

## Annual Awards Issue

Liturgical/Interior Design » Award

### DESIGN CONCEPTS

Holy Cross Abbey Church Renovation » Berryville, Virginia



Cool Spring Farm, which dates from the late 1700s, consists of approximately 1,200 acres along the Shenandoah River. In 1950, 30 Cistercian Trappist monks acquired the farm after their previous monastery burned to the ground. They built simple cinder-block buildings, one of which served as their church and had changed little since its construction. Recent efforts to update the church were grounded in the Cistercian ideals of simplicity and beauty.

On the interior, wood brackets and trusses were added to create a sense of heightened space while drawing attention to the tabernacle. These features are accentuated through enhanced lighting, both natural and artificial. Vertical windows extending nearly to the floor were added along with direct/indirect LED pendants and spotlights. The design accommodates visitors while preserving a degree of separation between guests and the cloistered monks. Accessibility was improved throughout. Nonsymmetrical doors on each side were dressed in stained wood panels to create symmetry while maintaining function. The tabernacle penetrates a

curved wall, maintaining its central focus while creating an apse for private reflection behind. New seating for the monks takes the form of 24 white oak choir stalls arranged antiphonally, in addition to a new altar, ambo, and other furnishings.

A mysterious stained-glass window, hidden behind shutters for years, was exposed and restored. Lighting controls were added to allow preset conditions for various daily functions as well as soften the light during early morning and late night prayer. One distinct challenge was hiding the existing hydronic heating system that runs along the exterior walls at varying heights. The solution takes the form of new wood wainscoting with decorative metal grilles beneath the windows to conceal the heating system.

#### Jury Comments

*The very humble nature of the original church has been retained, while new elements such as brackets and arches have been added in a very harmonious way. It is a delightful, intimate space, and the interventions are minimal and sensitive. The color palette is very subtle.*



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