RESTORATIVE CONSTRUCTION AT THE FRANCISCAN RENEWAL CENTER
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The Franciscan Renewal Center is both resourceful and resource-efficient in creating houses of worship.

Initially, 65 years ago, there was a converted bar of a lodge, followed three years later by a community "chapel-raising" fueled by burgers, beans, and beer. On January 3, 2016, the center had the groundbreaking for a 17,050 square-foot church, designed to be certified Silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). If certified, it will be the first religious building in Arizona and only the 15th in the United States to achieve LEED certification.

"I'm particularly proud that we are able to produce a building of unique architectural and artistic merit," said Fr. Joseph Schwab, OFM, Executive Director of the center. "With our architect, Westlake Reed Leskosky, and general contractor, Haydon Building Corporation, we are building a church that speaks of our present technology for many generations to come."

The new church is the result of a successful fundraising campaign and will seat up to 800 people. Completion is scheduled for the summer of 2017.

Little could Franciscan friars Fr. Owen da Silva and Fr. Victor Bucher imagine such a facility when they discovered the Kachina Lodge.
Lodge on 25 acres of desert along the Scottsdale-Paradise Valley border on Lincoln Drive in 1951. They purchased the property for $150,000 and established the Casa de Paz y Bien, now also known as the Franciscan Renewal Center. The bar of the lodge served as the “Casa’s” chapel, holding 44 retreatants; six large guest houses accommodated their overnight stays.

Through word-of-mouth, retreat attendance grew. The friars asked community members to help build a new chapel to house 60 retreatants, offering only the three B’s—burgers, beans and beer as compensation. Lloyd Le Raine Pike, a former retreatant, was retained as architect. The groundbreaking took place in June 1954.

The community continued to grow each decade, and the chapel was remodeled in 1971 to hold 212 people and again in 1988 with 312 seats.

When the Conventual Church of our Lady of the Angels was established in 2006, offering full sacramental preparation, it attracted more members. Ten years later, Mass attendance spills onto the lawn and patios, necessitating a larger chapel.

With the new building, the Casa and its community are committed to environmental integrity and resource efficiency in the way of St. Francis of Assisi, who voiced concern for the environment more than 800 years ago. Other measures to reduce the Casa’s ecological footprint include solar panels on the friary and Assisi guest lodge, recycling programs, eco-friendly takeout dinnerware for guests, and xeriscaping. Detention basins capture rainwater from surrounding Camelback and Mummy mountains to support vegetation and control overflow.

The new church is part of the Casa’s Master Plan, including guest room and pool renovations completed in 2013, campus infrastructure and parking area improvements, the Assisi 32-room guest lodge that was finished in 2015, and a new Community Life Center to begin construction once the church is built.

The Casa was founded by and is today an active religious community of the Order of Friars Minor – part of the worldwide Franciscan family. Activities at the Casa include daily Mass, Sunday services, private retreats, gathering space for nonprofit groups, as well as 50 volunteer ministries that assist the poor or vulnerable, empower individuals to improve their circumstances and build community fellowship.