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Tactful Reconciliation
The construction of a new parish hall and chapel at St. Mary's Episcopal Church also provided an opportunity for Kerns Group Architects to reverse earlier changes to the design and orientation of the original church interior. By Allen Freeman

Portfolio: Religious Buildings
Growing congregations, changes in liturgical tradition, expanding missions, and sheer acts of God have given architects a wide range of opportunities to create uplifting spaces for a number of Virginia churches and synagogues.

Temple Beth Israel, Bruce R. Wardell, Architect
St. James's Episcopal, Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith
St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, Carlton Abbott and Partners
St. Anne's Episcopal, James William Ritter Architect
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On the cover:
St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church,
by Carlton Abbott and Partners.
Photo by J. Christian Wildman.

In our next issue:
The Changing Workplace
Calling her “a classical southern lady using her talents and leadership skills to better the status of her fellow human beings,” the American Institute of Architects has named Mary Tyler Cheek McClanahan of Richmond as an Honorary Member of the AIA.

Long known in her home community as a patron of the arts and supporter of social causes, McClanahan has won national acclaim for her key role in such organizations as the Richmond Better Housing Coalition and the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association, which operates Stratford Hall Plantation. In nominating her for the award, then-President Willard E. Gwilliam, FAIA, of AIA/James River noted that McClanahan’s “unfailing concern for the needs of people has shaped her community with programs that are national models for social initiatives, urban revitalization, housing solutions, and historic preservation.”

In a lifetime of distinguished service as a community volunteer, wrote Gwilliam, “she provided vision and grace with her leadership, energy, and resources to establish and support organizations that have informed and benefited the profession of architecture and its allied arts while enhancing the very life of our citizens.”

Influential as any corporate chairman, Mary Tyler Cheek McClanahan still refers to herself modestly as a community volunteer. Since returning to Richmond from Vassar College in 1937, she has shaped thought, organized people, and generously given to meet the needs of changing times in secular and religious education, race relations, conservation, literature, architecture, and the fine arts.

Perhaps no organization has benefited so visibly from her commitment than the Richmond Better Housing Coalition (RBHC), which she organized with the support of other civic leaders in 1988. Under her continuing chairmanship, the housing coalition has raised funds to bring the Local Initiatives Support Corporation to Richmond to directly address the urban housing problem. The coalition has focused on bricks and mortar projects to influence housing policy and to demonstrate the spirit of enlightened private sector involvement – local empowerment and financial support. The housing coalition has produced more than 400 new apartments and single-family homes in existing neighborhoods with imaginative planning, good design, and good construction.

Raymond Gindroz, AIA, of UDA Architects in Pittsburgh, has worked on several RBHC projects and was one of the architects to endorse McClanahan’s candidacy for honorary membership. “I have been impressed with her ability to reach out to members of the community, find what is needed, and then bring together the team of people who can bring about meaningful change,” Gindroz said. “Her determination, skill, and generosity of spirit has made it possible to produce buildings of high architectural quality, in very difficult – almost impossible – bureaucratic and financial situations. In so doing, she has established precedents of national importance.”

One of the many historic sites that has benefited from McClanahan’s interest in historic preservation is Stratford Hall, ancestral home of Robert E. Lee. Nina Burke, president of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association, credits McClanahan with the concept that led to the development of the long-range plan for contemporary support buildings which complement the historic site while maintaining its integrity and affording visitors an informative experience. “The ‘crown jewel’ of her efforts is Stratford’s duPont Library which houses historic library collections, archives, and Mary Tyler’s brainchild, the Stratford Hall Monticello Leadership Seminar for Teachers,” wrote Burke.

In 1991, McClanahan received the Architecture Medal for Virginia Service from the Virginia Society AIA. In presenting her with the state award, VSAIA acknowledged her work with organizations including the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, the Maymont Foundation, the National Committee for Jefferson’s Poplar Forest Fund, and Richmond Renaissance.
Architecture Week Grows Beyond Limits of Calendar

Good news for devotees of design: Architecture Week has, for this year at least, unofficially become Architecture Fortnight, by virtue of the two participating chapters having scheduled events spanning a period of two weeks. The fun begins April 9 with a reception at Union Station in Charlottesville and closes with informal presentations and jazz music at a residence in Richmond.

Building on the success of years past, the AIA/James River and AIA/Central Virginia chapters have organized a series of public tours, lectures, and hands-on activities in Charlottesville and Richmond. “Architecture Week is intended as a public outreach vehicle and is developing a historic thrust as well,” says Rachel Preston, event coordinator for AIA/Central Virginia.

While details of some programs were unavailable at press time, the following activities are scheduled:

- **Friday, April 9:** Reception and presentation of award submissions, 6:30 p.m. at Union Station, 810 W. Main St., Charlottesville.
- **Saturday, April 10:** Kids’ Day Event, Charlottesville. Time and location TBA.
- **Monday, April 12:** Landscape Architecture Day in Charlottesville with presentation of Scottsville River Corridor Plan by U.Va. professor Nancy Takahashi and tours of synagouge garden by landscape architect Gregg Bleem and Temple Beth Israel addition by Bruce R. Wardell, AIA.
- **Tuesday, April 13:** Tour of the Governor’s Mansion in Richmond with First Lady Roxanne Gilmore and discussion of preservation issues at the Virginia State Capitol. Time TBA. At 4 p.m. London architect Richard Rogers will present the Jefferson Medalist lecture at the University of Virginia. Call 804-924-3715 for information.
- **Wednesday, April 14:** A tour of the ongoing Pavilion 7 restoration and private gardens from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. by Connie Warnock and Mary Hughes of U.Va.’s facilities department. Also, from 4:30-7:30 p.m., a tour of the Venetian Wings at Monticello by historian Bill Beiswanger; cost is $10 for Monticello tour.
- **Thursday, April 15:** Historic preservation lunch and book signing. Charlottesville. Time and location TBA. Also, a roundtable discussion on “The Efficacy of Boards of Architectural Review” will be held at 7:30 p.m. at a Charlottesville location to be announced. In Richmond, an art show and sale sponsored by the International Interior Design Association will be held at the Shockoe Bottom Arts Center, 2001 E. Grace St. from 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- **Saturday, April 17:** Kids will build the original Navy Hill neighborhood at the Children’s Museum of Richmond, 740 Navy Hill Drive. In Charlottesville, join Historic Garden Week for tours of surrounding estates. Contact the Garden Club of Virginia at 804-644-7766.

Billie Tsien, architect of The Neurosciences Institute in La Jolla, Calif. (above), will speak April 21 at VCU for Architecture Week.

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Weighing the Options on “Smart Growth”

On April 20, the National Building Museum will launch a series of exhibitions entitled “Smart Growth and Choices for Change.” Cosponsored by the Urban Land Institute, with support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the series will explore alternatives to patterns of sprawl. The following article describes the concept of smart growth, an approach which seeks common ground among developers, environmentalists, government officials, and the public.

By Geoffrey Anderson and Harriet Tregone, Environmental Protection Agency

In communities across the nation, there is a growing concern that 20th century patterns of land development are no longer in the country’s long-term interest. Although they support growth, communities are questioning the economic costs of abandoning infrastructure in the city only to rebuild it further out. They are questioning the social costs of the mismatch between new employment locations in the suburbs and the available workforce in the city. They are questioning the wisdom of abandoning brownfields in older communities, eating up open space and prime agricultural lands at the suburban fringe, and polluting the air of an entire region through ever-increasing automobile traffic.

Smart growth shifts the debate away from the pro- or anti-growth sentiments of the past. It seeks growth, recognizing the crucial role that development plays in maintaining and improving communities. Smart growth also acknowledges the fiscal, environmental, and other concerns that are dominating current discussions and asks the question: not whether, but how to grow.

Smart growth takes different forms in different communities. However, it has common features in that it tends to enhance the sense of community, protect investment in existing neighborhoods, provide certainty in the development process, protect environmental quality, reward developers with profitable products, and decrease congestion by providing alternative modes of transportation.

Today smart growth is often the path of greatest resistance. Public infrastructure and housing policies are designed to rein-
force current development patterns, and in many instances, smart growth is simply illegal. For example, current zoning practices often require unnecessarily wide streets, large setbacks, and large lot sizes. They also often forbid mixing retail and commercial with residential uses and require excessive parking spaces. Barriers to smart growth originate at many different levels in local, state, and national government and in the private sector.

Despite this, and because of smart growth’s ability to engender collaboration and agreement between both policy makers and practitioners in the development sector, barriers have fallen and smart growth is becoming easier due to many initiatives, including the following:

- The Institute for Transportation Engineers recently issued street design guidelines that provide the alternative designs necessary to create smart growth neighborhoods.
- Numerous local governments have adopted alternative zoning overlays that permit a greater mix of uses, lower parking minimums, smaller setbacks, and other design features.
- Innovative developers are providing built examples of smart growth and earning good returns, creating the comparables needed for financing future smart growth projects.
- Leading-edge local governments are speeding up permitting for developments that meet community and environmental goals. States are making brownfield redevelopment easier by providing liability protection, favorable financing, and discounted impact fees.
- Federal public housing efforts are deconcentrating low-income housing, incorporating high proportions of market-rate units into new projects, and using neighborhood design principles.
- Free parking’s favored tax treatment was nearly eliminated when transit and other forms of commuting were made eligible for equal tax benefits.
- The capital gains tax on the sale of a home was revised, allowing people to trade down to smaller and less-expensive housing without incurring a tax penalty; this gives great latitude to those who wish to move back to and invest in older suburban communities.

Though developments following the model of the past 50 years are still easier to build, standard development is running into the usual roadblocks and smart growth is getting easier. This should continue as more smart growth developments are built and new partnerships are formed among environmentalists, developers, and others in the development industry.

Excerpted and reprinted with permission from “ULI on the Future: Smart Growth,” the Urban Land Institute, Washington, D.C.

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The new addition and renovations to St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Arlington embody the spirit of a congregation trying to reconcile the costs of bricks and mortar with a ministry of social responsibility. Working together, the architect, rector, and a handful of parishioners made St. Mary’s a more beautiful setting for the parish’s high-church liturgy while strengthening its ability to carry out that mission.

The design architect, Brian Frickie, a principal of Kerns Group Architects of Arlington and himself an Episcopalian, was called in after the church’s first architect, KressCox Associates of Washington, D.C., produced schematics that the parish loved but the building committee, hewing to the rector’s admonition not to overspend, determined St. Mary’s could not afford. Parting amicably with KressCox, the committee asked Kerns Group, the second choice in the original selection process, to assess the church’s budget and building program.

St. Mary’s wanted a new parish hall with a commercial kitchen, a chapel, and additional classrooms; consolidation of its office space; and a thorough renovation of the Gothic revival church, the oldest part of which is 100 years old. The committee
concluded that fundamentals in concept and design, and not in program, were preventing the church from meeting the budget, Frickie recalls. Kerns Group accepted the commission.

St. Mary’s, which occupies a triangular site at the edge of the Marymount College campus, has become a large church filling a traffic island. However, it must have started out on that site as just a small country parish church on North Glebe Road at Old Dominion Drive. A limestone-faced sanctuary built at the turn of the century was enlarged in the 1920s. In the 1950s, the congregation added a two-story brick extension to one end (origin-
ally a chapel over parish offices, now remade into the choir room over the nursery), and in the 1970s they built a smaller addition containing an elevator for wheelchair access on the other.

At some point in the church’s history, the parish locked the doors leading to the sanctuary through the bell tower, and worshipers began entering through side doors at the crossing. The arrangement ran counter to the logic of the building’s massing and generated an awkward circulation pattern. The altar originally was at the end of the sanctuary opposite the bell tower, Frickie says, “but no one can tell me with any real authority whether the sanctuary was flipped in the 1920s or 1950s.”

He proposed restoring the sanctuary’s orientation, reopening the bell tower doors, and replacing the doors at the crossing with large bay windows or lanterns, as he calls them. His design also called for chapels bathed in sunlight to occupy the arms of the crossing on either side of the altar.

Frickie presented his solutions to the building committee as they evolved, and at each stage there was resistance. “Change is a four-letter word in churches,” he says. The congregation was used to looking down a long, narrow nave with natural light coming from behind them. “They thought there would be too much light at the altar,” he remembers. But he convinced them that more light would “uplift their spirits,” and the committee then embraced with enthusiasm his concept of lanterns.

The parish moved out of the church during renovation and construction. When they returned in the spring of 1998 they had two small chapels nesting within the bays of the lanterns at either side of their altar. The larger chapel seats only about two dozen; the other, a place where a parishioner can stop to light a votive candle, is even more intimate. The baptismal font, pulpit, and Eucharist rail all fit around the central altar, appropriate for high-church ritual, and the entire ensemble pushes forward several feet into the nave. At the corners of the altar’s platform, freestanding candlesticks symbolize the four corners of the earth to which Christ sent his followers.

Frickie’s most subtle accomplishment at St. Mary’s was at the altar, where he carefully fit the parish’s demanding needs of ritual into a space for which it apparently was not intended. But he also enhanced the whole sanctuary’s beauty without significantly changing its character. The subdued palette remains. The ceiling is still dark, but brighter lighting compensates. The pews are the same, although refinished to a lighter hue. The carpet is lighter, too – a soft blue shade traditionally identified with the Virgin Mary.

The choir, which previously occupied a loft behind the current altar, is today accommodated at the opposite end of the sanctuary. Once one gets over the notion that the choir and organ console should be elevated above the level of the congregation, as they were before the renovation, they seem at home. The organ is new, its pipes and tracker-action console encased in plain, German-made cabinetwork occupying much of the south wall.

Just beyond that wall was the only apparent place on the constricted site to build the new addition, a logic reinforced by the decision to reorient the sanctuary and return its main entrance into the bell
tower. Now, entering through the vestibule in the tower, worshipers can proceed straight ahead into the back of the sanctuary or turn right, toward the new parish hall and St. Mary’s third chapel, which seats 50 people.

Both the parish hall and the new chapel feature exposed timber scissor-trusses that echo, but don’t mimic, the sanctuary’s Gothic-inspired ceiling. (The sanctuary's gracefully bent trusses were at first thought to be made of wood, but the architects discovered them to be steel, the lowest chord of which are covered in wood.) An interior wall of the chapel is a columbarium, its keyed compartments lined up like post office boxes.

The addition’s lower level, whose floor is about three feet below grade, is given over to parish offices, a vestry room, and support space. An entrance to this service level faces Glebe Road, its doors recessed and de-emphasized under a broad brick arch. But on this side of the church, the addition draws closer to the road than does the sanctuary, crowding against the bell tower and upstaging the main entrance.

True, the growing needs of the parish precluded any addition that could completely defer in presence to the old church on its little triangle. As built, the main axis of the new construction angles obliquely from the sanctuary’s longer axis, the addition extending south to the site’s minimum setback line along 26th Street. By segmenting the exterior massing to express interior volumes and emphasizing the segments by cladding the parts in contrasting brick, Frickie mitigated the addition’s apparent volume. But one wonders if the new wing would not recede more if the brick masses contrasted less.

This parish reminds us that houses of worship take many forms. St. Mary’s opted not to make a pristine architectural statement. Instead, it met its self-defined goal of service to the community, brought order to its house, and enhanced its sanctuary. Those were the first priorities.

*Allen Freeman is a senior editor of Preservation magazine.*
“We understood from the beginning that this process was not about building ourselves a more beautiful house but rather about supporting and furthering our mission,” says Diane Hellens. She is a business school graduate, commercial building developer, and St. Mary’s parishioner who wanted something to do part-time while she took care of her second newborn. The Rev. Mr. Andrew Marrow, rector of St. Mary’s, asked her to get involved on the building committee and she accepted.

Kress Cox Associates had already been selected and provided a scheme for St. Mary’s. “They are wonderful people who do beautiful work,” Hellens says, “but we came along when they had just finished a church building that had no top-end budget – a gorgeous piece of work, but it didn’t set them up mentally for a struggling Arlington church. They wanted to produce a perfect little church addition, and all else being equal, we would have liked to have had something like that.”

Of Brian Frickie, the principal with Kerns Group Architects who designed the addition that was built, Hellens says, “Brian absolutely shared Andrew’s commitment that this is about mission, not about building a beautiful house. Once we had pricing come in, we had a couple of meetings where we had to cut the job. Usually at that point – no disrespect intended – architects get insulted and snippy. But Brian was the first to jump in and say. ‘Okay, let’s see where we can go. We don’t really need this, and we can downgrade that finish.’

“We were determined not to mortgage the mission of the church. Parishes around us were trying to pay for overbuilding with dollars they’d rather spend on ministries,” Hellens says. “We’d have put a tent out there before we’d have gone that way.”

— Allen Freeman
Congregation Beth Israel in Charlottesville added new educational and worship facilities to its existing 19th century facility, the tenth oldest synagogue in the country. But architect Bruce R. Wardell, AIA, of Charlottesville was quick to acknowledge that any addition to the venerable building needed to respect the integrity of the original historic structure while tripling the square footage of the existing facility.

In order to create a massing that was sympathetic to the existing scale and detail of the street, Wardell adopted a design strategy that creates a "village" of structures smaller in scale than the original temple. He began by locating a small chapel to the southeast of the old temple – a new sanctuary which reflects the Gothic precedent of the original structure and obscures the mass of the new construction. It is also oriented so that, on the interior, the ark can be placed properly at the east end of the space, a condition that had not been satisfied for more than a hundred years.

Connecting the two worship spaces is a structure whose metal-and-glass curtain wall is rendered in a decidedly Modern idiom. Embellishing the glass wall is a wire "trellis" upon which trumpet hon-
Eysuckle vines are planted. This contemporary element creates an intentional relationship between the historic and the new. From inside the new social hall, the expansive glass wall also frames a dramatic view of the surrounding urban landscape.

Wardell studied many options for the interior of the chapel, starting with a scheme based on the strong Gothic/Victorian precedent of the old temple. He was told by the rabbi and building committee that the chapel would serve a wide array of people – some liberal, others quite conservative – so his first sketches were considered to be too sacred, or vertical, in nature. "They wanted, rather, to emphasize the horizontal nature of the space for the sake of a secular, community feeling," says Wardell.

That led to the final design with a truncated pyramidal roof and a strong horizontal band at the head of the windows. "Everything below that line was made of natural material – white oak paneling," Wardell notes. "Above that line, on the metaphorical sky, the surfaces are all painted. That ended up being the right balance, the right complement to that space."
A spirit of collaboration prevailed throughout the course of restoring St. James’s Episcopal Church in Richmond, whose sanctuary was gutted by a 1994 fire caused by lightning. Including the congregation in each step of the design process was Frederic H. Cox, FAIA, of Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith Architects in Richmond. Cox and colleague Sarah Grier-Barber pooled their expertise with that of experts in classical architecture, acoustics, and other specialties to return the church to its former grandeur.

Design solutions were based on the material history of St. James’s 1912 sanctuary, vestry records, comparable structures, and the needs of the congregation. Although the church’s elaborate brass pulpit and lectern survived the fire, most furnishings did not. Only four original pews remained, but reproductions were crafted in Pennsylvania. Richmond furniture maker Harrison Higgins created the new mahogany altar and four bishop’s chairs based on sketches by consulting architect Christopher Cotton. Higgins also made the pedestal altar found in the new chapel.

Working from copies of original shop drawings, Gianetti Studios, Inc. of Brentwood, Maryland, recreated the neoclassical plaster wall and ceiling details. After consulting with Cotton, an authority on the architecture of James Gibbs (whose St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London served as a prototype for St. James’s), Cox raised the center section of the nave ceiling and embellished it with a slight arc, which improved the space’s acoustics.

Through the efforts of Richmond’s firefighters, ten stained glass windows – four of which originated with the Louis Tiffany studios – were saved. These were cleaned and restored. In addition, three sets of 19th century stained glass panels, recently removed from Monumental Church in downtown Richmond, were incorporated into St. James’s. A gift of the Historic Richmond Foundation, these windows became available when Monumental Church was refitted with clear glass.

Along with many challenges, the fire also brought opportunities to create new spaces in the church. Among them are an enclosed chapel for small ceremonies and a 2,500-square-foot undercroft providing new meeting space beneath the sanctuary.
Father Mike Hannah of St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Yorktown performed the role of good client; he prodded the architects of the church’s new sanctuary to see beyond obvious solutions and reach for architectural expressions that would illuminate the liturgy. In describing his hopes for the character of the church and its component parts, Hannah often invoked expressions such as “mystery,” “imagination,” and “transformation.” As project architect David Stemann, AIA, remembers it, Hannah believed the building forms and materials could provoke the imagination in a way that would deepen the worship experience.

Because the addition rests behind a rather bleak masonry structure that housed the parish for 45 years, architects Carlton Abbott and Partners of Williamsburg created a tower to mark the addition and give the church a greater presence. Inside, they sculpted a transcendent space balanced by a choral floor plan that nods to the church’s desire for a place that is both hospitable and intimate. Concrete, steel, and wood are choreographed in a graceful skeleton informed by Gothic memory. Articulated connections in the roof structure are animated by natural light that pours through a 64-foot skylight, balanced by clerestories at the rafter bearing and an apse window where light filters through a wood-and-fabric grille. Visible ductwork is screened by a suspended wood grille that also accommodates lighting.

The furnishings have perhaps the most direct relevance to the liturgy, as they are integral to the sacrament of the eucharist. Each individual piece – altar, ambo, tabernacle, candles, and baptismal pool – was conceived as belonging to a family of objects related in form, material, and manner of construction. Their use requires them to be human-scaled, yet their place within the sanctuary demands a significant presence. Each piece was customized to convey its liturgical role.
Circle of Faith
St. Anne’s Episcopal Church • James William Ritter Architect

Founded in 1972 as a “church without walls,” St. Anne’s Episcopal in Reston was intended by its founders never to have a building of its own. The congregation continued on that course until 1986, when it became apparent that its mission could not be met without a proper home. In 1989, a first phase with a 125-seat meeting room was completed. Within two years, the church decided to move forward with the next phase of the building program.

They elected to build a sanctuary that would hold more people while maintaining a sense of community during worship services. That goal was accomplished by architect James Ritter, FAIA, of James William Ritter Architect in Alexandria, who designed a “circular” building of masonry that blends with the rectangular wooden form and language of the original church. The combination of these two distinct geometries became the central architectural theme.

At the center of the plan, Ritter placed the altar – not only for symbolic reasons, but also because the gesture allowed the altar to become a focal point for the church. Windows were incorporated into the nave in sufficient numbers to allow reflected light to fill the space with daylight, heightening its sense of openness. Cross-shaped windows in the gables of the original building are repeated at each new gable and multiplied in the gable and rood screen behind the altar.

As the church grounds are developed, the masonry circle which begins inside will be completed by the addition of a columbarium wall to enclose an outdoor prayer garden.

The sanctuary’s circular form emerges from the church’s east façade (top and drawing, right). Generous glazing in the gable above the altar (left) fills the space with daylight.
After more than three decades in existence, Galilee United Methodist Church in Sterling was still operating with an undersized sanctuary. A new master plan by LeMay Erickson Architects of Reston called for the construction of new worship, fellowship, religious education, and administrative spaces as well as future demolition of the existing 35-year-old buildings. But the first order of business was to build the new sanctuary and expand the church parking lot to accommodate a larger congregation.

The church sits on a five-acre site that is partially wooded and partially developed. It is also beside a pond and the junction of two major highways. LeMay Erickson located the building to be open to the wooded areas and pond while acknowledging its high visibility in the community both day and night.

A transparent glass entrance allows unobstructed views through the church to the large cross above the altar. A careful balance of form focuses the chancel, allows for a flexible choir area, and fosters the gathering around of the congregation. The circular geometry of the sanctuary continues beyond the exterior wall to give shape and identity to the south terrace, which provides a gathering space.

Natural light is controlled to enhance the various liturgical elements and functions of the church. Direct light and views from the sanctuary take advantage of the attractive natural site and dramatize an openness of the congregation. Indirect natural light shields potential glare, bathes banners, and backlight the choir and musicians.

Light of the Lord
Galilee United Methodist • LeMay Erickson Architects
Rebuilding Traditions
Church of the Redeemer • Lawrence Cook Associates

Leaders of the Church of the Redeemer, a Roman Catholic parish in the growing Richmond suburb of Mechanicsville, approached architect Lawrence Cook in need of a large addition on a not-so-large budget. Included on their wish list: a 600-seat worship space, a commons or gathering space, and new administrative offices.

Cook, principal of Lawrence Cook Associates in Falls Church, factored a number of liturgical considerations into his design. Entry to the building occurs along a sequence of spaces: beneath a gateway of two large oak trees to arrive at the plaza; into the high-ceilinged commons sized for social interaction; through the intimately-scaled, dimly-lit foyer; and finally into the bright worship space, with its soaring pyramidal roof.

The focus of the space is the gathering circle, where at Sunday Mass the altar table is located. The traditional relationship between celebrant and community is creatively altered here in a unique arrangement. The celebrant performs on the nave floor, where some of the community is seated in chairs. The larger portion of the congregation is seated in pews on elevated oak platforms, a move that encourages and enhances participation of the laity. To accommodate this unconventional arrangement and provide flexibility, the circle is furnished only with movable objects custom-designed by the architect and a liturgical consultant.

In the worship space, laminated arches and beams are oversized to convey a sense of strength. Natural light penetrates from the 16-by-16-foot skylight, as well as from triangular skylights in the corners. On the floor, brick pavers are inscribed with memorials to parishioners' loved ones.
Design Considerations for Sound Systems in Houses of Worship

The use of high-quality sound reinforcement systems in Houses of Worship is on the rise. Where once basic systems were adequate, today’s Houses of Worship often require more advanced systems to meet the needs of their congregation and worship styles. By working with your clients, you can avoid problems integrating the sound reinforcement system into their facility.

In most cases, the worship style will help dictate the requirements of the sound reinforcement system. Conservative traditional worship styles generally indicate a requirement for a basic speech-oriented sound system. More contemporary worship styles and services using live music (aside from traditional organ or piano) require a more advanced system, perhaps incorporating separate speech and music playback loudspeakers. It is common today to see Left/Center/Right systems being used in contemporary facilities. This design uses a single point (center) loudspeaker system for superior speech intelligibility, while using a Left/Right stereo configuration to allow for proper music reproduction.

Another point to consider is the location of the system control equipment. In the past, the main system electronics were “buried” in a closet somewhere - only to be turned on and off before and after the worship services. The majority of the sound systems being installed today are designed to be manually operated during the service. For sound system operators to properly run the system, they must be situated in a location where they can see and hear what is actually happening in the worship space. This cannot be done if the system control equipment is located in a room separate from the actual worship space. Ideally, the sound system operator should be located in the main congregation seating area. From that point, the operator can hear exactly what the congregation hears and adjust the system accordingly.

This should be considered even for facilities whose initial sound system requirements are very basic. Requirements will change over time, leading to the need for a more advanced system and a place to put the operator of that system.

There is still some resistance to giving up “prime seating” space for the sound system operator and the equipment. With proper education of your clients, this objection can be overcome, as has the old objection to a “central cluster” loudspeaker assembly. Most facilities now recognize the benefits of the center located loudspeaker, and with today’s compact high performance loudspeakers, aesthetic concerns can be addressed successfully.

Several methods can be used to address the problem of locating the control equipment in the worship space. One of the most common is to locate only the minimal equipment in the worship space (mixing console, tape decks, CD player). The remaining equipment (amplifiers, and signal processors) can be located in an adjacent room or storage space. The mixing console and program sources can be housed in specially designed furniture designed to blend in with the trim or décor of the worship space.

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Dick Roberts has a dual passion for the traditions of architecture and the artistry of handcrafted things. Over the years, he and his wife Shirley have amassed a museum-caliber collection of 18th century antiques that curators of early American decorative arts would swoon over. So when he learned of the possible availability of a refined Colonial Revival house that would complement his collection perfectly, Roberts wasted no time in arranging to take a closer look.

“I called the woman who owned the house and said, ‘I think you have the most beautiful home in Virginia and someday I would hope to visit it,’” Roberts recalls. “She invited us right then.” The setting for the house, which commands a spit of land that juts into Linkhorn Bay in Virginia Beach, was breathtaking in itself. But Roberts remembers that as he entered the residence for the first time, even though it wasn’t decorated in quite the fine fashion it is now, he could see the essence of a masterpiece.

Completed in 1940 as a residence for Mr. and Mrs. James H. Devereaux, Jr., the house was made all the more desirable by the pedigree of its architect, William Graves Perry, who came to Virginia from Boston in the 1930s to oversee reconstruction of the colonial capital at Williamsburg. It was Perry’s firm – Perry, Shaw & Hepburn – which was responsible for researching the details of early Virginia architecture and rebuilding much of the core of Colonial Williamsburg that visitors see today. The Devereauxes, frequent visitors to Williamsburg, were impressed with Perry’s work.

“Outside of Williamsburg, this house is the only building in the entire South that Perry designed,” Roberts points out. “That period between 1920 and 1945 was the rediscovery of American Colonial design. And the way one of the folks at Williamsburg characterized it, Perry’s design is not a copy of any particular historic home, but a plan for the times conceived in the language of 18th century Georgian architecture.”

Several months after Roberts visited the house, the owner decided to sell. And in time, Roberts managed to purchase it from her. Having acquired the house, however,
Roberts—who named the residence for his wife—was only just beginning. For although the basic framework was in place, he felt the house needed a few adjustments to make it really shine.

To oversee the renovation, the couple commissioned John Paul Hanbury, FAIA, of the Norfolk firm Hanbury Evans Newill Vlattas & Co. “John Paul’s expertise in historical restoration and preservation is unmatched,” says Roberts. “We knew there was no one in whom we would have the same confidence and trust.”

Hanbury’s first task was to take stock of the house’s unique characteristics. Among them: a staircase in the center hall that was recovered from the Hunter House, an 1826 dwelling in old Princess Anne County that was demolished in the early 1900s. The cypress flooring was noteworthy too, originating with a Louisiana plantation house built about 1840 and torn down in the late 1930s. Perry’s knack for incorporating architectural fragments extended even to the antique brass box locks on the main front and rear doors—locks which Perry is believed to have donated to the house from his personal collection of period hardware.

“Philosophically, I wanted to make sure all the building systems were preserved,” Hanbury says of his approach to the project. “I also wanted to reverse some unfortunate changes that had been made by the interim owners.”

Brickwork and ironwork had deteriorated over the decades, for example. Exterior millwork on the rooftop balustrade was seriously showing its age, as well. And somewhere along the line, a service stair had been removed from the back of the house with no attempt to heal the unsightly scar.

Although the house still exists in a parklike four-and-a-half-acre setting among mature hardwood trees and American hollies, Hanbury proposed the addition of a stately brick wall near the street to set off the house. Any concerns about the wall not matching the house were dashed by representatives of New London Brick Co., a North Carolina manufacturer which was able to produce bricks that matched perfectly. Repairs on the outer shell of the house, which is brick laid primarily in a Flemish bond pattern, included tuck pointing the masonry joints and rebuilding the rooftop balustrade.

From the broad limestone stoop, visitors enter through a massive front door into the house’s central hall. It’s hard to miss the copper lantern which Perry placed in the center of the glazed transom. “We think it’s a delightful feature to the house,” Roberts says with a touch of pride.

Inside the house, the cypress floors were carefully stripped and refinshed. To give a proper finish, Hanbury removed metal heating/cooling registers in the floor and designed new ones of cypress that fit flush. In addition, raised panels in the wainscoting had cracked in the joints where a previous owner had put caulk. So Hanbury called for the obvious offenders to be removed, stripped, and refinished so they would float properly with changes in heat and humidi-
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ty. Once Roberts moved into the house, he had the remaining panels—some 250 in all—removed, cleaned, and replaced.

To the right of the hall, the drawing room features a bow window opposite the fireplace. Hanbury restored the original hearth and modified the paneled wall flanking it by removing bookcases and introducing new display cabinets with semicircular backs. “The cabinets allow the Robertses to display handsomely a very fine collection of imported Chinese porcelain,” says Hanbury.

Across the hall in the library, Hanbury increased the wall space for paintings by removing bookcases and inserting new raised panels. Neatly tucked behind a wall are a new bar and entertainment center, with woodwork so closely matched to the original house that the new amenities seem as if they have always been there.

Bright color dominates in the dining room, which features a deep cornice and another bow window opening to views of the bay. The visitor’s eye is quickly drawn to the wallpaper, which features Chinese garden scenes on a rich yellow background. “It was hand-painted on silk in London—twenty-four panels, no repeats,” Roberts explains.

The Robertses received assistance from Colonial Williamsburg’s design studio in ordering the paper, as well as in selecting fabrics and window treatments in the dining and drawing rooms. “They were a continuing help with suggestions on paint colors. We repainted the entire interior—we had to. Every surface and every bit of woodwork was off-white.”

Silver Chippendale wall sconces are original to the home. But the absence of the original chandelier sent Roberts on a search for a proper replacement. He found an old one in Atlanta that was tarnished but already fitted for electricity—and scaled perfectly to the room.

The most prominent change to the house occurred in the kitchen, where Hanbury removed what he calls “an unfortunate change of French doors with thick muntins” that seemed better suited to a prison than to a domestic space. Sensitive scaled double-hung windows were reinstalled beside a new set of doors that lead out onto a screened porch built on top of a massive brick pad constructed by the interim owners.

Minor repairs also were required on the loggia behind the main block of the house. The bottoms of the original ornamental ironwork had rusted away, so Hanbury sliced the columns off at the base and put a stone plinth beneath each one. “They are in much better proportion with the plinths,” Roberts says. “And if I won’t get struck by lightning for saying so, I think John Paul
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improved on William Perry’s original design.”

On the second floor, much attention was paid to the master bedroom, which had been altered with a new tray ceiling by previous owners. “I suggested we capture some of that volume and rework it in a way that it might look original to the house,” says Hanbury. To do that, he replaced a missing cornice and introduced molding at the top of the ceiling to highlight the rectangular tray.

That Roberts’ modernization of the house was handled with kid gloves is testified to by the fact that, late in 1998, Shirley Hall was recognized as a Virginia Historic Landmark by the state Department of Historic Resources. Its nomination for listing on the National Register of Historic Places is now under consideration.

Hanbury says the building warrants landmark status because it represents one of William Perry’s highest accomplishments. “The craftsmanship is unparalleled. And the way Perry used idioms from Colonial Williamsburg and employed them playfully – it’s just very well done.”

Perry – who was educated at Harvard and MIT and was trained in architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris – was the senior principal at Perry Shaw & Hepburn when the firm won the commission for Colonial Williamsburg. As the landmark nomination form notes, the firm’s architects traversed Virginia’s byways “recording styles and details heretofore unknown and unnoticed by the general public. The body of their work at Colonial Williamsburg served as a reservoir of accumulated data from which they and others could drink.”

That was no less true for William Perry, who seldom had a free hand to express himself outside of the rigid limitations of the restoration at Williamsburg. The opportunity to design Shirley Hall liberated him, and the result was an unfettered eclecticism not to be found in the vicinity of Duke of Gloucester Street.

He employed a balustrade at the Governor’s Palace and he used one in this house too, notes Hanbury. Likewise, Perry didn’t hesitate to use a simple, almost provincial, stairway from a house in rural Princess Anne County and then surround it with elegant millwork in a much more formal style.

“He could take those elements that he thought were best representative of the Colonial period and integrate them here,” says Roberts. “As others have observed, Perry must have really had fun doing this house, because he did not attempt to just copy.”
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804-644-3041
Architect: Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith Architects, Richmond
Project: Massanetta Springs Conference Center

This 10,100 s.f. lodge, part of a master plan for Massanetta Springs Conference Center in Harrisonburg, features 16 guest suites, a conference room for 75 people, and meeting space for 20. The design includes wood siding, a stone foundation and chimney, large overhangs, and a wraparound porch. Tel: 804-780-9067

Architect: The Chenault • Harvey Group, P.L.C., Richmond
Project: St. Paul's Baptist Church

Architectural design for a new 88,000 s.f. worship facility has been completed by The Chenault • Harvey Group. The new complex will provide for a 3,000-seat worship space, 600-seat fellowship hall, 350-seat chapel, and administrative wing with upscaled educational and preschool facilities. Tel: 804-747-6900

Architect: MTFA Architecture, Inc., Arlington
Project: Tibetan Refugee Resettlement Community

Located in Dehradun, India, this development of housing and educational facilities is for nearly 1,000 Tibetan refugees now living in impoverished exile in India. The plan was generated with sensitivity to the mandala of life in Tibetan culture and will help preserve a culture on the brink of extinction. Tel: 703-524-6616

Architect: Bond Comet Westmoreland + Hiner Architects, Richmond
Project: Fluvanna Central Elementary School addition

This K-2 addition includes expansion of core facilities and provides additional capacity for 500 students. By providing this additional space, the county is able to close antiquated facilities and accommodate the majority of elementary students in one facility. Tel: 804-788-4774
A 7,600 s.f. wood structure will serve as the initial facility for this Calvert County, Md., church. It will accommodate 210 persons for worship and social functions, religious education, and parish offices. The landscaped plaza will provide an outdoor gathering space and buffer. Tel: 703-931-6716

HSMM has created a new outer space-themed rehabilitation unit for this Virginia Beach hospital, which will provide long-term “live-in” rehabilitation for children. HSMM prepared 3-D animation to allow the facility’s users and benefactors to experience the new unit prior to construction. Tel: 540-857-3100

Boulders IX, a speculative office building for EDC and The Principal Financial Group, is the third building in a series of recent projects. This project responds to difficult site constraints such as steeply sloping topography and a small lakefront. Tel: 704-561-7431

The fellowship/nursery building is the third phase for the Hunton Baptist Church master plan. The fellowship hall seats 250 and divides into four large adult classrooms. The building connects two existing buildings. Tel: 804-343-1505.
On the Boards

Project: The Brandermill Church

The Brandermill Church in Chesterfield County has unveiled plans for a spacious new 600-seat sanctuary, replacing an existing sanctuary which will become a commons. The exterior design of the new facility will match the transitional style of the existing church to provide a unified appearance. Tel: 804-780-0070

Architect: Kerns Group Architects, P.C., Arlington
Project: Ingleside at Rock Creek

Sited on 12 acres of natural woodland in Washington, D.C., this $22 million independent living community is being constructed along a ridge overlooking a stream. Kerns Group designed the 250,000 s.f. facility to fit the neighborhood scale and restore damage to the environment. Tel: 703-528-1150

Architect: Mitchell/Matthews Architects, Charlottesville and
Duany Plater-Zyberk, Gaithersburg, Md.
Project: Town Center, University of Virginia Research Park at North Fork

Eighteen months after winning a highly contested design competition, Mitchell/Matthews and DPZ have completed design for a new town center and master plan for U.Va.’s 532-acre, 3 million s.f. research park at North Fork. Tel: 804-979-5220

Architect: The DePasquale Gentilhomme Group, Richmond
Project: Christ Church Episcopal

The DG Group created a “village green” that cohesively unites the community in the large central outdoor space, in courtyards and gardens between buildings, in gazebos, and on front “porches.” Surrounding the green are structures for worship, education, fellowship, and administration. Tel: 804-649-2192

On the Boards listings are placed by the firms. For rate information, call Inform at 804-644-3041.
This 10,000 s.f. nature center will create a home for the Foundation, which exists to encourage the conservation of the natural resources of central Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. The project will be an example of green design and construction that can serve as a model for the community. Tel: 757-220-1095
When an artist/architect couple in Arlington sought extra studio space in their home, their first inclination was to renovate the basement. But their architect, Charles Matta, AIA, took stock of the physical and psychological limitations of the existing basement and proposed a simple alternative offering more natural light, better access, and the possibility of multiple uses unavailable in the basement renovation.

The owners were thrilled. Now their new studio and display area occupies a square pavilion on top of a new garage, which holds the couple’s antique Packard.

Whether flooded by sunlight or warmly lit by cove lighting at night, the studio is a focal point for work or entertaining. It connects directly to the main house through an anteroom and across an intimately scaled deck. In addition, a pergola filters the western sun and softens the connection between studio and house.

The addition’s detailing is austere, but well conceived and fully documented. “I had 12 sheets of drawings,” Matta says. The idea is one thing, he adds, “but if you don’t show exactly how it works together, [the idea] will fall apart.”

The pavilion’s geometry carries through in the windows, floor tile, and cabinetry. Open shelving slips between the window molding much like a mortise-and-tenon joint, forming a deep frame for both windows and art – examples of a traditional Norwegian art form known as Rosemaling.

Matta’s crisp detailing continues on the exterior. False fascia and water table boards ease the transition between different materials. The fascia conceals a gutter; the water table board conceals the joint between masonry and siding and the connections for the deck railing.

Although the house’s basement was renovated too, it is used primarily for storage and large art classes. The primary work space is upstairs in what Matta calls the more architecturally rewarding, more fulfilling room.

— T. Duncan Abernathy, AIA