



Stained glass windows undergoing restoration at St. Francis Xavier church

By Kasey Fowler Staff Writer

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— The historic stained glass windows at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church are undergoing a makeover. Reinarts Stained Glass Studios Inc. of Winona, Minn., is restoring the windows, which were installed more than 85 years ago.

When the windows were installed, there was not enough support in the middle, so they are bowing because of their weight. Church officials think the windows most likely were installed by regular glass installers, not stained glass specialists. The technique is a little different for stained glass than regular glass and may account for the bowing.

The restoration includes putting more support in the middle of the windows. Reinarts also is fixing damaged and broken pieces of glass. Some windows sustained damage from rocks — dating back to when Randolph was a rock road — to BB pellets. Broken glass pieces are being removed and shipped off to be fixed.

The church's stained glass windows are Munich style. During the later half of the 1800s and the early 1900s, many Catholic churches in the United States imported their windows from studios that grew out of that style. St. Francis' windows were made in 1921 in a studio in Chicago.

Munich-style windows usually have realistic figures painted on antique-colored glass. Figures are set in scenes framed by white and gold columns and canopies. The religious scenes were painted on larger sheets of glass and fused to the glass through firing in intense heat, according to church officials. This allowed for a blending of color not attainable by the old Medieval style.

St. Francis officials were told their stained glass windows are in the top three in Oklahoma in quality. The windows are unusual in that they probably were done by the same group of artisans. Most of the time when they were made, each window was assigned to a different group of artisans. The windows have continuity of color schemes and facial features throughout.

Whole windows will not be removed during the restoration process, but ventilators on the bottoms of the windows have been removed. The ventilators were able to pop open to allow ventilation, so they have sustained more damage. Windows on the south side of the church have incurred heat damage, and windows on the north side of the church, near the road, have incurred more chip damage.

The church is approximately one month into the process that is predicted to take three months. This restoration should last about another 85 years, according to church officials, but when the windows are about 200 years old they likely will have to be redone completely.

Reinarts has been creating, restoring and protecting stained glass since 1950.

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