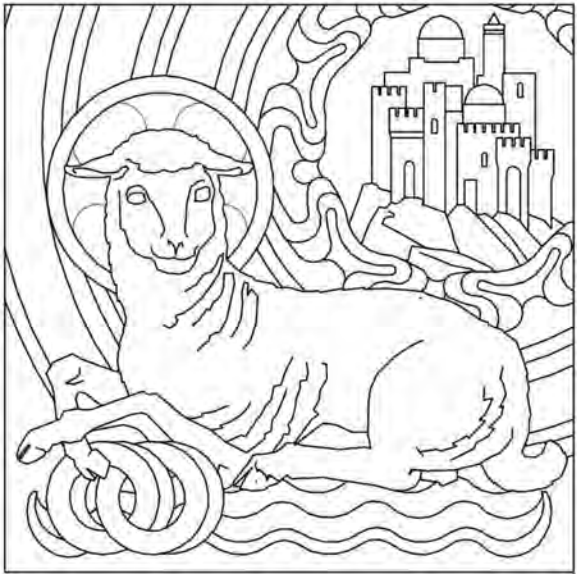


Then came Passover. On the night before Israel's deliverance, God commanded His people to share a meal—a lamb without blemish, its blood marking their doorposts. Judgment passed over them, not because of their righteousness, but because they were covered. Every year, they ate and remembered: salvation comes through the sacrifice of another.





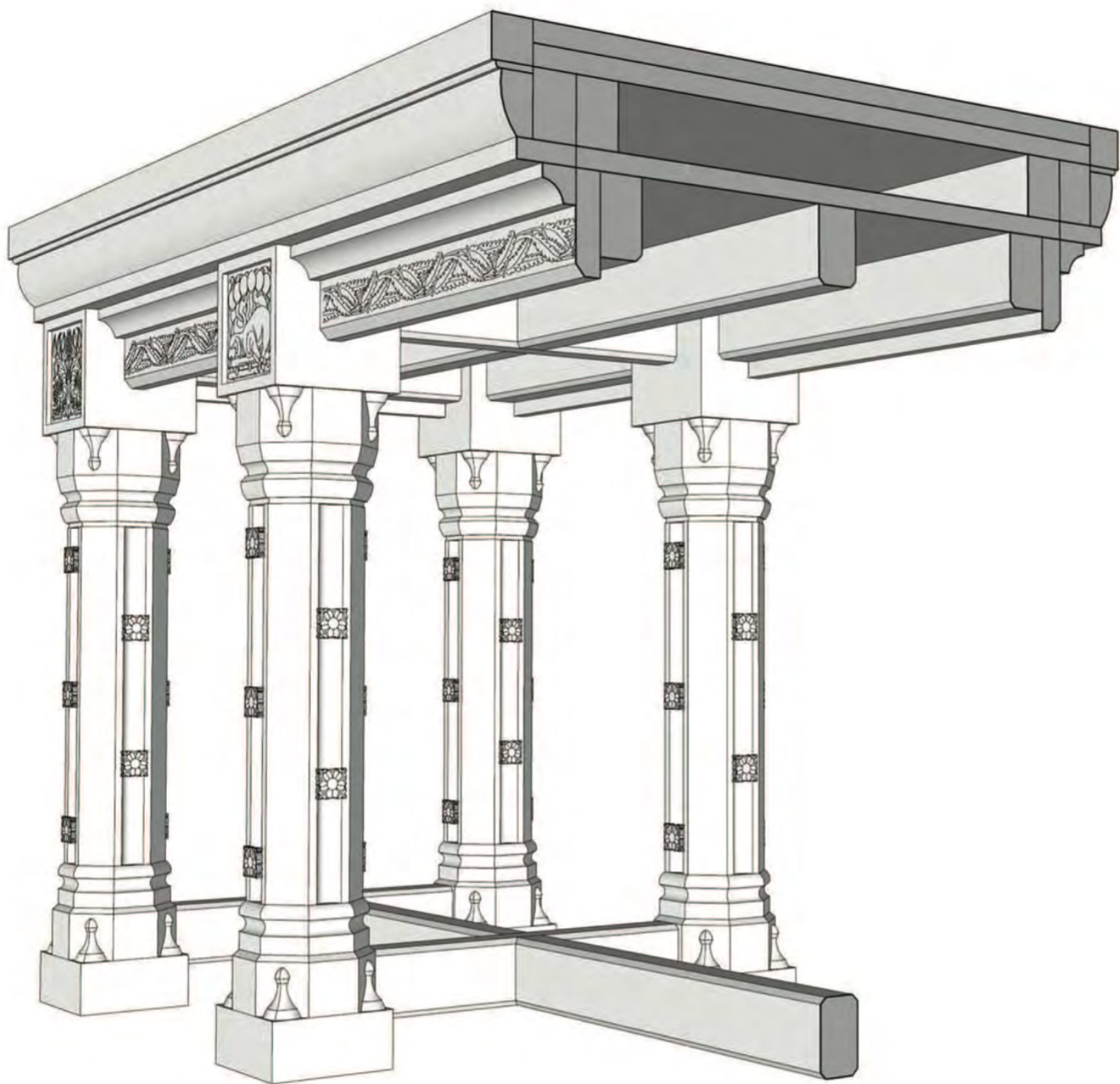
Centuries later, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus sat at a table once more. But this time, He lifted the bread and the cup and said, This is my body. This is my blood. The true Passover Lamb had come. The next day, He was broken and poured out so that we might be brought in.



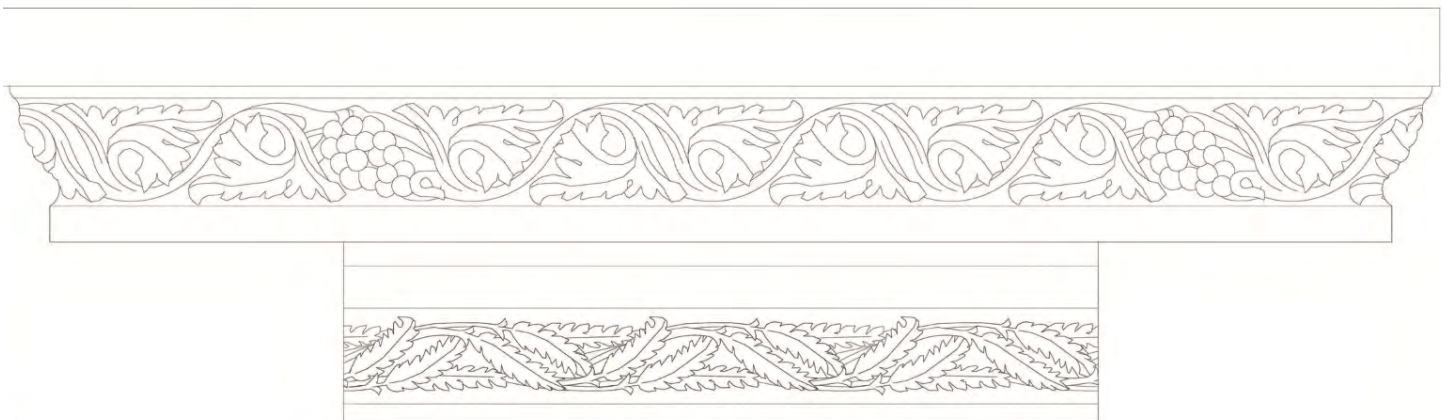
Scripture ends where it began—with a meal. But this time, it's a wedding feast. The Lamb who was slain will welcome His bride, and we will sit at His table forever.

Every time we gather, we taste in part what will one day be ours in full. The gospel is not just heard—it is eaten. And in this meal, we remember, we proclaim, and we long for the day when the Bridegroom Himself will lift the cup and say, Welcome!

Look closely, and you'll see something uniquely local—the Oklahoma Rose and Indian Blanket etched into the legs. Each leg is eight-sided pointing us to the eternal sabbath rest to come. Flowers budding on the legs is inspired from the communion table at the Princeton University Chapel, where Pastor Blake served as a campus minister. Cram & Furgeson Architects designed that table, too, a century ago.



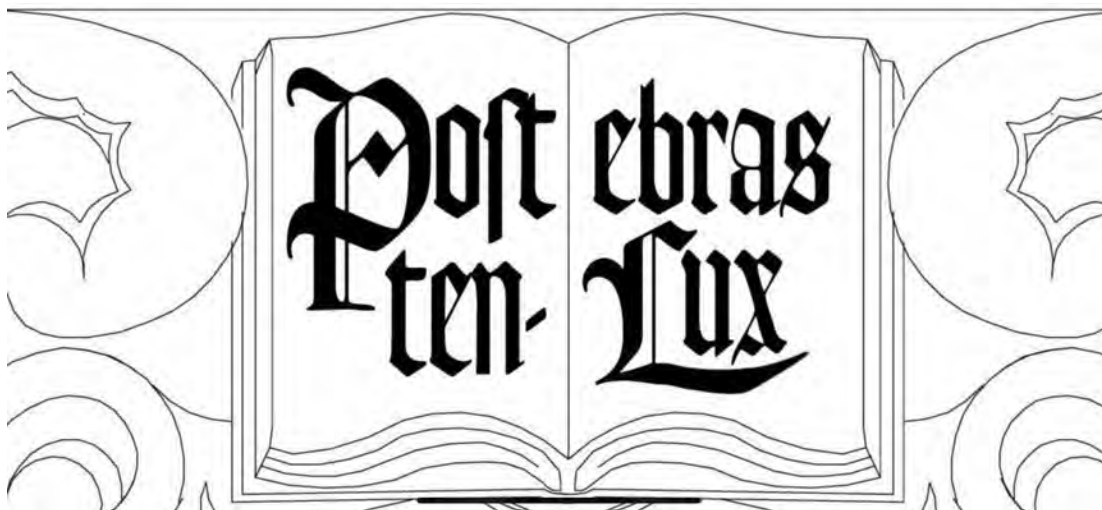
The vine and wheat relief that girds the table points to Christ's body and blood, while the squares on each end remind us that He is the *Alpha and Omega*.



MINISTERS' CHAIRS

The ministers' chairs echo John Calvin's in Geneva, marked with the burning bush—God's unchanging presence—and the inscription *post tenebras lux* ("after darkness, light"). This motto of the Reformation reminds us that gospel light breaks through the darkness. Here, Trinity's ministers will sit—not just in tradition, but on the truth—proclaiming God's Word to generations to come.



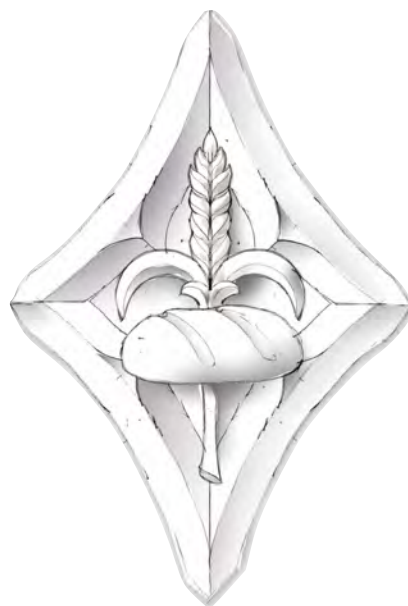


SEVEN “I AM” STATEMENTS

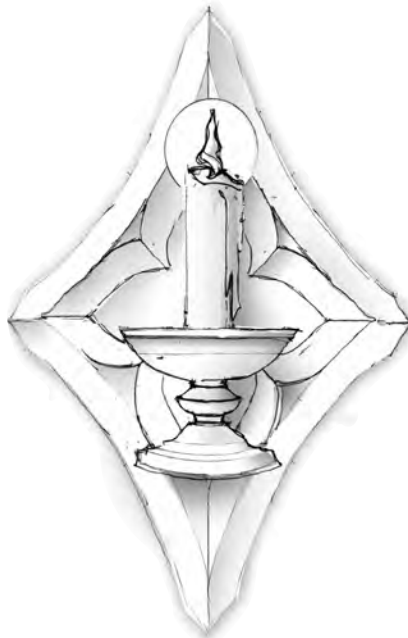
We hope that after visiting Trinity, you’ll find yourself asking the most important question of all: *Who do I say Jesus is?* It’s the very question Jesus Himself asked His disciples in Matthew 16:15—“But who do you say that I am?”

Notice the seven sections of wainscoting along the south wall. Their number is intentional, pointing us to the seven *I AM* statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Each time we leave this place, it is as if Jesus, by His Spirit, is asking us again: *Who do you say that I am?* It’s a question that shapes everything—our worship, our lives, and our hope.

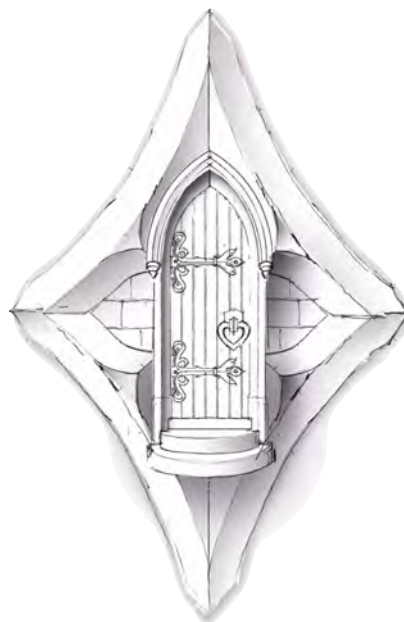
The Bread of Life (John 6:35)



The Light of the Word (John 8:12)



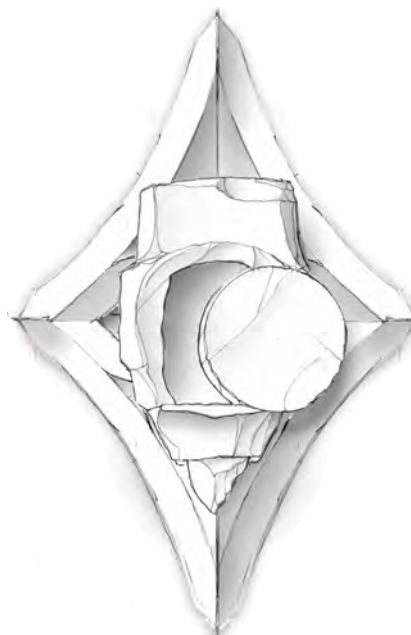
The Door (John 10:7)



The Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)



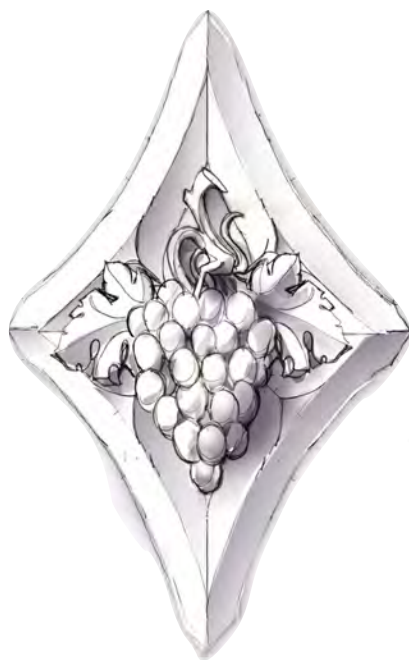
The Resurrection and the Life
(John 11:25)



The Way the Truth and the Life
(John 14:6)



The True Vine (John 15:1)



The columns standing between each of the seven sections draw our attention to an eighth—one that came long before. They point us back to the original *I AM* statement, spoken from the burning bush in Exodus 3, when God declared to Moses, “*I AM WHO I AM.*” Long before Jesus’ *I AM* statements in the Gospel of John, this was the name by which God made Himself known—a name that speaks of His eternal, unchanging, self-existent nature. Here, even in the architecture, we are reminded that the same God who spoke from the fire has now spoken to us fully in Christ.



The burning bush is also important to Protestants because John Knox and other Reformers in the 16th century Church of Scotland adopted the burning bush as a symbol of God's abiding and unchanging presence with His church amidst persecution. The burning bush in reformed church architecture is often accompanied by the Latin motto *Nec Tamen Consumebar*, which means “Yet it was not consumed.” This Latin motto reflects the idea that, despite facing challenges and persecutions, the church remains steadfast and endures in every age by God's grace.

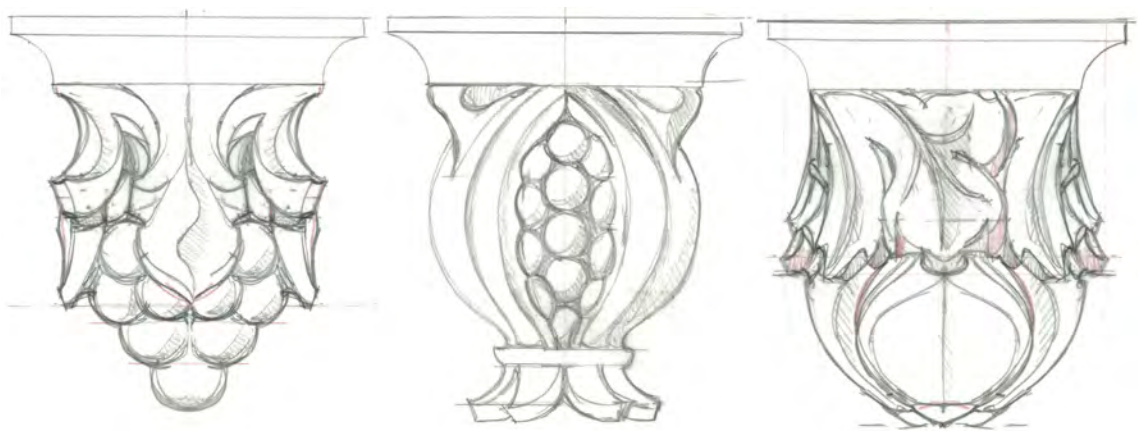
What challenges are you experiencing today? How might the way through those challenges—be found in turning from your own self-saving strategies and resting by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, who gave His life that you might be forgiven of your sins and covered with His righteousness, reconciling you to God and giving you the hope you so ardently crave?

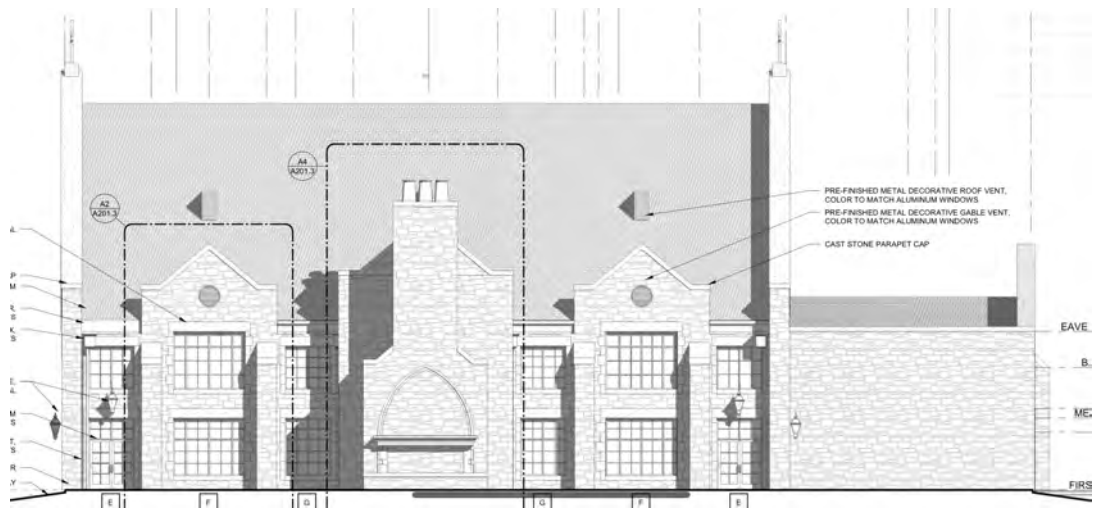
Who do you say Jesus is?

We are grateful to Matthew Alderman at Cram & Ferguson who hand-drew the designs for these artists to carve out of pink cedar after listening to the vision from Pastor Blake.

Andrés Felipe Mantilla Rey and his team of artisans in Bogotá brought Alderman's drawings to life, meticulously hand-carving each piece of pink cedar for Trinity's narthex and Trinity Hall. For these twenty-five artists, this work was more than a job—it was a craft, a calling. When Trinity's project ended, so did their employment. For a year, Trinity ensured they didn't just build a church, but were sustained by it, providing their annual salaries. Their enduring woodcraft will stand for generations, pointing us to the gospel.







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