



Photo by Dale Hall Photography

## SCHMIDT CUSTOM FLOORS INC. | Waukesha, Wis.

**WHEN THEY SIGNED** on to install the floor of a meditation room for a health care organization, Schmidt Custom Floors' challenge was to "create an environment for people to go to clean their thoughts." The stunning final product may be particularly effective on wood floor aficionados, whose minds will likely be scrubbed of anything other than the question, "How did they get this pattern to line up?"

Tom Zarek oversaw the unique project for Schmidt and says the client, Agnesian Health-Care, "wanted to do something special" for the St. Agnes Chapel at its facility in Fond du Lac, Wis. That resulted in a wood floor fraught with meaning.

The labyrinth in the floor of the chapel "signifies the journey of life in which joy, sorrow, growth, defeat, grief and celebration are encountered," Agnesian's website states. The concept of the chapel, developed in part by artists Yan Rieger and Françoise Rieger, was to highlight the natural beauty of earth, wind, fire and water, modeled on the stone labyrinth floor at the Chartres Cathedral in France.

Zarek reached out to Oshkosh Designs in Winneconne, Wis., to help create a strategy for executing the complex design for the circular room. They chose select-grade white oak with walnut inlays to create the winding floor.

With enthusiastic approval of the plans from

the client, Zarek and his team set to work cleaning up the concrete substrate and sealing it. Then they began installing the sections of the floor, which were 3 by 5 feet long, piecing them together and gluing them directly to the substrate. "This was put together like a big puzzle," Zarek says.

The installation was more exacting than your average floor, however. "It was really artful," Zarek says. "We had to put it together as any artist would." But despite the need for precision, the crew managed to install, sand and finish the approximately 42-foot-wide wood floor in one week, a smooth process Zarek says is a testament to Oshkosh Design's efficiency.

"I've been told this is the world's largest [wood floor] medallion," Zarek says.

The floor isn't the only part of the completed chapel in which wood plays a significant role. Yan Rieger also designed the room's liturgical features, including its alter and pulpit, carved from walnut trees grown at the healthcare site in Fond du Lac.

"Through these pieces of art, a deep sense of the Sacred is evoked in those who enter the space," the artists stated in an International Society of Christian Artists newsletter.

With the space's natural materials and symbolism, all grounded by its meditative floor, visitors to this chapel have no shortage of things to help them clear their minds.—R.K.

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