

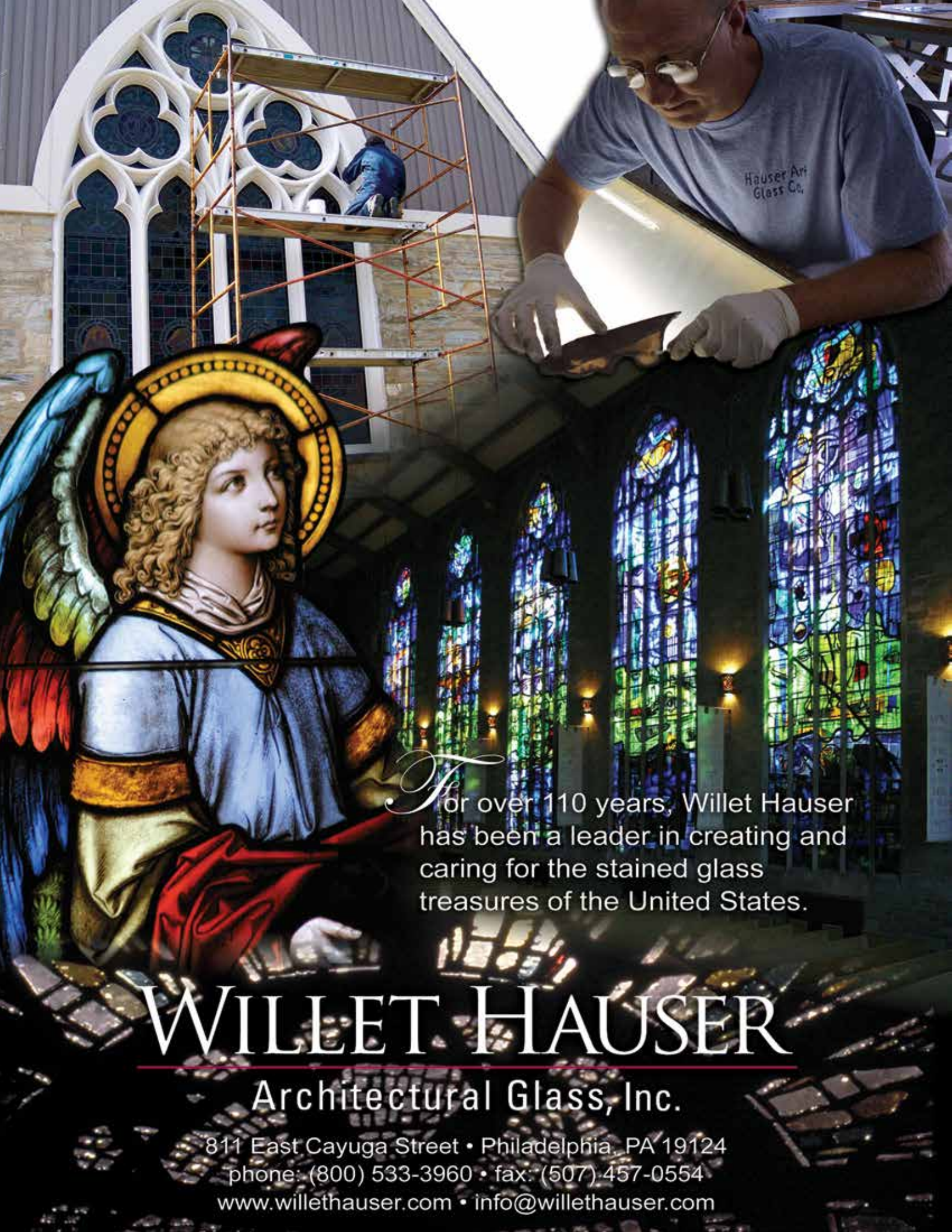
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Theme Issue:  
The Sacred in the City







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Photo: Pease Photography

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A new, flexible worship space occupies a former warehouse in downtown Cleveland (article begins on page 22)

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## ‘STRANGELY SACRED’ URBAN SPACE

EDITOR'S PAGE  
MICHAEL J. CROSBIE

Cities are places of concentration, of swimming in a great river of humanity, of chance meetings and sometimes of dis-comforting jumbles. As more of us in the world live in cities, we are spending more time with “strangers,” people we don’t quite know ... yet. Mark Twain once pointed out that “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness...” but he could have been writing about living in a city. In such urban places the sacred is compressed, and we often find the “strangely spiritual,” as we might call it, right next to us. These are the beliefs, faiths, and passions that we might not share, or even recognize. How do we occupy the same space, believers and non-believers alike?


The question came up in a slightly different context in a recent article by Ken Gallinger, who writes a column on ethics for the *Toronto Star*. A reader wrote to Gallinger asking how you should behave in a sacred place that is not sacred to you (<http://bit.ly/gallinger>). Must you remove your hat, for instance, if that is the custom in this religious culture?

Gallinger counseled that you should, out of respect for the community of believers, not necessarily because you share their beliefs. He went on to describe the often queasy feeling he has in religious monuments such as St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, “gilt-encrusted” and “guilt-encrusted,” where lavish decoration seems an attempt to cover over the sins of those who built these holy palaces, sometimes using questionable means, such as slave labor or ill-gotten gains. Do the sins of the clients, architects, and builders make a place less holy?

I put such questions to the *Faith & Form* LinkedIn group (<http://bit.ly/ff-linkedin>) for comment. Carl Trimble, a glass artist, replied that visitors need to recognize that it is the community of believers that makes a place holy, not necessarily the art and architecture, and that the place of gathering should be respected for the community’s beliefs. Writer Ken Caldwell added, however, that when any religious institution is guilty of a sin against humanity, it should be protested—loudly—even in the sacred space. Reverend Christopher Smith further addressed the very nature of what makes a place sacred—our actions, its history, God’s actions, a relationship? “Can these be perfect?” he questioned.

Andrew Gingerich, a planner and designer, considered the question from his Mennonite background. The settings for worship that he grew up in were often not only paid for but physically built by the congregation—investing them with a sacredness through generosity, human action, and love. These were not ornate structures, especially when compared to cathedrals, the fine materials and craft of which can make them seem alien today.

“For me,” Gingerich wrote, “the problem is that for many, these structures are seen as coming from another world, as if they descended from heaven and landed on the ground, not to be violated or questioned. In truth, they are human structures, with human histories. They need redeeming in the same way all of our built places need redeeming. Have they been redeemed? If no, what would redeem them? Not a question I can answer.”


Human structures with human histories, and to them we bring our own experiences, questions, and prejudices. The world’s growing urban condition brings us closer to those with different spiritual lives, often lived within institutions with clouded histories, beneath roofs sometimes raised under dubious circumstances. How do we respond? 

MICHAEL J. CROSBIE IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *FAITH & FORM* AND CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT [MCROSBIE@FAITHANDFORM.COM](mailto:MCROSBIE@FAITHANDFORM.COM)

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# THE SACRED IN THE SECULAR CITY: A CONVERSATION WITH HARVEY COX

By Michael J. Crosbie

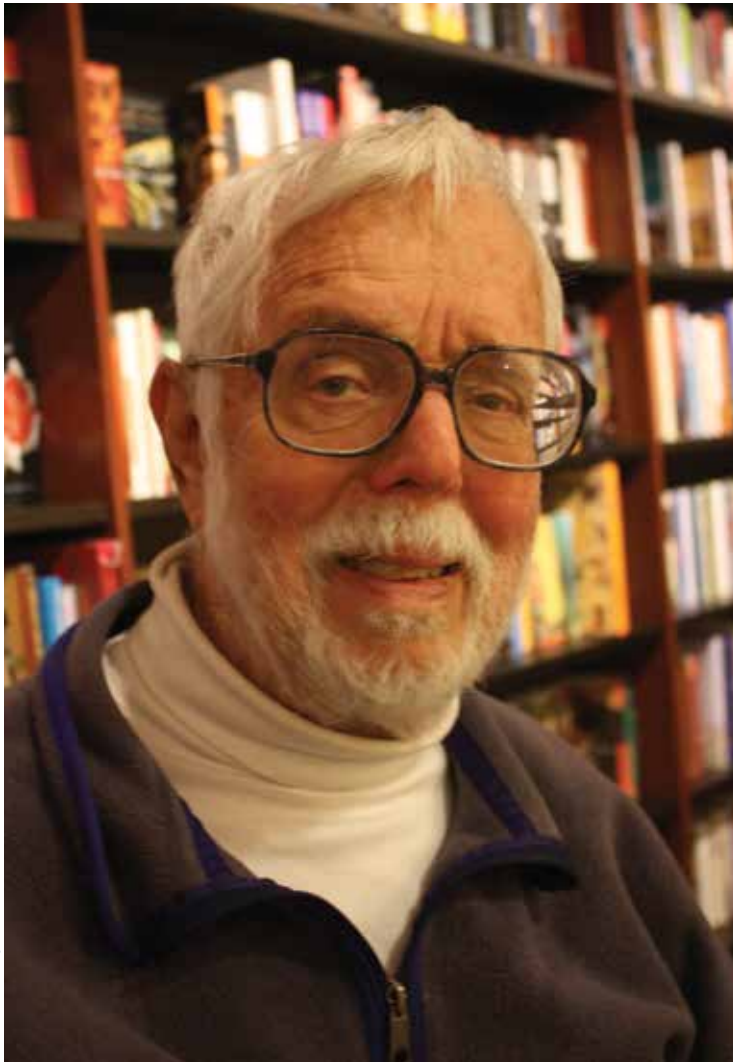


Photo: Michael J. Crosbie

No one book has done more to influence the concept of and the conversation about the presence of the sacred in our cities than *The Secular City* by Harvey Cox, published in 1965. That same year, Cox arrived as a professor at the Harvard Divinity School, helping to shape new generations of clergy and theologians through his teaching and writing for nearly a half century. Coinciding with the occasion of his retirement from Harvard in 2009, Cox published *The Future of Faith*, in which he furthers his exploration of the Church as institution, and how it continues to change. I sat down with Cox (who now serves as Hollis Research Professor of Divinity at Harvard) to discuss his views of the sacred in the city, and new shoots of growth emerging in the dynamic context of an urban world.

**Michael J. Crosbie:** It's an interesting time; the first time in the history of the world that more people are living in urban areas than not. Your landmark book, *The Secular City*, considered how the changing urban context might shape faith. What are your thoughts now about living in a more urban world and how that affects human spirituality and religious architecture?

**Harvey Cox:** The cities where people are living are not the utopian vision that some once had. I think the jury is still out to some extent, on what happens when this large a number of people congregate in large cities, in megacities, and when you pair that with large migration rates in history. Tens or hundreds of thousands of people are moving into cities; it's a mixture of people that was not characteristic for the ancient cities and the classical cities. On one hand people can meet and get to know each other; sometimes it results in the lowering of prejudicial boundaries. But it also can exacerbate conflict. If you lived 200 miles away and you never saw me, that's one thing, but if we lived on the same block we might collide. Look at what is happening in Kenya, Syria, or Western China. Old ethnic rivalries get revived, and it raises the stakes. The possibilities for the really enhanced heterogeneous communities are there, but so are the chances for mayhem. For me it presents a serious challenge to religious communities to provide the spaces and occasions where people can come together and get to know each other, and trust each other, and participate in each other's traditions and festivals.

I was talking yesterday with some of my students working over in east Boston, which is a very low-income section of the city. There was a big corporation trying to build a casino there. A provision in the Massachusetts constitution states that the affected community has to have a say in whether they want a casino or not. The casino came in with enormous publicity saying that it would be great for east Boston and it would bring in jobs and money. But some Divinity students managed to organize a coalition of Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim communities—congregations in east Boston—and they defeated the casino. They were outspent 87 to 1 by the casino industry, yet they won the referendum. The interesting thing to me is that for the first time these congregations met each other not just in a nice, ecumenical setting; they were really doing something for the community, it was controversial. This is an exemplary idea, that various faith communities can come together and accomplish something. For a year or two there would have been some construction jobs, but like anyplace a casino builds, the community would have gotten poorer for everyone but the casino. For the students I thought it was such a great example. The gambling issue used to be one that divided liberal from conservative Christians. But now there's an alliance between the old pietistic approach and the more social-action-oriented people. It illustrates the fact that while there is more possibility for conflict, there are also more chances for really creative new things to happen.



**MJC:** Is there a connection here between the growth of urbanization and the growth of the “spiritual,” versus the “religious”?

**HC:** I think there is. What is really fascinating is the growth of the spiritual, but not the religious category, the way people describe themselves. This new phenomenon challenges the old distinction between sacred and profane. It’s not quite sacred and not quite secular; it’s something else, but we haven’t quite figured out what it is yet. I had a seminar two years ago where some of the students went out and interviewed people who described themselves as spiritual but not religious. We pressed them: “What do you mean by that?” One thing that was very clear was that no one wanted to be thought of as an atheist. We don’t like the packaging of spiritual reality that is being given to us; we don’t like being told what we have to believe. So our conclusion was that these people want to uncouple the spiritual reality from the power nexus that it has been identified with. For me that’s an important and welcome development. I think it’s been long needed. I like the idea that it has redefined this old sacred/secular dichotomy—it doesn’t fit with either, or it fits with both.

**MJC:** If more people are living in urban areas, maybe they relate spiritually more on an individual basis, rather than an institutional one?

**HC:** I think it’s good. It points up the importance of events like the festival. Muslim and Christian communities, a few times a year, have public displays of faith, it’s out in the streets. Whether it’s a saint’s day or revolves around breaking a fast, whatever it is, it has a public face that is not strictly institutional. It’s not just inside a church building or mosque, so people are exposed to it. Then people ask questions: Why do you do it that way? What is this day? What does it mean? Then believers have to explain something that they may have never had to explain to themselves. It clarifies their own faith traditions in a way that they might not have thought of before, and it has that positive advantage. More of this happens in cities.

**MJC:** You mentioned the importance of creating an environment, a space for the sacred and the spiritual, which I think is very important—this idea of having a public space that allows these things to happen. How do you create those spaces?

**HC:** Well, you have to carve them out; they don’t create themselves, especially with the price of real estate. Somebody has to provide that space. It doesn’t, however, have to be a space sacred only to one tradition, and that’s the big thing we are learning about urban spaces and churches, synagogues, and mosques. We can share spaces without losing much, in fact we might even gain something from it. The space itself takes on a kind of “movable feast” quality; it can be a mosque on Friday, a synagogue on Saturday, and a church on Sunday. It’s economically more feasible, and it’s welcoming. It’s one way for these poor city churches that can’t afford to keep the heat on and a roof over their heads to survive.

We have also learned a lot from storefront churches. One feature of a storefront church is that you see what’s going on before you jump into it. Some of the bigger churches have learned that lesson, and they minimize the barrier between inside and outside, as opposed to the

old style where you have a gigantic, thick door, and you’re either in or out. This is a recognition of this new, emerging spiritual space—it isn’t totally encompassed by this side or that side. It’s a zone of transition. That’s what a mall is all about: you walk through it, and you look the goods over, the old idea of the open market place. You have this emerging spirituality where some are not quite ready to commit, but not quite ready to walk away, either. A passage from T.S. Eliot’s wonderful poem, *Ash-Wednesday* captures this: “Will the veiled sister pray/For children at the gate/Who will not go away and cannot pray:/Pray for those who choose and oppose.” There are a lot more of them now: they don’t quite want to go away, but they’re not quite ready. It’s an enormously important category, religiously, of people. I think churches could be so much more responsive to those people by creating the spaces, creating the occasions, an atmosphere where they feel welcome, they don’t need to sign up to be there.


**MJC:** We now have the first pope in an urban world, the first pope from the Americas, not afraid to live in a city hotel instead of an aloof, papal apartment.

**HC:** He’s an urban cat.

**MJC:** A good description of him. I was interested in your division of the history of Christianity as first the Age of Faith, then the Age of Belief, and now the Age of the Spirit. How does the Age of the Spirit play out in the urban context?

**HC:** I don’t think we are quite in the Age of the Spirit yet. We are moving into it. That’s what I said in the book, *The Future of Faith*, that there are indications that we are on the edge of it, but we are still mired in the Age of Belief for many people. Being a Christian means believing in certain things, some of which stretch back to the changes in doctrine that Constantine made. Before the creeds, being a Christian was trying to be a follower of Jesus. There was no universal creed; it was Constantine who insisted on that, and said everyone had to toe the line. What I am saying in *The Future of Faith* is that we are entering into an Age of the Spirit and it may take a long while, because people will cling to the Age of Belief, and there will be people who insist I have to cling to it. But as far as the Age of the Spirit and the city is concerned, I think they co-adhere pretty well. The city is the place where the things we just talked about are possible, both conflict and confluence. According to Aristotle, a city is a place where strangers meet. What happens when strangers meet? You can have hatred and bigotry, but you can also have the emergence of a new, richer form for community. You have enhanced opportunities and enhanced dangers.

**MJC:** So as we move into this Age of the Spirit, what are the opportunities for the city to encourage it?

**HC:** Give it space. One of the great things that churches and other religious institutions have are spaces in the city. This emerging spirituality needs open space where people can be, and do, and ask, and criticize, and celebrate, and do what one needs to do. It is space that provides an occasion to acquaint people with the great traditions, and perhaps to go on from there. I think there are a lot of wonderful opportunities. It’s a great moment for *faiths*—plural. 



*View of building boom in Mecca approximately four years ago shows construction almost complete on the clock tower (at right in photo). The black cube of the Kabba has since been encircled with an elevated walkway.*

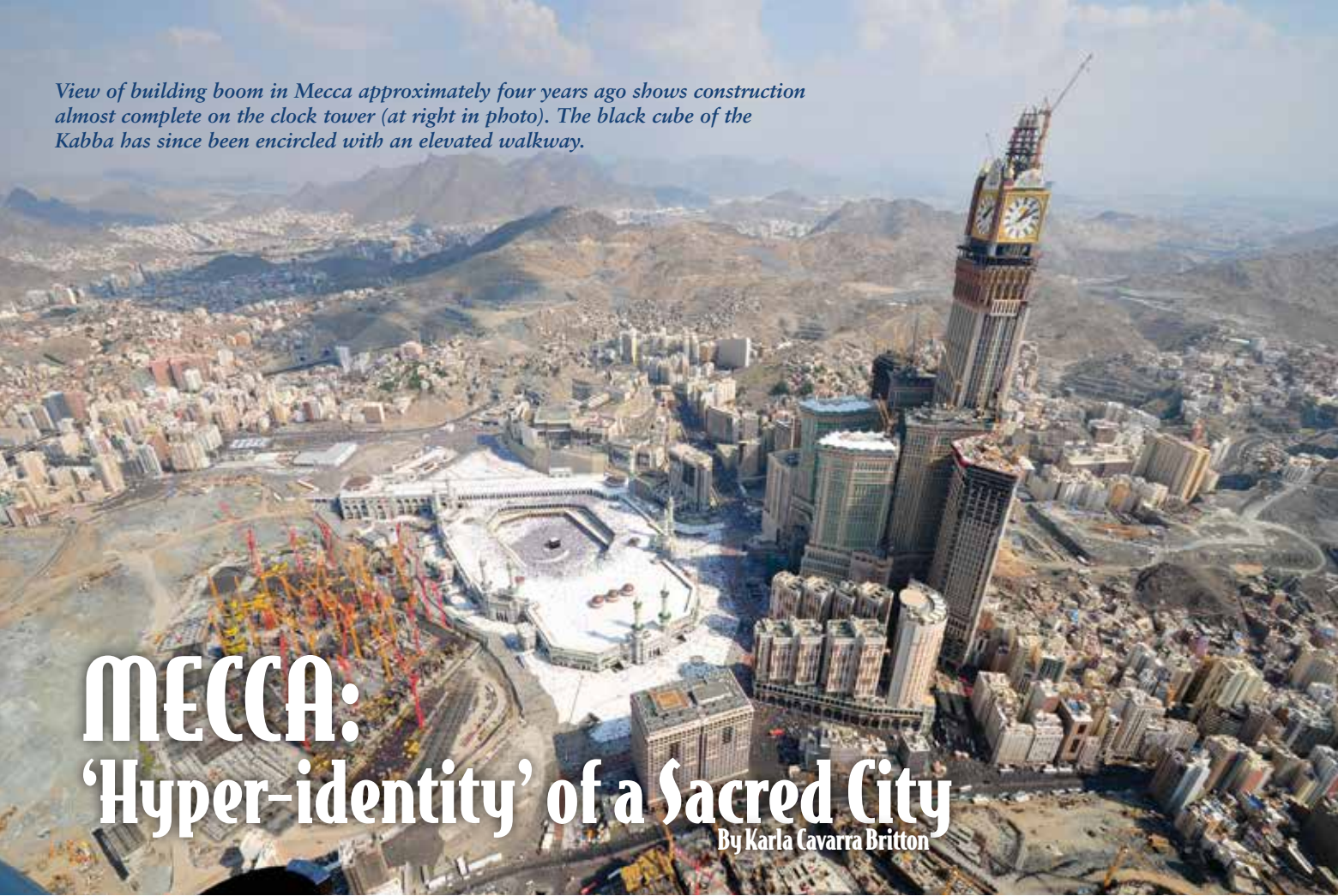
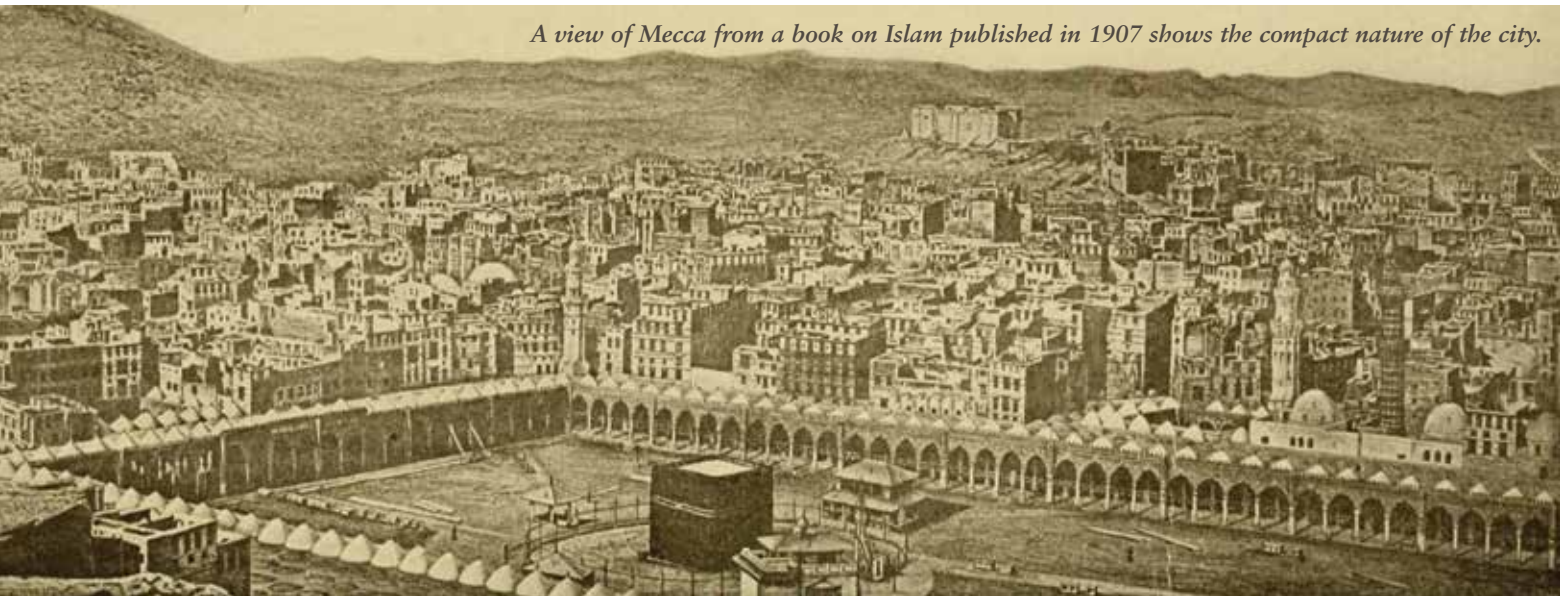


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# MECCA: 'Hyper-identity' of a Sacred City

By Karla Cavarra Britton

*A view of Mecca from a book on Islam published in 1907 shows the compact nature of the city.*



ANY DISCUSSION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SACRED AND THE CITY TODAY ought to address the evolving transformation of one of the most influential holy cities in human history—Mecca. Of the world's major religions and the sacred cities associated with them—Rome, Banares, Kyoto, Jerusalem, Peking, and Canterbury come to mind—

Mecca, the city at the heart of Islam, remains the urban environment that is most intensely identified with both the specific obligations and the historical faith of a particular tradition. With a pilgrimage to Mecca being among the Five Pillars of Islam, the city affects the piety of individuals and the identities of Islamic communities in a particularly intense way around

the globe, drawing men and women from a great variety of cultural and ethnic identities together in the common experience of the annual *hajj*. (Every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so is obliged once in his or her lifetime to make the pilgrimage to Mecca to participate in the *hajj*, a set of ritual activities associated with the prophet Muhammad, who

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“And remember Abraham said: ‘My Lord make this a city of peace, and feed its people with fruits—such of them as believe in God and the Last Day.’”

Quran 2:126

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was born in Mecca and himself performed the already ancient *hajj* during his own lifetime.) Other holy cities draw the faithful of their own traditions in a spirit of devotion or perhaps curiosity, yet Mecca has a unique claim upon millions of Muslims from all parts of the world, who come to the city from such disparate places as Indonesia, India, Pakistan, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America, both men and women, rich and poor, young and old. As a contemporary sacred city, however, Mecca also exemplifies a new hyper-inflated urban condition, perhaps driven by its exceptional cosmopolitanism: in a series of major interventions recently carried out by its Saudi overseers, Mecca’s symbolic presence has been reshaped by the insertion of a massive wave of building that has introduced on an immense scale new elements of commercialism, technology, and modernization into the city’s historic fabric.

The explosive expansion and development of contemporary Mecca—once exemplified in an urban plan proposed by Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid in 2008—focuses on accommodating the city’s religious and historical heritage to the realities of modern mass pilgrimage. For the three million Muslims who travel each year to the holy city from around the globe (with 17 million predicted by 2025), Mecca continues to represent in its distinct urban identity the convictions and patterns of life that define Islamic faith, and certain fundamental allegiances with a global reach. Among the sacred cities of the world, the ubiquity of pilgrims’ desire to reach the holy city of Mecca to participate in the annual five days of ritual observances expresses in a uniquely intense manner the ways in which the city’s ancient origins, with its cosmological symbolism, remain for Muslims a potent formational identity marker. Yet many contemporary pilgrims, such as Basharat Peer writing in *The New Yorker*, describe how unprepared they are to encounter the Mecca of today. Peer observes, “I had not prepared myself for contemporary Mecca, a city of more than one-and-a-half-million people. In my imagination, it was dominated by the Kaaba, the minarets of the Grand Mosque, the stories of Muhammad, and the desert that formed the landscape of the Prophet’s life.”<sup>1</sup>

Instead, what pilgrims encounter is the recent expansion and rebuilding of the city that has been guided by an inescapable urge toward gigantism, with new buildings many times bigger in terms of surface and height than the original mosque—buildings that now loom as strange objects in the urban center, overwhelming any sense of a coherent architectural identity. The Grand Mosque itself, last enlarged in 1953, is being expanded again by Saudi King Abdullah, increasing its capacity from 750,000 to two million. (Real estate in the area around the mosque is now some of the most expensive in the world, costing some \$18,000 per square foot.) The *matraf*, or open area around the Kaaba, is to be expanded to triple its capacity to 130,000 pilgrims per hour. But to make way for this new growth, the historic center of the mosque will be obliterated. Irfan al-Alawi, executive director of the preservationist Islamic Heritage Research Foundation, says of the proposal: “They want to get rid of the brick vaults and stone columns that have stood there since the 17th century. These are the oldest part of the holy mosque, designed by the great architect Sinan.”<sup>2</sup> The plans for the city also include a rail system to connect the principal pilgrimage sites, a high-speed train link to Medina, and an ongoing redevelopment of the city center with additional high-rise hotels and shopping malls—all with an emphasis on



technology that will make Mecca “smarter than any other smart city” (to quote Prince Khalid al-Faisal, Mecca’s governor). “Modern Mecca,” observes Peer, “feels like it was built by a people without history or tradition—a sprawling imitation of modernist architecture.”

The redevelopment of Mecca is most vividly—and unavoidably—embodied by the city’s new architectural symbol: the Abraj al-Bait, or Royal Clock Tower complex. The complex is made up of a series of interconnecting towers that house five luxury hotels, a shopping mall, a hospital, and a prayer room that can hold up to 10,000 worshippers, all centered around a clock tower vaguely reminiscent of Big Ben’s home, rising almost 2,000 feet. Immediately adjacent to the Grand Mosque, which is the location of the Kaaba and the most sacred site in the Islamic world, the complex is built on the site of the Ottoman al-Ajyad fortress built in 1781 but razed to make way for the new building. The Abraj al-Bait is now the biggest (in terms of area), and the second tallest building in the world. Designed by the German architect Mahmoud Bodo Rasch and built by the Binladin Group, the tower can be seen from 30 kilometers away, glowing even at night, and sends out a call to prayer that reaches seven kilometers across the valley. The tower is encrusted with a pastiche of traditional Islamic elements such as mosaics, and is topped by a gigantic *hilal*, or Crescent Moon, the potent symbol of Islamic religious and political identity.

From an urbanistic point of view, one of the most interesting effects of the focus on new building near the Grand Mosque is what *The Guardian’s* Oliver Wainwright has called a “unique concentricity, with everything determined by its orientation towards the hallowed centre, [spawning] a strangely diagrammatic radial urbanism. From above, like a sea of iron filings pulled by a magnet, the whole city appears to crowd round a core, the vortex of pilgrims giving way to an equally swirling current of tower blocks. It is the axis of prayer writ large in concrete.” Yet the construction boom that crowds Mecca’s skyline with cranes is not limited to the vicinity of the Grand Mosque. On the western side of the city, for example, is a new site known as the Jabal Omar Development. This extensive complex is intended to house 100,000 people in 26 luxury hotels. Likewise, to facilitate pilgrims’ arrival in Mecca, the King Abdul Aziz gateway airport in Jeddah has been modernized and expanded, with its capacity planned to quadruple





*The Abraj al-Bait, or Royal Clock Tower complex, looms over pilgrims at the Grand Mosque.*


to 80 million passengers a year. During the holy month of Dhu al-Hijjah, the airport receives an influx of two million additional pilgrims for the *hajj*. As designers of the airport from OMA (the Office of Metropolitan Architecture) report, no other airport in the world can claim such an overwhelming specificity of use.<sup>3</sup> Its unusual programmatic requirements necessitate providing terminals that can accommodate both pilgrims' physical and spiritual needs, while two grand terminals are reserved for the Saudi royal family.

Unlike many holy cities, therefore, Mecca is not only an important pilgrimage destination, but a politically charged site as well. As the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad, the city encompasses more than a spiritual and religious meaning, including within its very character the idea of a theocratic state and a

divinely inspired moral order.<sup>4</sup> In the tradition of the great ancient holy cities, Mecca is still a place for the concentration of tremendous resources of power, wealth, and culture. Historically, of course, religion and urban form have always been intertwined. The history of the built environment has from the beginning been tied to sites of worship, which are the focal point around which civilizations and city-states developed. What is particularly intriguing in the case of Mecca, however, is the way in which this city has traditionally conjured in the imagination something of the mysterious and enigmatic, with both centralizing and strongly exclusive implications. This city, toward which Muslims throughout the world pray daily, is at the same time according to Saudi law strictly off-limits to anyone who is not part of the Islamic faith. The powerful aura of mystery conjured by this dichotomy is reinforced by the striking images of thousands upon thousands of white-shrouded pilgrims during the *hajj* season moving ritually in concentric circles around the black granite cube-shaped Kabba. The spiritual force of this experience is perhaps best expressed in the *talbiyah*, a traditional prayer offered by the pilgrims: "Here I am, O Allah, here I am! Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Verily all praise, grace, and sovereignty belong to You! You have no partner." Yet for the non-Muslim, one cannot overlook the fact that the road to Mecca, both figuratively and literally, divides traffic into two lanes: the one marked "Muslims Only" goes to the city center, while the other, marked "Non-Muslims," goes around it.

Some organizations such as the Islamic Heritage Research Foundation have repeatedly expressed alarm over the destruction of historic sites in Mecca to make way for skyscraper hotels and shopping malls. The demolition of the fortress adjacent to the Grand Mosque, for instance, sparked an international outcry in 2002. The Saudi Islamic affairs minister

quickly rejected the concern, however, claiming that, "No one has the right to interfere in what comes under the state's authority," and "this development is in the interest of Muslims all over the world."<sup>5</sup> In the end, not only was the fortress swept away, but even the hill on which it stood was removed. Indeed, the King of Saudi Arabia has said it is his religious duty to expend whatever "wealth and effort" are necessary to improve facilities for pilgrims going on the Islamic pilgrimage, in spite of growing concerns about the scale of development. King Abdullah, who also bears the title of custodian of the two holy mosques (Mecca and Medina), has said that Allah had blessed Saudi Arabia with these holy cities, and such a generosity mandates "a duty, prestige, and honor and prerequisite by which his country and its leadership" should abide.

In Rem Koolhaas's reflections on "The Generic City," he observes that, "There are so few features [of the city] now that there is a tendency to exaggerate and to amplify whatever feature can be found in any given local condition, almost to the point of hyper-identity. 'Critical regionalism' has turned into hyper-regionalism, a fabrication of regional difference after its erasure and disappearance."<sup>6</sup> In reflecting on the contemporary realities of the holy city of Mecca, one can observe a similar evolution in process: historical buildings are torn down to make way for immense new developments that speak almost deafeningly of the city's hyper-identity as a sacred site. The city thereby becomes, however, a peculiar instance of certain sharp dichotomies that define a continuing distinct identity. There is the dichotomy between its ancient historic roots and contemporary form; its centralizing pull for Muslims and its rigid exclusivity of all others; or its intense effect on individuals' experience of the sacred within the mass culture of its commercial infrastructure. Even in the midst of these dichotomies, Mecca curiously reasserts the potent significance of *place* in an era in which virtual realities overwhelm our sense of rootedness. Within the world, there is the unique city of Mecca; and within that city, there is a sacred site, the Grand Mosque; and at the center of that mosque, there is a holy shrine, the Kaaba; and embedded in that small structure there is a particular rock, which is the only vestige of what is traditionally understood to be a building of Abraham's own construction. Millions of people from around the globe have come, or hope yet to come, to see and even to touch that one stone. There is no identity of place more definitive, or at the same time, as effectually indeterminate. 

1 Basharat Peer, "Modern Mecca: The Transformation of a Holy City," *The New Yorker* (16 April 2012), <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/04/16/modern-mecca>

2 Quoted in Oliver Wainwright, "Mecca's Mega Architecture Casts Shadow over Hajj," *The Guardian* (23 October 2012), <http://theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/oct/23/mecca-architecture/hajj1>

3 Office for Metropolitan Architecture, "Jeddah International Airport," <http://www.oma.eu/projects/2005/jeddah-international-airport/>

4 Malise Ruthven, "The Islamic Optimist," *The New York Review of Books* (16 August 2007), <http://www.nybooks.com/archives/2007/aug/16/the-islamic-optimist/>

5 "Saudis Hit Back over Mecca Castle," BBC News (9 January 2002), [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/1748711.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1748711.stm)

6 Rem Koolhaas, "The Generic City," in *S, M, L, XL* (New York: Monacelli: 1995), 1239-64.





*Religious buildings, such as St. Paul's in London, are part of every city's fabric, adding spiritual and economic value.*

*Photo: Duncan Harris/flickr*

# URBAN SACRED PLACES: WHAT ARE THEY WORTH?

By A. Robert Jaeger

What is the value of an older church, synagogue, or temple to its neighborhood or town? If that value is significant, can we use it to persuade the larger community to help preserve the building and all the public good it houses? In an era when so many congregations are declining, can our message about the enormous “public value” of sacred places generate new resources that will help to sustain and stabilize sacred places that otherwise would become vacant and endangered?

These are the questions that have propelled Partners for Sacred Places, a national nonprofit organization, to undertake a new research project documenting how our older churches, synagogues, and other religious buildings contribute to the economic health and life of communities. We are affirming something enormously important: that sacred places constitute a significant and irreplaceable community asset—not just architecturally, but also in terms of the arts, human services, and community vitality. Sacred places can

and do provide space for the performing arts, and resources for efficient, high-impact programs that respond to hunger, homelessness, poor nutrition, and other societal needs. Furthermore, with a helping hand sacred places can do much, much more.

We are convinced that this new understanding will persuade civic leaders and funders to take an interest in preserving and making the most of religious buildings, including the reuse of space that may be sitting empty much of the week—a phenomenon that today is all too common.

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Partners' work to assess the public value of sacred places builds on an important study we conducted with the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1990s. The results, published as Sacred Places at Risk (SPAR) [bit.ly/sparstudy], quantified the role that historic sacred places play in hosting community-serving programs. Among the key findings of the study:

- More than 80 percent of those who benefit from the community service programs housed by churches and synagogues are not congregation members;
- On average, congregations house four ongoing community service programs;
- The average congregation brings more than 5,300 hours of volunteer support to its community programs each year;
- The dollar value of the subsidy provided by the average congregation to outreach programs housed in its building was close to \$150,000 (and much more in today's dollars).

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*We are affirming something enormously important: that sacred places constitute a significant and irreplaceable community asset*

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Since the late 1990s, Partners began to realize that sacred places contribute to community life in many other ways. We conferred with several leading scholars and research professionals to develop a new methodology to calculate what we call the economic "Halo Effect" of older religious properties. By documenting dozens of factors that contribute to overall neighborhood health, we are able to demonstrate:

- The dollar value of social services and cultural programs sponsored by congregations, including the value of clergy, staff, and volunteer time; space provided; in-kind support; and the environmental and public health value of outdoor open space, recreational facilities, parking lots, gardens, etc.
- The impact of congregational spending—both operational budgets and capital projects—on the local economy, including local jobs and local businesses.

- The value of sacred places as gathering places and convening locations, including the spending of visitors to congregation-hosted events and performances, and the incubation of small businesses and nonprofits in affordable space.

Of course, sacred places contribute to community health in other ways that are not so easy to quantify. For example, what is the impact of active sacred places on the formation of social capital, i.e., their influence on attitudes, behaviors, and social cohesion among those who serve, as well as on those who are served?

What are our findings from this research? The overall economic value of a sacred place exceeds, on average, \$1 million each year—far more than we calculated before. Clearly, sacred places make an important contribution to the health of neighborhoods, undermining the argument among some that congregations have no value because they do not (as a rule) pay taxes.

One of Partners' goals, now, is to help congregations tell the story of their economic and community value to their local leaders, paving the way for new partnerships and new funding. We also need to tell this story to leaders in government, philanthropy, the arts, and social services across the nation. This story is important, both locally and nationally.

The other part of this story is that the "Halo Effect" of sacred places can often be even larger, if congregations are given a helping hand. Yes, congregations house many important programs serving the community, but often they have considerable space that is unused or underused. If that space is put to use, the civic and economic value of sacred places will grow.

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*Sacred places contribute to community health in other ways that are not so easy to quantify.*

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Thus, Partners has pioneered several programs to provide that kind of assistance. Our first venture was "Making Homes for the Arts in Sacred Places," a program which "matches" sacred places with performing arts organizations and provides support to help clergy, lay leaders, and arts leaders develop a sustained, mutually beneficial relationship. We will help

both parties develop trust and good communications, and we will help them configure the space, develop a lease, and adopt best practices for the management of shared space.


Similarly, our "Food in Sacred Places" program helps congregations make best use of their green space, kitchens, and other spaces to host programs that can grow food, host cooking classes and nutritional education, support food entrepreneurs, and promote good health in the community.

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*The overall economic value of a sacred place exceeds, on average, \$1 million each year—far more than we calculated before.*

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In addition, Partners is developing, with the support of the MacArthur Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, a new Web site that will facilitate the two programs described above, and other space-sharing partnerships. Organizations and artists interested in working with sacred places will complete profiles outlining their space needs, mission, work style, organizational capacity, and interest in working with houses of worship. With information from both parties, potential matches will be identified based not only on compatibility of space needs and square footage, but also on a marriage of mission, vision, and values.

Because large numbers of congregations of all faiths are struggling to remain in urban areas, with buildings that have often been seen as a drain on their finances, many will close or merge in the coming years. At the same time, new congregations are being born and are finding places in the city to worship and serve, and they will increase their economic value in the coming years. Whether congregations are declining, static, or growing, we need to communicate the larger value of sacred places widely and quickly in order to have an impact on their preservation and sustainability. We have always loved America's older religious buildings, but now we also understand the enormity of the role they play in making our cities livable and economically healthy--and the urgency of supporting that role--for the good of all. 



# Sacred Space in the City: Adapting to the Urban Context

By Michael T. Foster, FAIA

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, SACRED SPACE has shaped and provided deep meaning to cities and urban communities as well as to the health, well being, and quality of life for the inhabitants. For the first time in history, a majority of the world's population is now living in urban areas. Most growth is now shaped by government bonds, tax-increment financing, and large-scale corporate returns. Despite the ascendance of economics as the touchstone for value and meaning in cities, sacred spaces are and will remain a vital part of healthy cities.

Sacred spaces and gathering areas for worship have historically had a synergistic correlation with residential patterns of development. From the “upper room” to the cathedral town and even post-war sprawl in America, sacred spaces and cities have informed and even defined each other. Urban areas are now experiencing tremendous growth and change, but without the diverse cultural values or faith traditions that shaped great cities of the past. Reversing this trend will be difficult in the future, with current planning and development criteria well established. Hundreds of urban churches, synagogues, mosques, and other sacred spaces are lost every year for lack of resources. The need to acknowledge the “buried talents” in sacred land equity could not be greater. It is the land itself, often abandoned by unsustainable buildings and institutions, that offers solutions to preserving and renewing sacred space in the city in a new context.

This generation of accelerated urban growth, technology, and mixed-use development has transformed our cities, embracing the diversity of uses through shared resources. New infrastructure, optimizing land use to serve more people through diversity, density, and heightened design quality and through mixed use has become the best practice of public policy to achieve many urban goals. Unfortunately many key elements in the mix of uses of a healthy city have either been forgotten or ignored.

The health of a city or of its inhabitants is not limited to green buildings and hospitals. Sadly the role of sacred spaces has gone the way of big box retail, with the mega-church



Photo: AgnosticPreachersKid/wikipedia

*St. Thomas's Cathedral has sat as a ruin in Washington, D.C. for 40 years.*

model moving congregations to large suburban parking lots far from the vibrant urban fabric. Much-needed renovations of existing churches, synagogues, and mosques in urban areas are challenged by changing demographics and are often deferred indefinitely, until the buildings become obsolete or abandoned.

Many are lost to redevelopment, and others are at risk of deterioration beyond the point of feasible renovation.

Excellent options to preserve sacred spaces in urban areas include revitalization, adaptive re-use, and synergistic land-use designed to retain and grow the sacred and the associated program missions of faith-based congregations. Establishing compatible and strategic partnerships allowing these institutions to survive and flourish is dependent

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*Rendering of a new facility for St. Thomas's Parish, as it faces 18th Street.*



Photo: Courtesy of MITFA Architecture

upon faith-based institutions taking the lead in mixed-use development by prioritizing their mission while shaping the city. Strategic partners can range from affordable housing financed through tax credits, or development partners for commercial enterprise or condominiums, to support and sustain ministries in the city or around the world. In every case the objective must focus on the mission through creative, shared land-use stewardship to sustain and grow sacred space and ministry activity in the city.

There is no single solution that is appropriate for every congregation or site, and there is no magic formula. Further, there is no architectural or land-use option that will ever replace the spiritual act of tithing to fulfill the health of a congregation. With most faith-based institutions, it is necessary to establish the careful balance of fulfilling all mission priorities together with land-use stewardship within the program, budget, and pro-forma. The approach is not limited to size, or jurisdiction, and can be applied to any religious organization across the spectrum of denominations and faiths, ranging from small groups to large congregations. The solution is revealed in a carefully structured process to reconcile mission, stewardship, community needs, and resources to explore and develop strategic

partnerships to help preserve sacred spaces and programs.

#### CASE STUDY: ST. THOMAS'S PARISH

For 40 years, following the destruction by rioting and arson of the downtown cathedral of St. Thomas's Parish in Washington, D.C., the congregation spent decades in prayer, seeking discernment. The historic cathedral was a grand Gothic structure expressive of the Episcopal Church. It had served powerful and influential socialites in the city. After fire ravaged the site, only the ruins and a small portion of the church remained. The site where the cathedral once stood was converted to a temporary park that remained for decades pending reconstruction. The community was transformed and rebuilt on renewed values to welcome and embrace everyone through God's grace, compassion, and hospitality. The congregation first shrank, and then struggled, but continued to meet in the remaining crowded fellowship hall in the back corner of the site. It is there they kept faith alive with hope and prayer that they would re-establish the once vibrant parish and preserve its mission in a city that has been losing sacred space every year.

Failing to gain consensus on whether to rebuild or to leave for the suburbs, the congregation invested in dozens of studies and

completed several building designs that could not be funded. Instead of giving up, they asked our firm to facilitate an "Ambassadors Workshop" to explore in depth two critical questions the firm had formally asked the chair of the stewardship committee: First, "What is going on here...that is worth preserving?" And second, "What is *not* going on here ... that God is calling us to do?" From the careful exploration of these two questions, a balanced program was developed to meet the current needs of both the congregation and the community, while preserving not only the sacred space, but also its identity and mission. The final question they had to ask themselves was this: "Are we willing to be held accountable to what God is calling us to do, and if so, how to do it?"

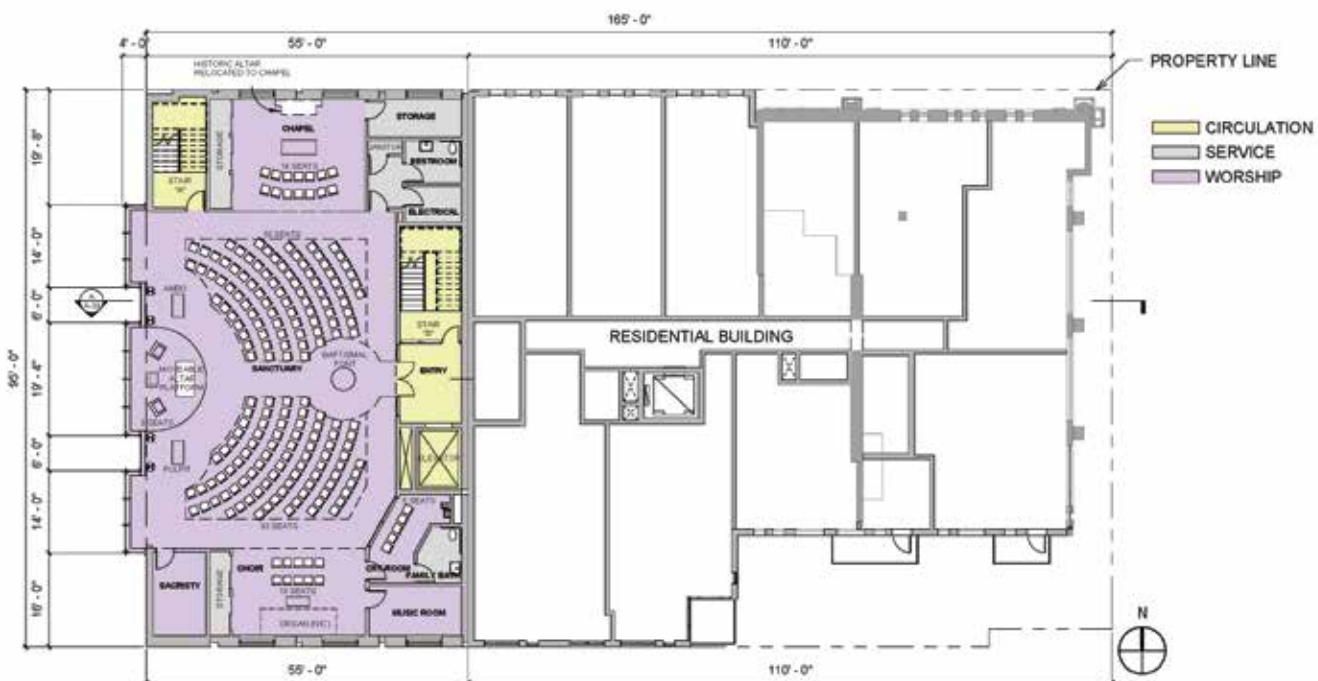
Today their vision is not that of a Gothic cathedral of times gone by, but of an open and welcoming transparent presence in the community, serving a smaller but more hospitable congregation. After researching the full zoning potential and prioritizing the needed program spaces, we were able to determine how the potential of land use, zoning, height, and density capacity could be used for needed housing in the area, which would also fund the new structure. The sacred space is designed to respect the heritage of the Episcopal denomination, while expressing the values of the current congregation. Organized to fit on one-third of the original site's footprint, the new structure could not be limited to the suburban model of one or two floors. The new urban church re-establishes its presence in the city in five stories with an aspirational presence and a focal point in the community. The program includes an entry narthex gallery, offices, and conference area on the first floor, a monumental stair and an oversized elevator ascending to the upper room for worship in a large glass sanctuary on the second floor, religious education and classrooms on the third floor, with the fellowship hall and an open landscape roof terrace overlooking the city on the roof deck, all over underground parking.

The remainder of the site is being developed into seven levels of multifamily residential construction, serving diverse needs from workforce housing to luxury condominiums. The site utilization strategy has allowed the prominent identity of the church to be restored to its historic location on the corner of 18th and Church Street, NW, in a modern expression that welcomes all and provides a sacred refuge from the city. The residential building is designed in scale and texture to be a transition from the historic residential fabric of the tree-lined street to being the home for a new





Site plan and ground floor of St. Thomas's new facility.



Second floor of St. Thomas's new facility includes worship space.

generation of people and families, while harvesting the buried land value in support of renewed and healthy sacred space. Construction documents are now being completed, and construction is anticipated to start in 2015.

The challenge is always change. In some cases it takes radical change to preserve values and reverse the silent change of diminishing sacred

space in our cities to the vibrant and spiritually healthy environments we crave and need. Today sacred space is less of a catalyst or meaningful response to urban land use. Reversing the trend from losing sacred space to redefining it on existing land will revitalize and contribute to the physical, spiritual, and psychological health, as well as to the beauty of our streets and cities. <sup>18</sup>



# Mission, Real Estate, & Revenue

A story of development at the  
Cathedral of St. John the Divine

By Frances Halsband, FAIA



This is a success story about a very large urban cathedral that faced enormous maintenance and operations costs but was short of funds. The process it followed transformed underutilized real estate into an income-producing asset that helps the cathedral to realize its mission. It managed a decade-long process to identify development sites on its property, maximize the income stream from development, and assure that new buildings would be congruent with its mission, in harmony with the existing historic structures, and would bring new life to the surrounding community. It is a story on a grand urban scale, but the message is relevant to any religious institution constrained from realizing its mission by the overwhelming cost of upkeep of its beloved historic facilities.

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine is the seat of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. Begun in 1892 and still only partially complete, it occupies Cathedral Close, an 11.5-acre site on northern Manhattan's west side. In addition to the cathedral, the Close includes five other buildings that accommodate diocesan activities, along with the Cathedral School.

## THE PROCESS

This story begins in 1999, when the Very Reverend Harry Pritchett, then Dean of the Cathedral, and cathedral trustees recognized that the century-long effort to complete the cathedral was not in tune with current financial realities. In a "re-visioning" they shifted their focus from new construction to maintenance and repair, and began a search

for sources of income compatible with their mission and objectives. From the very beginning, they agreed that all development should be congruent with the cathedral's mission and vision, compatible with the building's historic architectural qualities, and capable of generating revenue to help sustain the Close for future generations. They also created four rules that governed their approach:

- Do not sell land, but do consider long-term leases;
- Promulgate broad architectural guidelines for development, and retain design oversight on development projects;
- Consider uses that are consistent with the cathedral's mission and can generate revenue;
- Retain a team of qualified advisors to assist with implementation.

According to the current cathedral dean, Reverend James A. Kowalski, "We engaged in a holistic master-planning process, knowing that any plan had to achieve mission congruence, be physically appropriate, and bring revenue. We understood that our tax-exempt status meant that we should be giving back. We needed to do something that was a real community benefit. We defined three financial needs: rebuild the endowment, maintain the cathedral, and provide operating revenue. We knew we could not do it ourselves, and that it was essential to bring in experts. In sum, 'Don't put the plane in the air unless the plane is flightworthy and you know where you are going.'"

The Cathedral Fabric Committee was responsible for leading the effort. In-house staff included the vice president for strategic planning and special projects and an urban planner/preservationist. A team of outside advisors was assembled, including planners, land-use attorneys, real estate/financial advisors, and an advising architect.

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*Avalon Morningside Apartments is part of a partnership between developers and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.*

*Photograph copyright Cervin Robinson*



The first step was commissioning a master plan that identified significant spaces and places in the Close, outlined a plan for the future of the site, and identified under-utilized areas. Two areas stood out. One was the southeast corner of the Close, at the intersection of Cathedral Parkway and Morningside Avenue, a rocky cliff with parking at the top, and an untended jungle of weed trees surrounded with chain link fence at street level. This corner was a blight on the neighborhood, a dark and dangerous place at an important urban crossing. The second site, at the northern edge of the Close, was another, larger parking lot.

Landmarking of the cathedral site had been under contentious discussion for years. In conversation with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, the cathedral developed a “Restrictive Declaration” that identified areas of the site that should be protected with landmark designation, and areas that could be developed without impinging on the historic grouping of cathedral buildings. The Declaration defined the massing envelope within which new residential buildings could be created. The envelope was designed to maintain unrestricted views of the cathedral from key locations in the surrounding community. The definition of the massing envelope was crucially important, as it removed the risk for potential developers of open-ended and unpredictable negotiation with city officials about what kind of building would be allowed.

With potential development sites defined and approved, the next step was to frame a Request for Proposals from developers that described appropriate uses, aesthetic and financial requirements. The highest revenues were likely to be realized with rental housing on the site. While several not-for-profit social services groups were interested in collaboration, the cathedral quickly realized that subsidizing others’ missions

would diminish their capacity to realize its own goals. The RFP stipulated that the cathedral had approval over the developers’ choice of architects, and that all landscape and building designs would be subject to review to assure that building massing, façade design, and choice of materials would be compatible with the architecture of the cathedral.

Also, the cathedral defined its financial goals, determining that it did not want a lump sum payment up front, but preferred a long-term revenue stream that would grow the endowment, help pay for ongoing building maintenance costs, and contribute to operating costs. The cathedral resolved to offer a 99-year ground lease to developers.

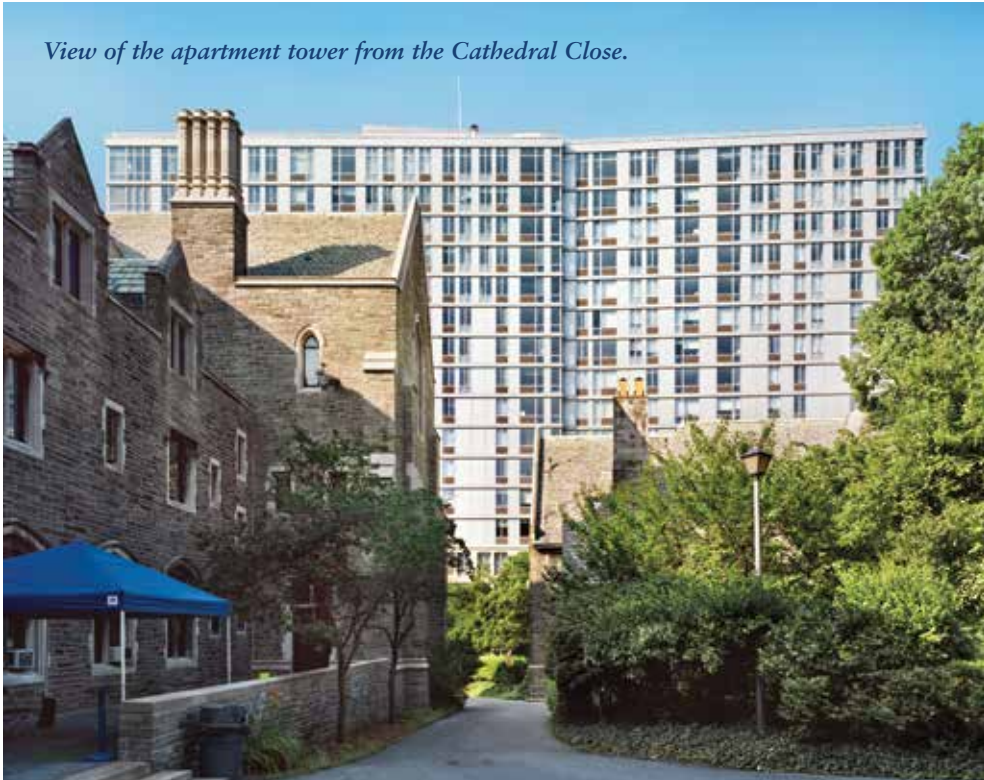
With all of these safeguards in place, the cathedral reached out to a real estate advisor to invite developer proposals for the southeast parcel, and manage the developer selection process. The selection of AvalonBay Communities as site developers initiated a remarkable collaboration between the developer, the cathedral board and staff, and the advisory team. As selected architects for the private, for-profit developer, answerable to a not-for-profit religious institution, we were responsive to and responsible for common goals of financial sustainability, environmental responsibility, aesthetic coherence, and civic enhancement. Committee presentations were an extraordinary balancing act; the developer understood the cathedral’s desire to meet all of its development goals, and the cathedral came to understand the goals and constraints of the developers.

#### **THE RESULT FOR MISSION, DEVELOPMENT, AND REVENUE**

The 20-story residential building of 326,000-square-feet was completed in 2009. It includes 295 apartments, community rooms, a lobby opening onto a landscaped garden, and a 150-car parking garage. Eighty percent of the apartments are rented at market rates and the



View of the apartment tower from the Cathedral Close.



Photograph copyright Cerrin Robinson

remainder are rented at affordable rates. The affordable rates are subsidized by the cathedral (which committed \$200,000 per year from its Mission Fund) and the developer (who benefited from tax-exempt bond financing and tax abatements).

The residential building entrance is at the lower end of the site, opening onto a landscaped plaza at the street corner. What had been a dangerous and overgrown corner is now a welcoming community space. The plaza is a quiet sitting space in the daytime and an active illuminated corner at night. The building entrance is completely separate from the

cathedral. Forty feet above, at the level of the Cathedral Close, new landscaping and roadways follow the cathedral's master plan, and the rose garden was moved and reconstructed.


The building relates both to the Cathedral Close and to the adjoining Morningside Park community. We kept the building height below the ridgeline of the cathedral and created simplified massing that would be a background building to the cathedral. The apartment building forms a wall defining the south edge of the Close, fanning out at the east corner to open to views of the park and the city beyond. Each facet forms a corner window for

apartment living rooms, and more than half of the residences are "corner apartments"—a boon to the developer.

We chose warm gray brick cladding to match the color of the brick and limestone buildings on the Cathedral Close. The lower portion of the north wall facing onto the Close is intricately detailed, with stone stringcourses and copper trim scaled to relate to surrounding buildings. Above the fourth floor the metal and glass skin is lighter in color and weight and reflects the sky above. The broken grid of windows on the north side adds lively detail to this planar wall, and the number of windows increases as the building moves skyward.

The developer is renting the site for 99 years. At the end of the lease, the building becomes the property of the cathedral. Rental income to the cathedral will be revisited at 10-year intervals to keep pace with the market. Revenue from both development sites is anticipated to be the equivalent of the amount that would be generated by a \$100-million endowment. Given the size of the cathedral and the scope of its mission, this is significant, but it is not a "silver bullet." The cathedral is more secure, but is still in a fundraising mode.

As the first new residential building in the neighborhood in decades, the project has attracted a population of faculty and graduate students from nearby Columbia University campuses, newcomers, and long-time community residents. The former dark corner is now a welcoming beacon in the community, and the cathedral has benefited from extending its mission, enhancing the neighborhood, and securing a revenue stream.

And what did the cathedral learn from this experience? Perhaps the chair of the Cathedral Fabric Committee, the Reverend Dr. Thomas Pike, summed it up best when he said: "My advice to any religious group is that they think the whole thing through theologically, so that they understand the relationship between mission, planning, financial, and aesthetic needs. The governance of the cathedral took the time to determine the basic mission, history, and future plans, and determine the financial needs so it knew what it wanted from a financial partner. We were very fortunate in finding partners who understood our needs and were able to deliver a project that met and exceeded our goals." 



Courtesy Kliment Halsband Architects

Site plan showing cathedral facilities and the new apartment development in the southeast corner of the site.

#### PROJECT CREDITS

Design Architect: Kliment Halsband Architects  
Landscape Architect: Rader + Crews  
Site Developers: AvalonBay Communities



# Putting Down Roots in the City

By Katherine Ball, LEED AP  
Photographs courtesy of LS3P

IN MUSIC CITY, home of the Ryman Auditorium, the Grand Ole Opry, and the Country Music Hall of Fame, people come to dream big dreams. Nashville, for the fortunate, boasts stately homes, southern charms, opportunity, and abundance. For others, however, life in Nashville has a harder edge, a classic honkytonk tale of hard luck, lost love, excesses, and falls from grace. The needs of the city are as big as its dreams. Close to 20 percent of Nashville's citizens live below the poverty line, and on any given night 3,000 to 4,000 people in the city are homeless. Eight soup kitchens serve the downtown core alone.

Often, those who have and those who have not lead very separate lives as very separate populations, and the under-resourced are

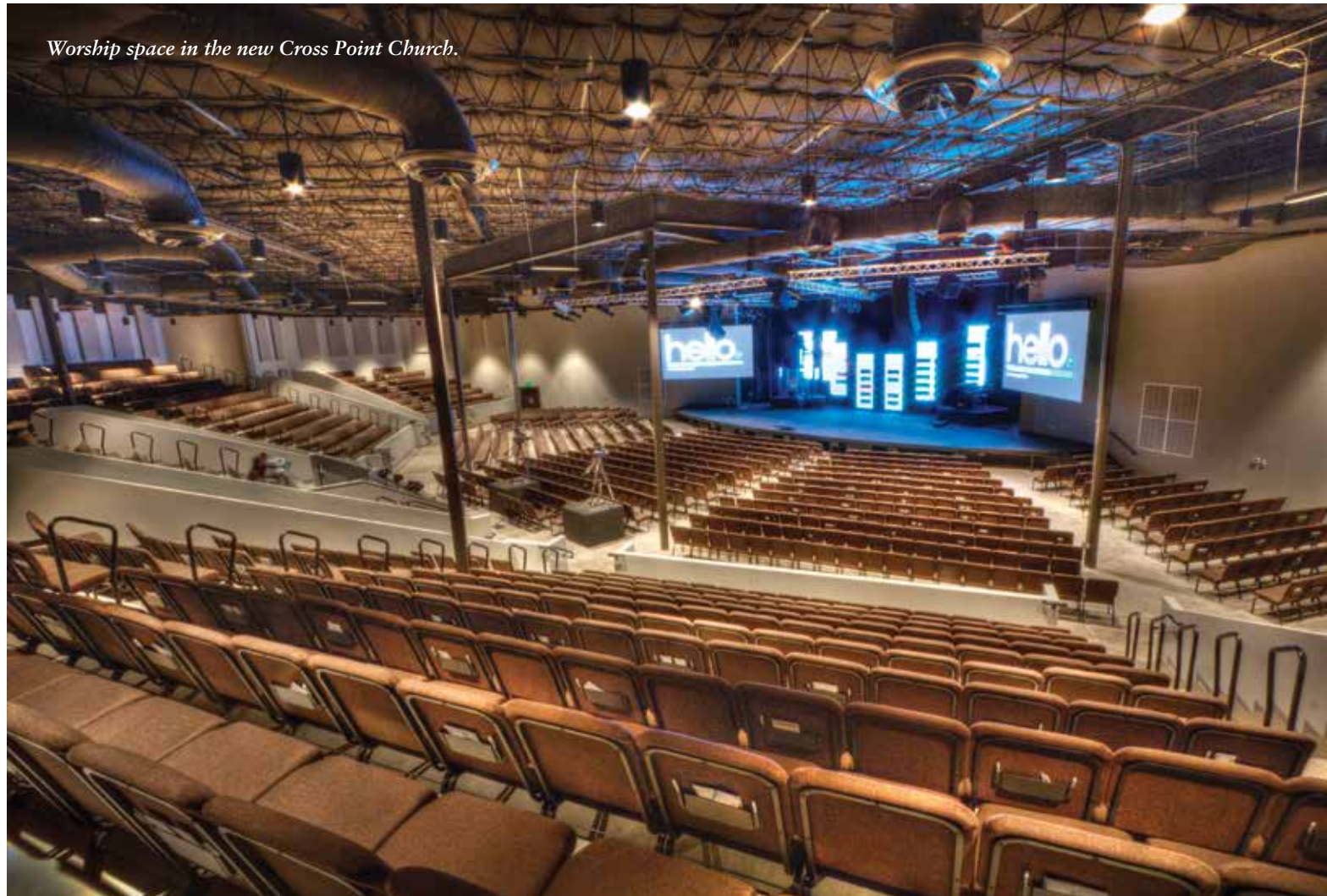
largely forgotten. Churches have long served such people in need, but during the era of disinvestment in city centers, many churches moved from dilapidated downtowns into more verdant and prosperous suburbs. Distance created additional challenges in serving the needs of the urban poor.

Cross Point Church wanted to eliminate that distance. A young congregation founded in 2002 by Pastor Pete Wilson, Cross Point describes itself as a place where "Everyone's welcome because nobody's perfect, but we believe that anything's possible." The multi-site Church leans towards the contemporary, with an accessible attitude. Think plaid shirts instead of suits and ties; guitars instead of organs; a coffee lounge instead of a formal

church parlor. The atmosphere may be easy-going, but Cross Point's focus on ministry is not. Pastor Wilson says it most powerfully in a visioning video for the new Nashville Campus: "We are relentlessly dedicated to reaching the lost." It made sense, then, that when it came time to build a new church home, it would be in the heart of the city, close to the areas of greatest need.

Cross Point had been growing rapidly since its founding in 2002, when the congregation was meeting at a local elementary school. By 2006 the congregation had grown to 500 adults, and offered four services to accommodate the crowds, but space was still tight. Pastor Wilson's video talks of a driving principle guiding church facilities: it is not enough to

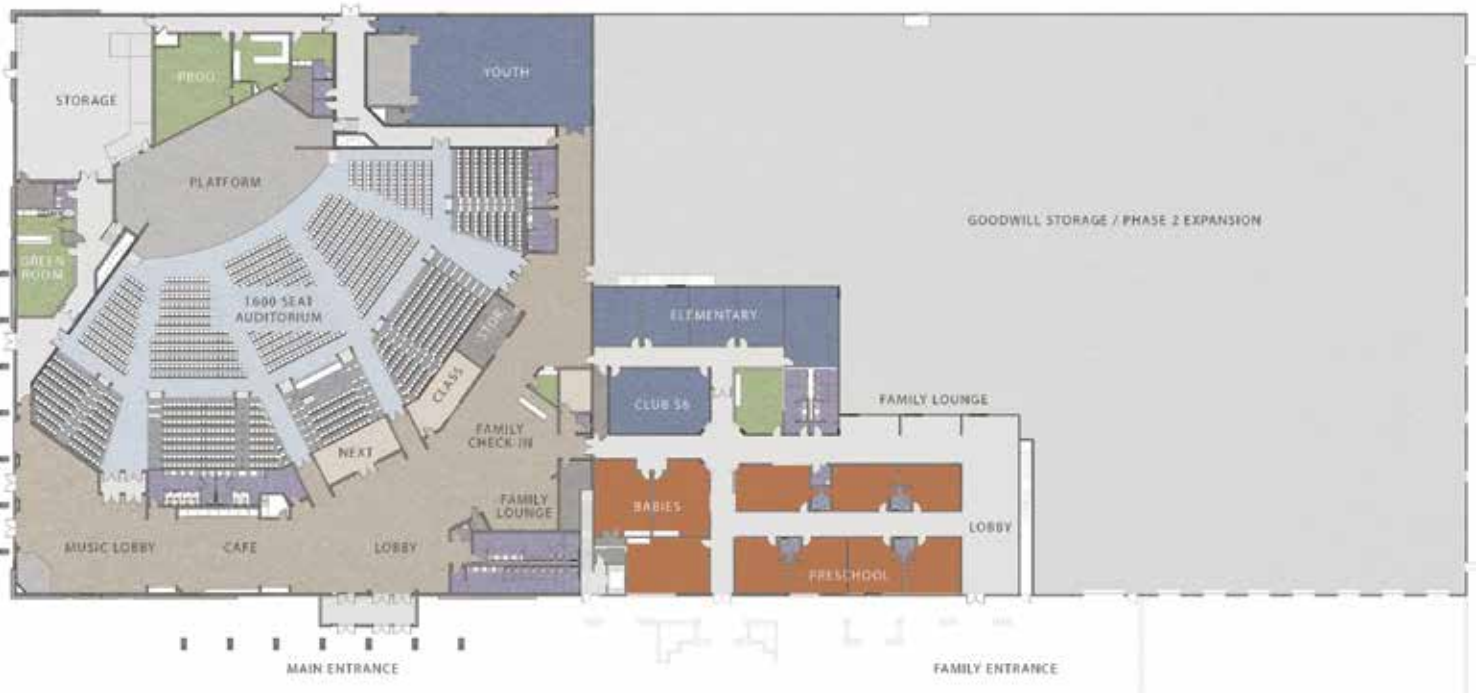
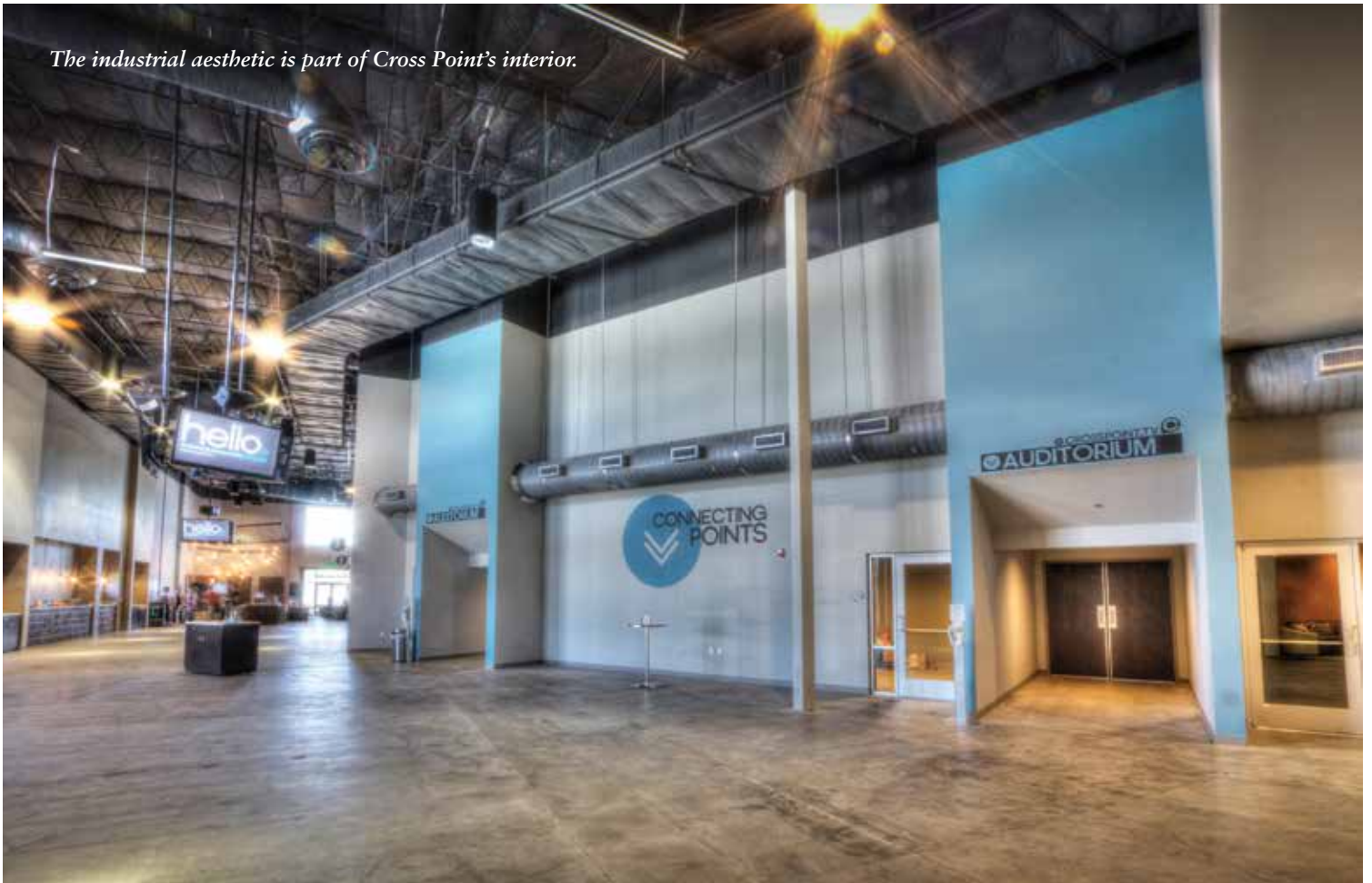
THE AUTHOR IS A CREATIVE WRITER AND RESEARCHER AT LS3P, AN ARCHITECTURE, INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE, AND PLANNING FIRM FOUNDED IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA.



*Worship space in the new Cross Point Church.*



*The industrial aesthetic is part of Cross Point's interior.*



have a seat for each member attending a Sunday service. The critical thing is to be sure there are always open seats for those who are not yet part of the community. With this in mind, the congregation raised more than a million dollars to move into its second home, sharing a church building with another congregation. New campuses also developed in Bellevue, Dickson, Franklin, and West Nashville, and the solution was

adequate for a time, but by 2012, Cross Point was one of the top 20 fastest-growing churches in America. Cross Point needed space for those open seats, quickly.

The search for this next space was difficult. The building needed to support its existing congregation, leave room for growth, and provide opportunities to minister to a cross-section of people, and do these





*The new Cross Point Church is a revitalized warehouse in its Nashville context.*

things within a budget that would leave room for Cross Point to focus on its ministries rather than on its facilities. The ideal site would be close to downtown, near both new development and government housing projects; close to the needs of young families as well as to the needs of the under-resourced; easily accessible to all.

The ideal site, as it turned out, required a bit of imagination to uncover its potential. Located at the corner of Jefferson and Cowan just off of Interstate 24, the size of the 1973-vintage warehouse was sufficient, bordering on cavernous, with 100,000 square feet of partially occupied space. Its precast and masonry walls were monolithic and imposing at 28 feet high. The neighborhood was gritty and industrial, with a nearby brick plant, drifts of shipping containers, and a few low-rent motels. Its proximity to LP Stadium, home of the Tennessee Titans, was a mixed blessing, as it offered game-day excitement along with parking conflicts. The warehouse was also located near the Cumberland River, and more important, close to the greatest needs of the city in the heart of Nashville. It was perfect.

Once the site was secured, the team could focus on translating Cross Point's vision into a built reality. The timeframe for the project was tight, with less than a year between the project kickoff in May 2012 and the opening celebration in March 2013. Cross Point engaged LS3P, a Southeastern regional architecture firm with a worship design team based in its Greenville, South Carolina office. The LS3P design team began the process with an intensive design workshop called the "Canvas Sessions." The purpose of these intensive sessions is to deeply understand a congregation's culture, mission, vision, and goals, and to create initial design concepts for a space that would transform its ministries.

Cross Point was focused and energetic, and the visioning process flowed naturally from its values. Jenni Catron, former Executive Director of Cross Point, was instrumental in organizing the sessions and helping the stakeholders to convey their vision. The church wanted a space that was welcoming, accessible, and real. The staff asked for built-in community spaces with a home-like feel; lobby and check-in spaces that were more "relational" than "transactional"; and "industrial chic" finishes that were authentic and warm. Design inspirations came from the local taqueria as well as from other worship centers, and a key priority was to maintain a view of the Nashville skyline from the entry lobby, keeping the heart of the city present within the church.

Lead architect Dave Benham of LS3P felt that the new design was an accurate reflection of Cross Point's character: "Cross Point was determined to keep ministry at the forefront of their vision," he recalls. "They wanted the space to be welcoming, but they wanted to keep finishes and amenities minimal. Their attitude towards stewardship of resources

ensured that we maximized their investment of time, money, and volunteer labor from the congregation."

Progress was swift, though it involved the age-old construction issue known as "unforeseen circumstances." The warehouse, it turns out, had stood in four feet of water during the historic Tennessee floods in 2010, when the Cumberland River jumped its banks. The site had recently been re-categorized as a flood zone. The problem was manageable, thanks to a system of waterproofing panels installed to slide quickly into place to seal doors and windows in the event of rising waters. However, the change required additional waterproofing, drilling through the concrete slab at 10-foot intervals to combat potential hydrostatic pressure, and re-working the budget as well as the design.


The doors of the new Cross Point Nashville Campus opened March 24, 2013, Palm Sunday. The 40-year-old warehouse near the brick factory had been transformed into a warm, modern, inviting community space; the renovation cost close to \$50 per square foot. This number was made possible by strict attention to scope, priorities, and details, and by countless hours of volunteer labor from members of the congregation.

The new design for the space broke down the monolithic, 28-foot-tall façade, creating a human-scale rhythm of metal panels, tranquil blue accents, and a "streetscape" texture. The interior, occupying almost 55,000 square feet, achieved its intended industrial chic aesthetic through exposed ceiling elements, a polished concrete floor, and reclaimed wood elements installed by a volunteer woodworker who was a member of the congregation. The feel is open and airy, with a double-height space in the entry lobby flooded with natural light. Expansive new windows frame a view of the Nashville skyline.

The lobby space is designed to welcome members and visitors with screens for digital wayfinding, a "connecting point" welcome station, and a cozy backlit coffee counter. A niche for small-group conversation is carved into the lobby wall, providing a space for first-time families to talk with church members and staff. An ethereal yet industrial sculptural lighting element hangs above a small corner stage, used when the lobby doubles as event space. This corner is lovingly known as Tootsie's, as a nod to the famed Nashville honkytonk where many of the city's best-loved performers have gathered and played.

Down the hall in the children's education wing, the vibrant orange color marks a zone designed for flexibility and growth. The space is durable and uncluttered, with simple details such as mod plastic dome lights providing a playful vibe. Digital displays facilitate Sunday morning drop-off; parents use bar-coded key fobs to register children, which print color-coded name tags leading families to classrooms. Middle-school student ministry spaces offer a variety of space configurations, with comfort and flexibility as the main design priorities.

The worship center is simple, minimal, and spacious, with stadium-style seating for more than 1,600. The seating configuration and large digital displays create a sense of proximity to the speaker from every part of the auditorium. Broadcasting and back-of-house spaces support the A/V equipment required to broadcast the service to the other Cross Point campuses. The organic and raw aesthetic creates a sense of authenticity in the space.

The building transformation is complete, but Cross Point continues to grow, evolve, and thrive. As Pastor Wilson points out, "The building isn't the Church, but the building is a tool, and we feel God has blessed us with this incredible opportunity to be able to reach out to others." Cross Point has the space to nurture its congregation, welcome newcomers, and pursue its mission to remain relentlessly dedicated to reaching the lost. 



## 'Re-Pitching the Tent' Downtown

A congregation shares space in an innovative design that makes the most of meager resources. By Marc Manack, Photographs by Pease Photography.

NORTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HOUSES A unique congregation in urban Cleveland, Ohio. With dwindling or relocated congregations, urban churches from a variety of denominations (including Presbyterian) are being closed and decommissioned at a staggering rate within Cleveland's urban core. With a congregation from diverse socioeconomic and faith backgrounds, North Church has fought to continue its ministry within the blighted neighborhood it calls home. To sustain its ministry, North Church made the choice to move

out of its over-sized and costly-to-maintain historic building. The congregation functions on a shoestring budget funded largely by donations from partner churches; thus the new facility had to be extremely low cost to build, operate, and maintain.

When considering possible sites for the project, it was critical that the church find a new location within its current neighborhood, where the church's parishioners primarily reside. Although the required parking spaces are provided on an existing parking lot across the street, the majority of the church's congregation either walks or uses mass transit to attend meals and services at North Church. The new church's location on Superior Avenue affords it access to one of Cleveland's major

transit thoroughfares; five bus stops are within two blocks of the site. Thus, out of necessity as much as desire, an ethic of resourcefulness was central to not only the project's location, but also its design, an ethic shared by the congregation and by our firm, SILO AR+D.

The facility for the new North Church is an existing abandoned industrial warehouse building where the church is strategically collocated with a series of affiliated nonprofit social organizations. North Church desired to have a unique, distinguishable, and inviting image within the larger complex. Spatial limitations in the existing building meant the sanctuary was required to be shared space with all tenants (Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry and its subsidiary organizations), providing

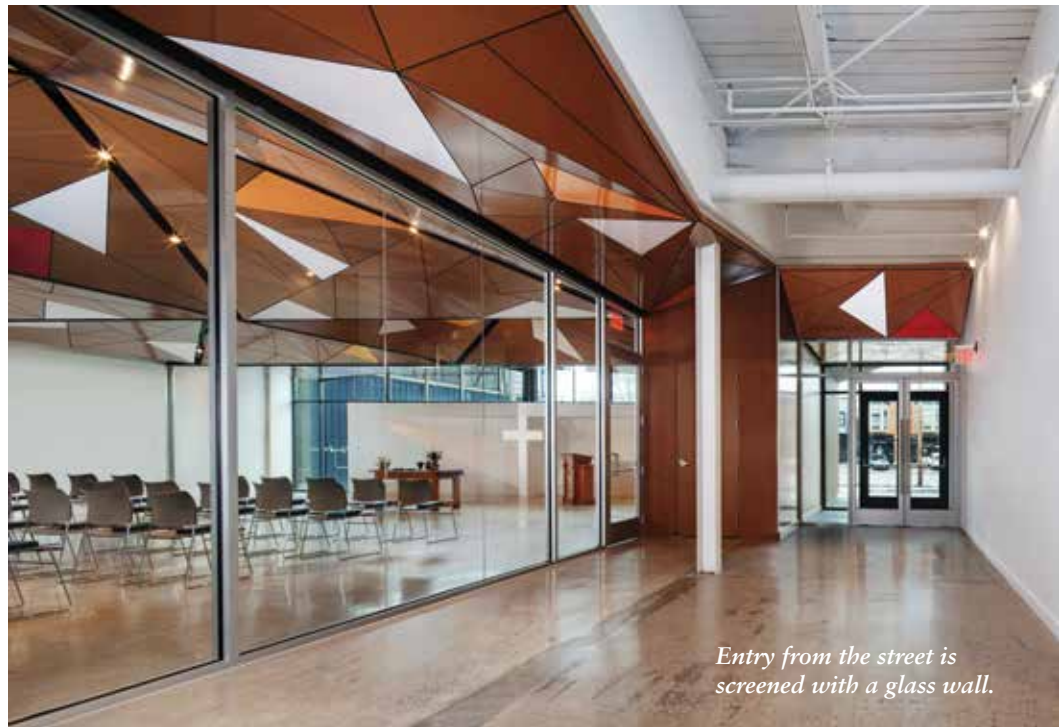
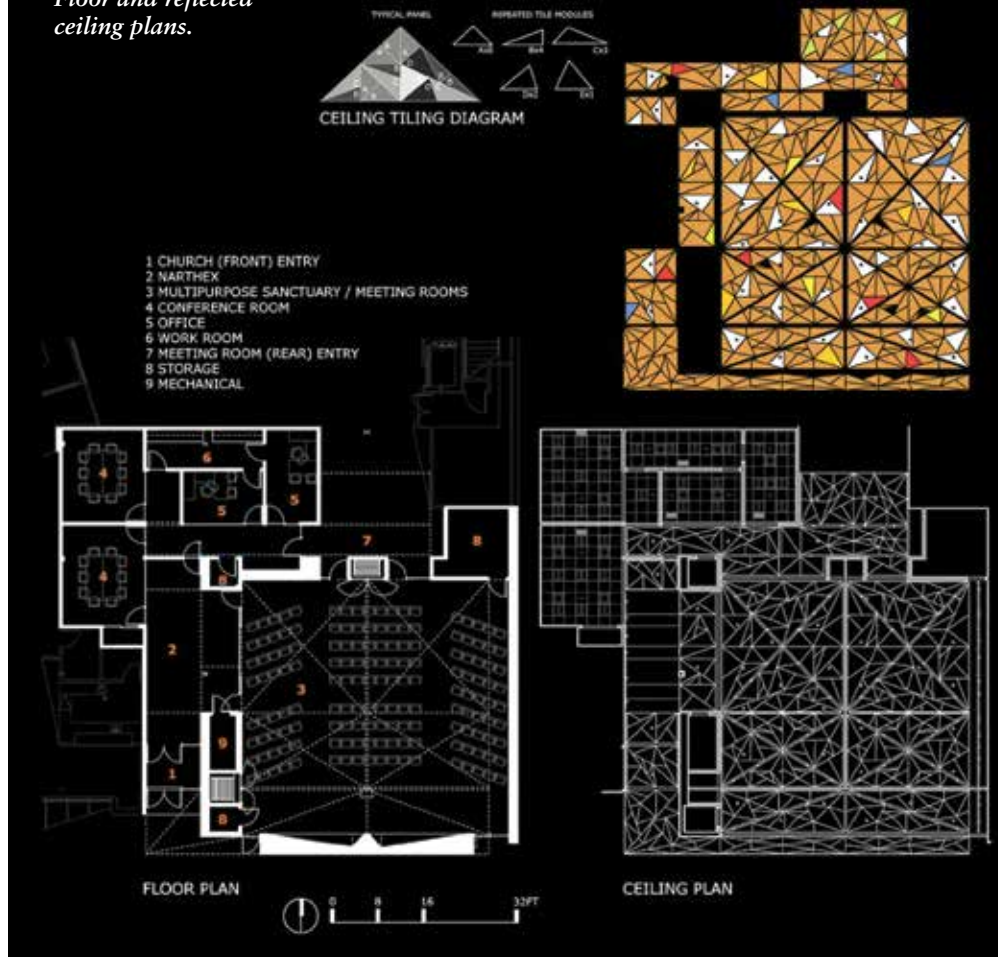
THE WRITER IS PRINCIPAL OF SILO AR+D, AN ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH AND DESIGN FIRM WITH OFFICES IN CLEVELAND AND FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS. HE IS ALSO A PROFESSOR AT THE FAY JONES SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS.



Exterior of the revitalized abandoned industrial warehouse, now the new home of North Presbyterian Church.



Floor and reflected ceiling plans.



Entry from the street is screened with a glass wall.

large meeting and assembly spaces divisible by movable partitions.

The limitations of the project scope and budget meant sustainable innovations had to be fundamental rather than superfluous to the design strategy. The site was selected because of the church's ability to collectively share services and infrastructure with another nonprofit organization under one roof, from common restrooms to a commercial kitchen used to serve weekly meals to homeless and needy in the community (total square footage is just shy of 5,000 square feet). Overall, the design aims to create the maximum effect with modest means. The existing building was salvaged and retained as much as possible, including structure, infrastructure, and flooring. Existing

concrete floors were patched and sealed, with existing structure left exposed and painted in public spaces throughout. The most significant new design element of the space, the interior/ exterior ceiling canopy, undulates to accommodate existing structure and infrastructure,

including main sprinkler piping. Additionally, the ceiling was conceived as primarily finished with a resilient cladding (made of 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper and a clear, water-based resin system that utilizes cashew nut shells) typically used in the construction






*Interior as a meeting space for tenants who share the building with the church.*

of skateboard ramps. Ultimately, rather than modifying the existing building to suit the desires of an idealized design, the design of North Presbyterian adapts to the existing environment, capitalizing on its resources and qualities, resulting in a more aesthetically unique and sustainable space.

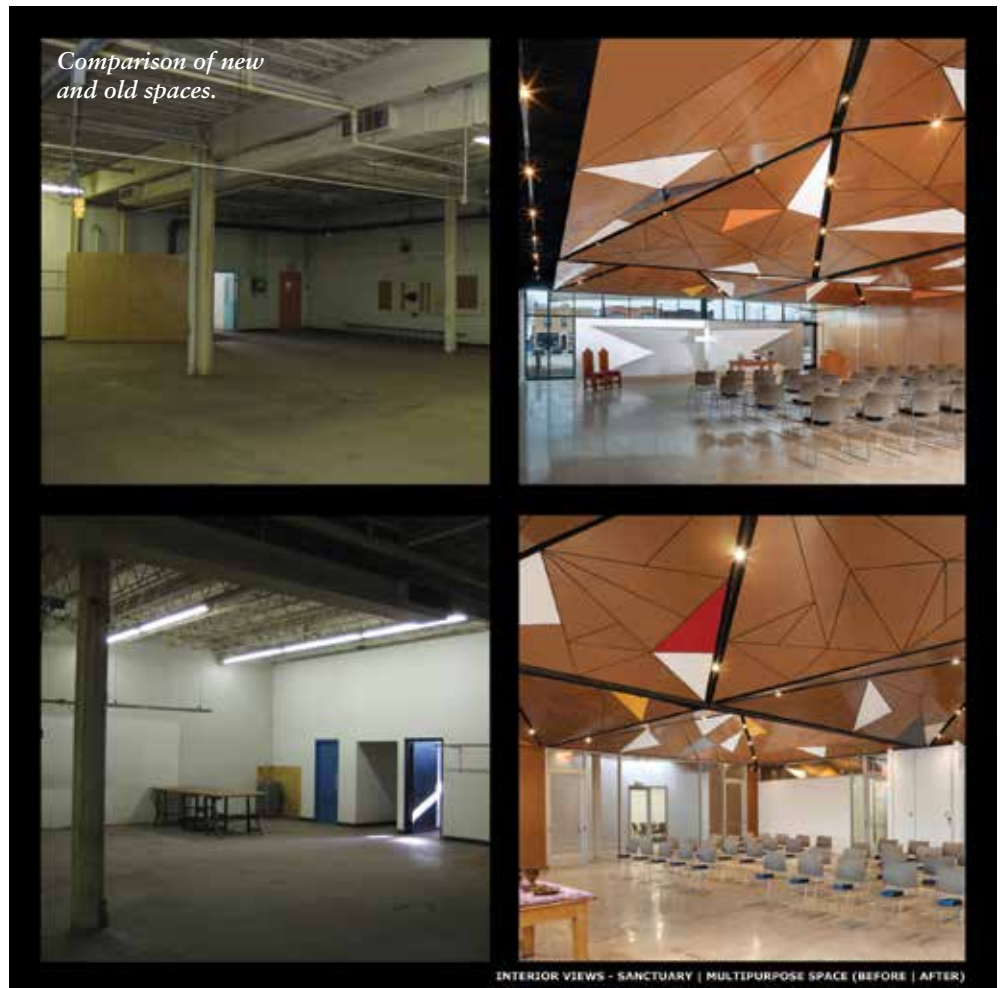
The architecture capitalizes on the multi-purpose function of the sanctuary to enhance the spatial qualities that characterize sacred worship space (symmetry, volume, indirect natural light). Conceived as a hybrid canopy/cathedral, the ceiling surface undulates to create a series of vaults that maximize the spatial volume available, while simultaneously concealing the appearance of hardware and headers required for the movable partitions. The faceted ceiling panels are subdivided into an animated triangular pattern that accommodates lighting, HVAC, and sprinkler systems. To maximize material economy and fabrication, a limited amount of triangular tile shapes repeat in a variety of patterns throughout. Reflective colored panels are introduced that echo the stained glass windows from the church's former home.

The ceiling pattern developed also represents innovative uses of material economy and construction techniques. The intention was to create the effect of a non-repeating and visual complex pattern using standard modules. Pattern modules were developed to maximize efficiency when cut from standard sheets during fabrication. Panels were prefabricated off site using CNC (computer numerical control) routing in files extracted from the architect's 3D model. To allow for imperfect field conditions, contractors were permitted to make ad hoc adjustments to the pattern, to utilize any and all leftover pieces to minimize waste.

The result of careful planning, shared space, and material resourcefulness was a project cost of \$40 per square foot (including MEP, exterior storefront, and all interior construction, finishes, and furnishings) for this new, highly flexible urban church. 



*Interior as a worship space for the urban-based congregation.*



*Comparison of new and old spaces.*

INTERIOR VIEWS - SANCTUARY | MULTIPURPOSE SPACE (BEFORE | AFTER)





# A MIRROR FOR BROOKLYN

## The Marian Murals and American Saints of St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral

By Ann Kendall

Photo: Whitney Cox

Cross the Brooklyn Bridge to the intersection of Atlantic and Flatbush to SHoP Architects' Barclays Center and you'll see a crossroads packed with rush-hour taxis and pedestrians rushing for trains gathering in Vanderbilt Yards to speed people into Manhattan or out to Long Island. It is a teeming entry to rapidly developing Brooklyn, that former Borough President Marty Markowitz says, "is no bedroom community." Today, Brooklyn is the most populous borough of New York City and home to nearly three million people. A diverse hum of business contributes to its prosperous status, yet 25 percent of the population still survives on incomes under the federal poverty line.

Turning down quieter Pacific Street, evidence of pending development surrounds the solid and stoic edifice of St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral. The heaviness of the church building embodies all those qualities Joseph represents—the guardian, the protector, and the servant. But when Monsignor Kieran Harrington arrived in January 2008, the then parish of St. Joseph's sat empty on Sunday morning, a ring of barbed

*Interior of St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral has been revived with an eye toward reflecting the ethnic diversity of its urban neighborhood.*

wire wrapping around its perimeter. The eight or ten parishioners who arrived on Sundays worshipped in the rectory where each time they spoke or sang, their breath turned to billows of steam from the cold. The 100-year-old building had witnessed the transitions that take place in any urban center over time: a burst of new immigrants populate a church, people have families and move to the suburbs, a new wave of immigrants comes in to take their places. But the broken windows that allowed birds to fly in and out caused those few parishioners to ask each other how they might spare some of their own limited funds to patch the shattered glass together; but most important, they never allowed the physical disintegration of their church to deter their efforts.

When Msgr. Harrington arrived that cold January and found the baptismal font frozen over, his first decision was to move Mass back into the church, regardless of the temperature; not the cold of winter or the heat of the pending summer would dissuade him from his idea that if you open the church, people will come. He added two Masses to bring the Sunday total to three; some of those devoted eight or ten worshippers

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*Our Lady of China is one of a new series of 22 Marian murals depicting the Virgin Mary.*



*A new Marian mural depicts the Virgin Mother as Queen of Nigeria.*

from the rectory-worship days would stay for all three Masses so he wouldn't be alone. A new priest came, Father Jorge Ortiz-Garay, the only Mexican priest in the Diocese of Brooklyn. Slowly the pews started to fill with new worshippers moving into the area, some traveling great distances: a mix of urban lives, immigrants from around the globe, young professionals and children. Prospect Heights, Brooklyn was slowly starting to prosper.

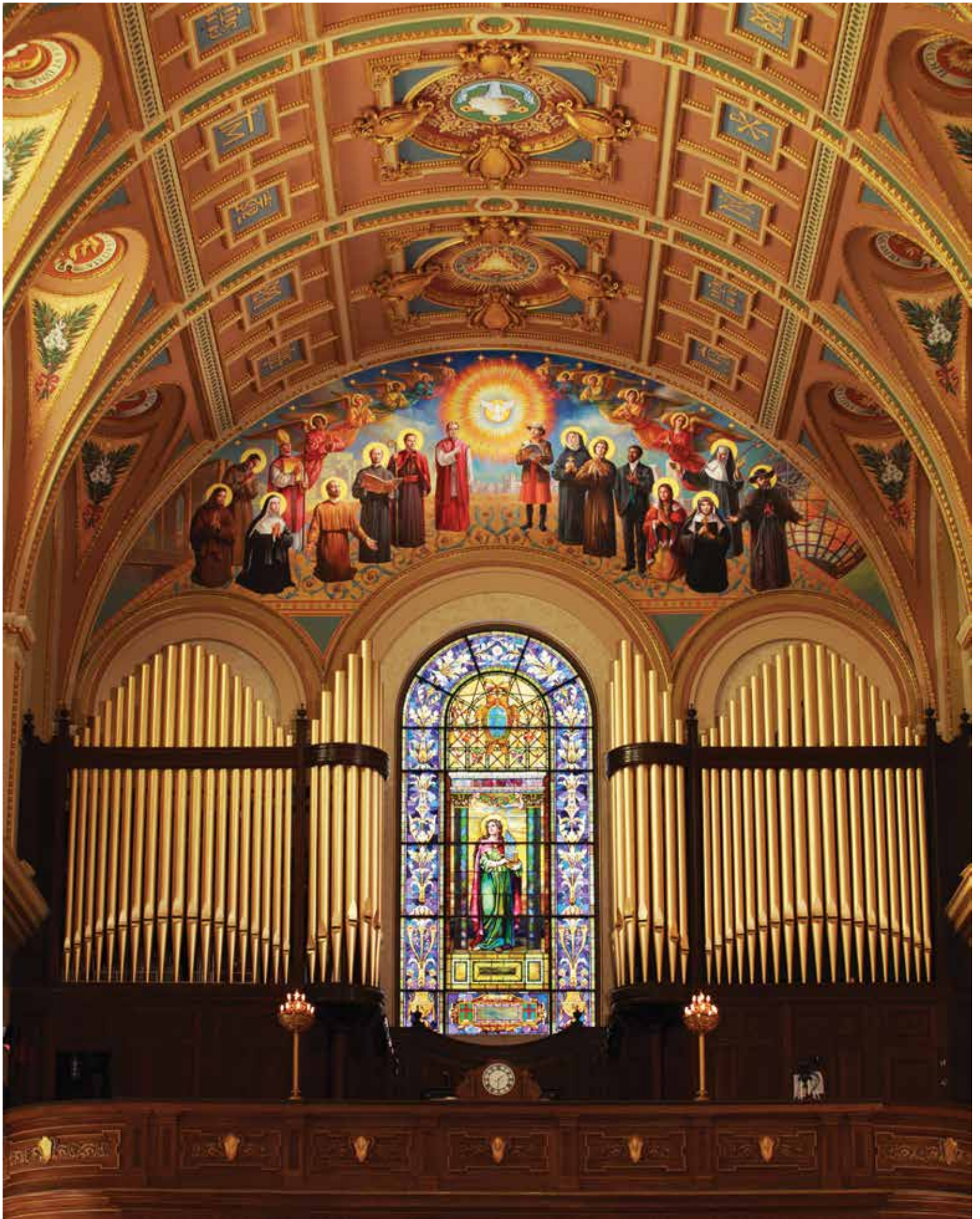
As gentrification surrounding the church progressed, worries grew, the congregation grew, and concern about its future continued: How could St. Joseph's survive financially? Would it succumb to the development pressures surrounding it? And most important, how could St. Joseph's retain its uniquely diverse community of worshippers, honoring its patron Saint Joseph of social justice, where families of many ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds could gather, not just to worship but to meld their lives together through the ceremonies and moments of a life shared—baptisms, birthdays, after-church walks to the park? As the parish was rallying to mount a campaign to rebuild, renovate, and restore St. Joseph's, events afoot at the

diocese—and at the Vatican—slowly came together to honor and elevate St. Joseph's parish to a Co-Cathedral for the diocese.

Today entering St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral, it is difficult to imagine that recently the church was a hollow shell, left standing almost as if through neglect. Now, as light shines through restored stained glass throughout the night, St. Joseph's is a beacon in the neighborhood, its doors open every day, all day, so that parishioners and those in need of respite can come in and feel the warmth that resonates from each surface within. The development of Brooklyn was a motivating factor in the decision to rescue St. Joseph's. With an increasing influx of residents and the need for a large space to accommodate worshippers, it was a rational and economic decision to bring the church to new life. The idea of living stones is an accurate description of the restoration process. Each person involved in the decision to restore, whether clergy, parishioner, or artisan, is part of this living church. The renovation itself (building, systems, and then decoration) served as an economic generator providing living wage jobs—aptly as Joseph is the patron saint of workers.

EverGreene Architectural Arts began the delicate and intricate work of restoring and creating the decorative elements of St. Joseph's after the building and systems were fully renovated in late fall 2013; the project was completed in a very short time-frame (just over two months) with painters and craftsmen working around the clock in some cases on a nearly-70-foot scaffolding. Each week at Sunday Mass, worshippers could look above and around to see the project's progress and to feel a part of the process; it was important to church leadership as well as to the growing congregation that the building remain operational for Sunday services during this intense time, though during the two-month process it did close during the week. Parishioners assisted in restoring the aged pews, working steadily in the basement to strip away years of varnish, while conservators, artists, and craftspeople climbed scaffolding in the church, restoring the few existing murals and disintegrating columns. While Brooklyn is prospering, an important note to this restoration story is that it remains an economically diverse parish; its collection plate does not overflow each week, it counts undocumented





Photos: Whitney Cox

*New 'American Saints' mural in place at St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral.*






Artists at EverGreene Architectural Arts work on the new 'American Saints' mural.

immigrants among its weekly attendees, along with representation of every socioeconomic group of Brooklyn. The most important design imperative for the project was the critical need to create a worship environment that honored its parishioners and surroundings while allowing space for those immigrants and worshipers who have not yet arrived in Brooklyn.

Msgr. Harrington points out that the Holy Mother is unifying to all Catholics: as the mother she is the entrance point, she offers access to all. EverGreene created 22 "Marian Murals" to grace the ceiling of St. Joseph's, representing the best-represented ethnicities in the diocese. In gazing towards the ceiling, one sees each mural set in its oval shape, welcoming contemplation with familiarity of language and vision. Msgr. Harrington also points out that the role of didactic art is often exposure to greater concepts: the Marian Murals made concrete the idea that not only can worshipers find the Mary of their own vision and background, but also the Mary of their neighbor. While the style of the art is traditional, the ideas are progressive and inclusive. Each nine-foot-oval mural was hand painted in EverGreene's studio and installed in the concave bay with ten on each side aisle (with two murals, Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Fatima, on rear-aisle walls); standing underneath each Madonna and gazing upward is to feel as if you

are in an intimate chapel-like setting, bathed in light whether viewing Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady Queen of Nigeria, or Our Lady of Hostyn. To create the set of 22 murals, 12 painters collaborated to bring the ideas of the church's apostolic groups' design guidance to reality; these groups also assisted the church in raising funds for each mural, creating a special ownership and feeling of inclusiveness in St. Joseph's renewal.

Msgr. Harrington used to hear questions from attendees: How does this church reflect what I have learned and know? The Marian Murals offer St. Joseph's an intricate fabric that reflects and beckons simultaneously for the entirety of the diocese. The interpretation of congregational desires for artwork that inspires and is inclusive now evokes the feelings the parish and its leaders want to share with the community at large and with Catholics throughout the diocese: everyone is welcome here. On Sundays, when the organ music begins to waft down from the loft and parishioners walk to their seats, they may stop to study their vision of Mary; in glancing back towards the organ loft they will see the newly created American Saints mural shining brightly with objects included of special meaning to the diocese: the Queen's Unisphere and the Brooklyn Bridge. As worshippers prepare to leave, their gaze will float upward to that

mural again, resting perhaps on one of the four figures without a halo: Pierre Toussaint, Dorothy Day, Fr. Bernard Quinn, and Bishop Ford, the four figures in the mural without halos, local representations of mortals who achieved saintly service through their actions. These individuals provide local inspiration for congregants, that ancient ideas are connected to modern living, an inspirational and aspirational message to go forth into the week ahead. Whether arriving on foot, by bus, bicycle, or train, the restoration and renewal of St. Joseph's is the symbolic crossroads of a dynamic community where there is a place for everyone, for even those who have not yet arrived. 

#### PROJECT CREDITS

Design concept, liturgical furnishings design, plaster & paint restoration, mural conservation, new murals (design & production), decorative finishes: EverGreene Architectural Arts; Owner's representative: Belle Brook Inc., LLC; HVAC: BP Mechanical Corp.; Lighting: Light Tech (directed by BP); Organ: Peragallo Pipe Organ Company; Maintenance/Electric: Vanguard (directed by BP); fabrication of new wooden liturgical furnishings: Ratigan Schottler; New marble fabrication: Wild English; under-croft restoration & wood refinishing: JA Jennings; Architect exterior: Acheson Doyle Partners; Architect of Record/interior: Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel; Stained glass: Botti Studios.





the **digital** cathedral <distributed and situational sacred space/>  
<by keith anderson/>



Pastor Keith Anderson meets with the congregation of 'God on Tap' in a local pub.

Those who believe that in Christ God has brought life out of death, hope out of sorrow, and love out of cruelty are now called to see the world, the everyday and ordinary, with new eyes, the eyes of faith—and to live lives of hope and love directed to the neighbor in need. To be sure, this view undermines many of the safe distinctions that we have come to rely upon—particularly the distinction between the sacred and the secular; but it seeks to replace those dichotomous categories with integral notions like incarnation and sacrament. In so doing this view seeks to relocate the sacred not beyond but within our everyday experience. — Ronald F. Thiemann, *The Humble Sublime*

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, I MADE PILGRIMAGES TO MEDIEVAL CATHEDRALS. Now, it seems, I make pilgrimages to new mission churches.

Last summer I made a pilgrimage to Humble Walk Lutheran Church, a new mission start congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, located in St. Paul, Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> I first learned about Humble Walk during the research for my book with Elizabeth Drescher, *Click2Save: The Digital Ministry Bible*, a hands-on guide for ministry leaders on using social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in their ministries.

Humble Walk was using social media in interesting ways, so I interviewed their pastor, Jodi Houge, who gave one of the most memorable quotes of the entire book. She said, “We recognized that most people don’t come looking for a church in our demographic. And so, we thought from the beginning, ‘We know this. The church is sinking.’ The facts are on the table for mainline denominations. So, we’re not going to do these big glossy things that try and draw people to our cool, fancy, hip church. We’re going to be where people already are, and try to be the church where they are.”<sup>2</sup>

For Humble Walk that means being embedded in their local neighborhood, the West End of St. Paul. They have decided not to have a church building, and instead to meet in local gathering spaces. They hold “Theology Pub” nights and “Beer and Hymns” gatherings at their

local pub, the Shamrock. They host bible study at Claddagh Coffee House. They worship in a local art studio, and during the month of July they worship outside in a local park.

That’s where I caught up with them. We gathered on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in Highland Park. People were seated at picnic tables, in lawn chairs, and on picnic blankets. We reflected together on scripture. Communion was served using an old plate that looked like it was from my grandmother’s kitchen on a small folding table with a hand-made mosaic; plastic IKEA cups held the wine and grape juice. Later that week, I went to the Shamrock Pub for dinner with friends so I could see where Theology Pub and Beer and Hymns take place. And there, while eating a Paul Molitor burger<sup>3</sup> (which, by the way, I highly recommend), I noted how, unlike some of the pilgrimages I had made before to St. Peter’s in Rome, St. Mark’s in Venice, and Notre-Dame in Paris, to make a pilgrimage to Humble Walk I had to visit multiple locations. I had to walk the streets and enter into the life of the West End.

I realized that by not having a building and instead embedding themselves in the life of the West End, they were making their entire neighborhood their cathedral. The main road in this part of town, 7th Street West, was their nave. The side streets were the ambulatories. And the shrines, well, the shrines were everywhere—in parks and bus stops, coffee shops and pubs, churches and community gathering spaces, homes and apartments.

Indeed, the entire neighborhood became sacred space, holy ground.

This caused me to look at my own neighborhood and my own ministry differently. I work in a much more traditional congregation, Upper Dublin Lutheran Church in Ambler, Pennsylvania. UDLC was founded in 1753 and has been on the same piece of property ever since. And yet, we also host Theology Pub nights and Beer and Hymns, and Coffee

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and Conversation gatherings in a local café. The visit to Humble Walk helped me see all of these not just as episodic forays into the neighborhood, or trendy ways of doing ministry, but as ways of naming as sacred space the places where people gather in their everyday lives.

As Houge suggests in the quote above, this is not how most ministers in mainline churches are accustomed to thinking about sacred space. While we certainly affirm that God is everywhere, in practice we often reduce sacred space to our church buildings, and then even more narrowly to a specific scheduled time for worship.

In my own Lutheran tradition we use the language of “the priesthood of believers,” meaning that each person is a minister in daily life, that they live out their holy calling in the world in their jobs, their homes, and their community. And yet, despite that rich theological inheritance, we often associate the godly life only with things that are done in and for church, which often translates to a layperson being asked to serve on a committee, and therefore within the church building. Of course, these are all good things, but they are not the only ways we live out our faith. So, how are we to regard all the time spent outside of church, and all the places it takes us?

In her book, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, Jeanne Halgren Kilde makes a helpful distinction between two ways of looking at sacred space, what she calls the “substantive” and the “situational” approaches to sacred space. She writes that in the “substantive” approach, advanced by Mircea Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane*, places are deemed sacred because a divine power dwells in them. “These holy centers orient individuals and groups ‘vertically,’ creating a spatial link between heavenly power above and the more problematic, even evil, power of the underworld below. They also orient groups ‘horizontally,’ dividing the landscape into sacred centers and profane fringes, imprinting a hierarchy of meaning onto the very earth itself.”<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, the “situational” approach proposed by Jonathan Z. Smith in *To Take Place* is more constructivist in nature. Kilde writes, “How people organize themselves and behave within specific places imbue those places with sacred importance. ...space is sacralized by human action and behavior, and certain spaces become sacred because people treat them differently from ordinary spaces. ...places are sacred because they are made so by human beings. ...sacredness is *situational*.... Groups of believers create holy places by investing certain places or spaces with religious meanings and then acting upon those meanings.”<sup>5</sup>

The ways in which Humble Walk sings hymns or studies the bible at the Shamrock is a way of, to use Kilde’s terminology, sacralizing that space. When we host conversations about life and faith at my local café or pub, we are doing the same.

It is a way of constructing sacred space, not with the architecture of buildings, but the structure of belonging and practice. It happens beyond our church buildings in local gathering spaces, when people pause to pray before a meal, give and receive love, serve their neighbors, when they find themselves at the intersection of life and faith.

People are, in fact, sacralizing space all the time. The ground they walk on is holy. When we enter into these local gathering spaces, we are not somehow making them holy; rather, we are acknowledging their holiness and along with that, the sanctity of people’s daily lives. As Ronald Thiemann writes, we are invited to see the world not as divided up between the sacred and secular, but to “relocate the sacred not beyond but within our everyday experience.”<sup>6</sup>

This honoring of the sacred in everyday experience is part of what I have come to associate with the concept of the “Digital Cathedral.” The Digital Cathedral is not an online or virtual church. Rather, The Digital Cathedral is intended to evoke an expansive understanding of church in a digitally integrated world, one that extends ministry into digital and local gathering spaces, recognizes the holy in our everyday lives, and embodies a networked, relational, and incarnational ministry leadership for a digital age.

I have chosen the medieval phenomenon of the cathedral as an image for ministry in a postmodern age because cathedrals, like the spacious, light-filled Gothic architecture that defines so many of them, have a sense of openness and inclusivity, which reflect a historic ministry of hospitality to believers and unbelievers, residents and pilgrims, strangers and friends, that still resonates today.<sup>7</sup> It is a corrective to a Church that has, in many ways, closed in on itself. Although we often think of cathedrals as monumental buildings, cathedrals themselves have always been deeply rooted in the life of their local community, not only as towering symbols of God’s presence and the Church’s power, but also in more subtle and more practical ways: by employing local workmen and residents in the ongoing maintenance and functioning of the cathedral, as the inspiration for everyday religious experience and encounters with the divine, and as a symbol of the hopes and aspirations of its people.

In her book, *the city of god: faith in the streets*, Sara Miles finds the sacred among the

profane, and locates Augustine’s City of God within and among the City of Man. She writes:

It’s not just inside church buildings that you can find God: in the holy city, God is the temple and dwells among his people. The people cross themselves before lunch in a break room or a school, process down the street carrying pictures of the Virgin Mary, pray in the parks, light candles on their stoops to honor the dead, gather with crosses to sing hymns and protest immigration laws. Plenty of poor people in San Francisco, like the homeless guys who build shrines in their encampment under the bridge, converse freely and intimately with God in public. And so do some rich, ostensibly modern people: they hold bible study in the conference room of a downtown investment bank or send prayers via Twitter to their co-workers at a tech company. The city might be far less religious than most if measured by the number of people who attend churches, but in its streets it’s the city of God.<sup>8</sup>

Today ministry leaders find themselves in a new religious landscape, one where the mainline Church has lost the central and privileged place it once held in American culture, and where the number of religiously affiliated continues to grow. We cannot simply wait for people to show up in our church buildings. We cannot remain trapped in a narrow understanding of “substantive” sacred space. Rather, like Humble Walk, we must recognize, name, and engage the “situational” sacred spaces that are continually constructed beyond our buildings. ☒

## NOTES

- 1 See <http://humblewalkchurch.org>
- 2 Elizabeth Drescher and Keith Anderson, *Click2Save: The Digital Ministry Bible* (New York: Morehouse Press, 2012), 157.
- 3 See <http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/top-lists/best-creative-burgers-in-minnesota/>
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## THE FIVE E'S OF SUSTAINABILITY

We recently completed a new campus focal point at Holmes Presbyterian Camp and Conference Center, situated on more than 500 wilderness acres in upstate New York. This complex of buildings and infrastructure—referred to as Agape, after the ancient Greek word meaning “pure love”—will support programs for children and adults to help them grow physically, spiritually, and communally. Most important, Holmes seeks to infuse children and adults alike with a deepened sensitivity to the environment around us as well as to our connectedness as people across a spectrum of religious, cultural, and physical divides. One of its signature programs, *Face to Face | Faith to Faith*, joins together young adults of different faiths and backgrounds toward the goal of dissolving prejudices, preconceptions, and barriers that often keep people apart.

Architecture has an essential role to play in this, well beyond containing programmed activities. It can serve to inspire; indeed, the buildings designed for the Agape campus emulate the spiritual and physical connectedness of its occupants, to one another as well as to the world around them. The tactile qualities and visual clues offered by the buildings' regional materials, craftsmanship, and fluid relationship between interior and exterior combine to allow architecture's voice to join the conversation.

For nearly two decades, design professionals have been striving to build a greener world, with results that often are laudable, lasting, and definitive. Still, many of these successes reflect a model of sustainability that hovers around energy and water conservation goals. Perhaps a better paradigm of Sustainability—one spelled with a capital S—could incorporate the full spectrum of what architecture represents, using our full box of crayons and not just green. Sustainability is most commonly defined as the three-E's: economy, environment, equity (i.e., our social and cultural investment). Rounding out the potential for a building to become a dynamic and interactive part of its community, we prefer expanding this traditional definition to incorporate five-E's: economy, environment, equity, education, engagement.


Education is an ongoing process, informing the choices of designers, users, and stewards toward the form that ultimately emerges. If we

THE SACRED AND THE MUNDANE  
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are to give architecture its full voice we need to be clear on what it, and we, are attempting to say. After all, the choices we make in the simplest of things—light, air, color, volume, orientation, texture—may ignite an emotional response. Education sets the stage for the success of engagement.

Religious sites by their nature embrace universalism, though generally within a regional context. Since the constancy of the sky is arguably the most universal element of all (the same the world over) it's little wonder that both actual and allegorical skylines have been central to the design of sacred sites for millennia. Endless vistas allow us to be in two places at once, both grounded and ethereal, an effective way to elicit a sense of belonging and calm. As design professionals, we have the ability to dissolve barriers between a building and its natural surroundings through the use of a variety of devices including operable window wall systems, skylights, light tubes, and natural ventilation, each offering a sensuous engagement of sights, sounds, breezes, or fragrances. Regional attributes are further enhanced with thoughtful selection of autochthonous materials, available now in increasingly dynamic and expanding palettes. Indigenous landscapes enrich the beneficial effects of regionalism within a universal context when featuring distinctive flora, fauna, and water features.

Environment remains one of the greatest leveling tools architects have in seeking to connect buildings with users: the world over, the sky is blue, the earth is under our feet, and the air we breathe surrounds us. Materials sourced locally that comprise structure, envelope, and finishes strengthen these simple yet powerful basic elements. The architecture of sacred spaces allows for transcendent approaches that many other building forms do not. Beyond inducing a sense of awe, our sacred sites can help ground the people who experience them and better connect them to the world community.

Though architecture has for ages been cited as the noblest of arts, one of the resonant tag lines of our time is that architects design buildings for other architects. With sacred sites as the centerpieces of a global community, we can inspire a deepened discourse among building, place, and people, transforming sustainability into Sustainability. 

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IMAGINE THIS TAKING PLACE AT YOUR HOUSE OF WORSHIP: A dozen or so creative men and women gather regularly to create art to adorn this place throughout the year. The use of their talents is a spiritual practice that benefits themselves as well as the faith community. Participants include creative thinkers, skilled artisans and writers, designers, painters, seamstresses, carpenters, and architects, along with other interested members. Guided by a facilitator versed in liturgical art, they reflect on aspects of the liturgical season, scripture or theological writings, rituals and symbols, current events, and the needs of the community. Through this reflection they identify emotions and metaphors to translate into meaningful, prayerful images. The group fabricates and installs the art, which may include suspended painted panels, weavings, banners, mobiles, and forms of interactive art completed over time by the community. The result is organic liturgical art born out of the wisdom of the community that serves the liturgy, and is capable of increasing participation and deepening the experience of prayer for all involved.

Because of its perceived lack of importance to worship, the idea of creating art of this nature seldom garners the attention it deserves. Much like the children at large family gatherings, it is relegated to the "kids' table." Of course, for many of us, the kids' table is the place to be: this is the creative laboratory of the next generation. Many "grownups" still wish they could sit there. However, in the great family gathering that is worship, many leaders resist the idea of including sacred art, perhaps for fear that it will be a distraction or because they do not understand its purpose. Besides, the creation of religious art is typically understood as being the domain of professional artists and architects, and is permanently installed during the building or

renovation process. Even clergy who support the addition of sacred art might stop short over fears of mediocre or kitschy art in the sanctuary. Some enthusiastic leaders may appreciate the value of sacred art, but are wary of the time and oversight required. Others may have concerns that the art will be rejected by the community. The default is to do nothing, or buy "art" out of a catalog.

But, with the right information, guidance, and talent, a successful sacred art ministry can be formed. I propose three scenarios based on a community's level of experience. The first is to commission a liturgical artist who collaborates with the community during the discernment process but works alone to create the art. The second is to work with an artist-in-residence who guides members of an existing sacred art ministry through the entire process. The third (a natural progression from the second) is to gradually develop a sacred art ministry from the talented members of the community, perhaps starting with one installation per year.

Liturgical art visually illuminates worship by drawing out the fullness of the mystery therein. The collaborative process of its creation can open untapped avenues of spiritual insight, leading to a greater discernment of God's movement in the ordinary. 

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SUSAN FRANCESCONI IS THE AUTHOR OF ART IN THE SANCTUARY ([ARTINTHESANCTUARY.COM](http://ARTINTHESANCTUARY.COM)), AN EDUCATIONAL WEB SITE DEVOTED TO THE PROMOTION OF LITURGICAL ART. SHE IS ALSO A CANDIDATE FOR A MASTER'S OF PASTORAL STUDIES AT CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION IN CHICAGO, AND THE DIRECTOR OF EVANGELIZATION FOR SS. PETER & PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH IN HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY.



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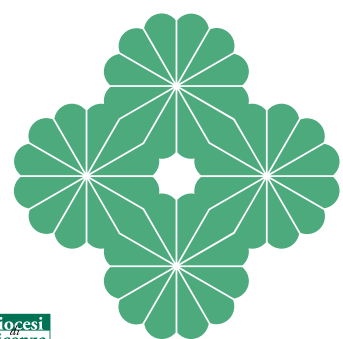
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**New IDEAS.**  
**Same KOINÈ.**



## ON DISPLAY

Manufacturers, craftsmen, artisans, religious institutions, Church suppliers showing new products and services for the religious market: building for places of worship, community furniture, installations, statues and sculptures, religious articles, liturgical ware-vessels, liturgical garments and textiles.

## THE AUDIENCE

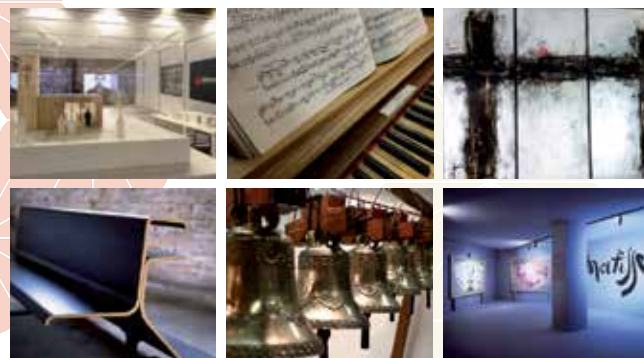
Outlet and retailers, wholesalers, buyers from the 5 continents, online stores, designers, architects, artists, liturgists, heads of religious communities, parishes and shrines, professionals dealing with the adaptation and building of places of worship.

## NEW FEATURES

In the renewed pavilions 1, 2 and 7 of the Vicenza Fairgrounds, Koinè will offer modern facilities and services to the new visitors joining with over 360 exhibiting companies.

### MOSTRANCES:

- The **contemporary glass windows** in Churches
- **Chasubles and stoles** from the world of production
- **Saints and holy cards:** on display a selection of holy cards designed by contemporary illustrators
- Days of study and meetings focusing on art and architecture



**Where:** Vicenza Fairgrounds, Italy  
**When:** April 18-21, 2015  
**Opening hours:** 9.30 am to 6.00 pm [on Tuesday 21, from 9.30 am to 4.00 pm]  
**Free entrance for trade operators and clergy**

UNDER THE PATRONAGE

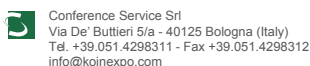


Diocesi  
Vicenza

ORGANIZER



ORGANIZING SECRETARIAT



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