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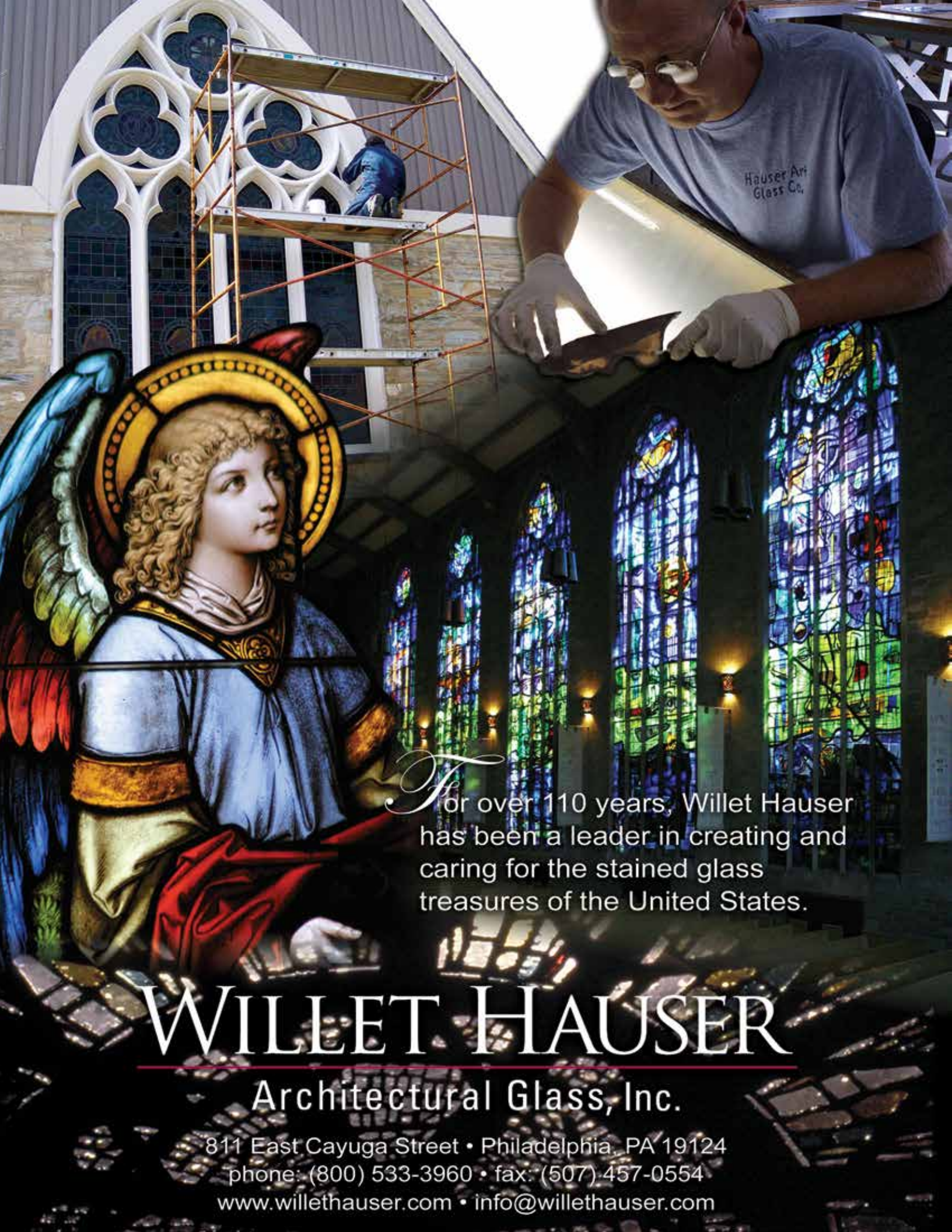
Theme Issue:

Inclusivity, Accessibility, Hospitality



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Detail of New Horizon Sanctuary of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, designed by Stanley, Love-Stanley, PC *(article begins on page 6).* *Photo courtesy of Stanley, Love-Stanley, PC.*

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Come Right In

Perhaps the antenna was just more in-tune with the topic of accessibility, hospitality, and inclusivity, but while this issue was being produced it seemed that there was a buzz in the religious architecture world about this subject. We were careful in planning this issue that it not be just about accessibility for the disabled, but consider access to sacred space being granted or denied based on a variety of circumstances, such as gender, sharing of faith, or comprehension of sacred space. Who is welcome and who is not, and why? And who decides?

First there was the news report about the new pastor of a San Francisco Roman Catholic church who had banned altar service in the future by young women, who have served this church since 1994. The reason, according to Fr. Joseph Illo of Star of the Sea Church, was that in an inclusive altar server program the young men usually end up losing interest because, in the Father's words, "girls generally do a better job." No good deed goes unpunished.

Banning young women from altar service would allow the boys, according to Fr. Illo, to "develop their own leadership potential," although one wonders what kind of a leader is being cultivated at Star of the Sea. Maybe it's the kind that excels when people who can "do a better job" are excluded from being leaders. Another reason Fr. Illo gave for the new policy was that altar service is a pathway to the priesthood, so why bother with the ladies if they haven't got a prayer to enter the priesthood? There's always the altar guild, right? (Fr. Illo's boss in Rome might have a different take on this.) Finally, Fr. Illo cited the 1,900-year tradition of female exclusion in the Church as precedent for banning female altar servers. There was no word as to whether Star of the Sea is planning to bring back slavery.

About 400 miles south of where female servers were being escorted off the altar by Fr. Illo, women opened an all-female mosque in Los Angeles—the first ever in the U.S., according to press reports. The mosque is the creation of a comedy writer and a lawyer (Hasna Maznavi and Sana Muttalib, respectively), who said that their motivation was to redress the inhospitability that women often encounter in mosques, from back-door entrances to a lack of leadership roles (there's that L-word again). They saw this new mosque as a space where women could have not only a place to pray in peace, but also a voice.

The topic of access and hospitability in the mosque is addressed in this issue in Tammy Gaber's excellent article (page 10) about the space allotted to women in mosques and how it needs to change. Gaber notes that there is nothing inherent in the teachings of Islam that relegates women to second-class status in terms of space, just as there is nothing intrinsic to the Christian faith that necessitates banning women from the altar, or as priests. These barriers are man-made and they have nothing to do with a particular belief system. They are just more evidence of how we fail to live up to our faith if we continue to perpetuate a "tradition" of exclusion, inaccessibility, and unwelcome--no matter what reason we give. And the problem isn't religion, either. The problem is with the people at the front door with the keys.

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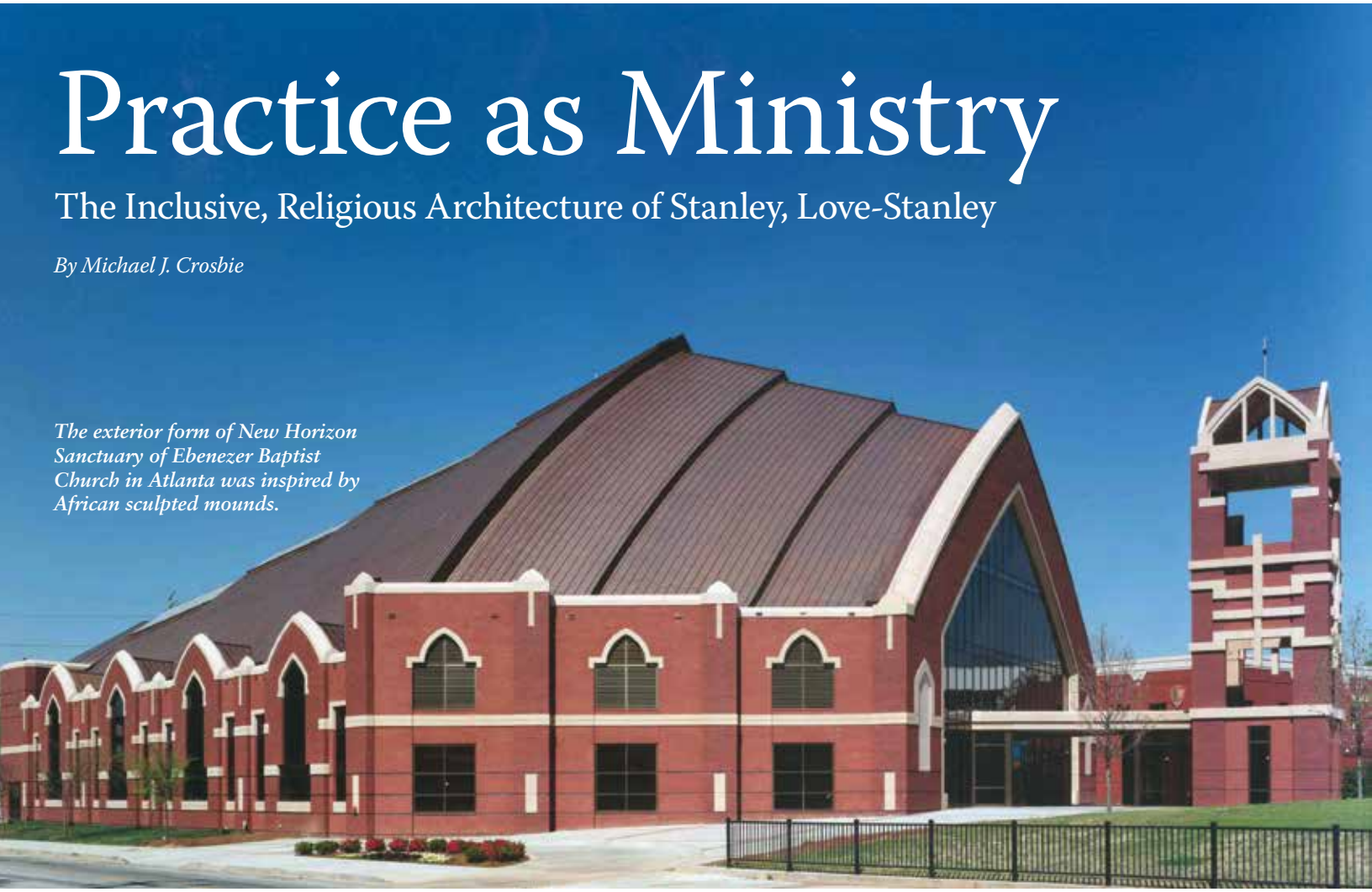
Practice as Ministry

The Inclusive, Religious Architecture of Stanley, Love-Stanley

By Michael J. Crosbie



The exterior form of New Horizon Sanctuary of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta was inspired by African sculpted mounds.

The practice of William J. Stanley, FAIA, and Ivenue Love-Stanley, FAIA, has been one of inclusiveness, hospitality, and connection to the community. This is especially true of their work with faith communities, which is how their practice started more than 35 years ago in Atlanta. Both have been recognized for their leadership in the profession; among their many honors they are both winners of the Whitney M. Young Jr. Award from the American Institute of Architects for the social import of their work. This April, they will receive the Distinguished Leadership Award from the Connecticut Architecture Foundation, and deliver a lecture at the University of Hartford. In this interview, they talk about their architectural practice as a form of ministry.

Michael J. Crosbie: To start off, how do you collaborate as a practicing couple?

Ivenue Love-Stanley: Bill is the designer, and I am the nuts-and-bolts person. I do the research, the code review, community meetings. I can smooth feathers that he might ruffle. When the office comes up with schemes, we vet them—what is good, what works and what doesn't. We do pin-ups in the office for reviews.

MJC: How did you gravitate in your practice toward the design of religious architecture?

William J. Stanley: A little bit on our background: Ivenue's family were committed members of the church, very highly regarded at church. They spent a lot of time at church (they lived right around the corner). Ivenue's two older sisters married pastors. My family is fifth generation African Methodist Episcopal. My aunt was president of the Women's Auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention.. Ivenue and I had the same backgrounds: church, Sunday school, mandatory choir memberships. As I got older I drifted away for a while, studied Islam as part of my exploration as a young man. I came back to my church after meeting Ivenue. My cousin, Nelson Harris, was a church architect and one of the founders of the National Organization of Minority of Architects, so he was influential and a role model for me. His daughter Gail Harris was the second female to become a bishop in the Episcopal Church.

IL-S: A lot of what we do today has to do with our backgrounds and the influence of the church. One of the first projects that Bill and I worked on together was St. Michael's Catholic Church in Gainesville, Georgia, by Welton Becket. I was still in architecture school and

Ivenue Love-Stanley and William J. Stanley outside their Atlanta office.

Bill was an intern architect. One of the principals at Becket gave us the schematics and asked us to finish it.

MJC: How is the background/history of the congregation expressed in your designs?

WJS: Some churches have a real sense of history, a sense of purpose, and they want to expand where they are, and that flows and drives the conversation. Others are aspirational churches. They have moved from somewhere else, and they need to respond to the new opportunities that they have. They may not have anchor churches around them. We really try to dig down and listen, sketching as we work with them. Once we understand their history and background, it helps form the design. For example, we were called upon to create the Lyke House Catholic Student Center on the Atlanta University Center campus; and the priest and committee we worked with incorporated a lot of Coptic art and images as part of their tradition. So we looked to the monolithic rock-carved churches at Lalibela in Ethiopia for inspiration. That connection resulted in a poured-concrete building, rusticated with bush hammering, with the windows formed like those on the Church of Saint George. We designed all the furniture as well, coordinated with the architecture. Nearby we designed the Absalom Jones Canterbury Center, where they do jazz vespers, but the space was also used for Islamic services. So it's flexible enough to be inclusive.

IL-S: What has been successful for us is to go in and try to understand the particular culture of every church we work with. We worship with them, we do the background research, understand their history, how they came about, and what is important to them. And for every house of worship we have done, we could go back to that congregation and join as full members, feel at home, and be welcome.

WJS: We also talk to the man on the street—not just the building committee members, but the people in the background: the ladies working in the kitchen, the guy parking the cars. We try to understand the congregation in its entirety.

IL-S: We really live with them. I think we come across as being not just an architectural firm, but part of their inner circle. I don't think we would have been as successful with this approach if we had not been active in church ourselves.

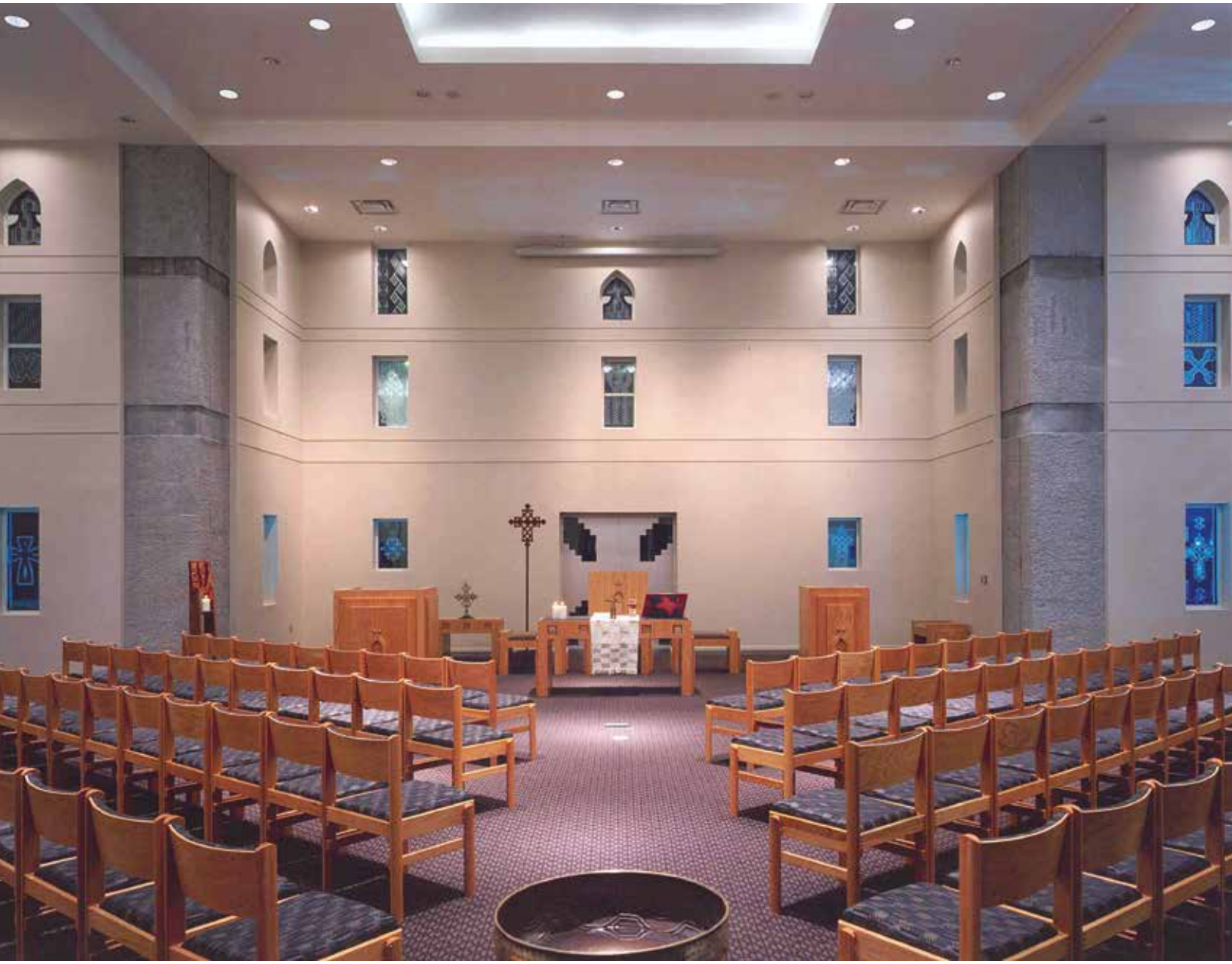
WJS: It helps that we know the hymns, the liturgy. We have done independent bible study and have taught Sunday school. We don't approach this as an academic exercise. You need to look at how they use their space, the importance of meeting and fellowship before and after the service, what they do outside of worship. They might have day-long events, like my aunt's church, where the night communion services are important because many people worked as domestics attended only after dinner had been prepared and served. We realize that things like incantation dance, education, foodservice, and childcare are bedrock to the success of the church. The places where you have a lot of activities, such as a gym or where the elderly hang out, is part of that success. Churches can really be enclaves that have linkages to other resources in the community—the library, or senior housing, or a school. That's a key part of their success. Through those, welcome is communicated in many different ways.

Interior motifs of New Horizon Sanctuary recall African cross motifs.

The Lyke House Catholic Student Center at Atlanta University Center recalls the iconic shape of the Church of St. George in Ethiopia.

IL-S: How you define a house of worship is not just coming in on a Sunday for communion and prayer and hearing the word, and then you're gone. It has to do with inclusiveness. There is something for everyone.

MJC: What is it about working on church projects that is most fulfilling, and frustrating, for you?



The interior of Lyke House Catholic Student Center at Atlanta University Center.

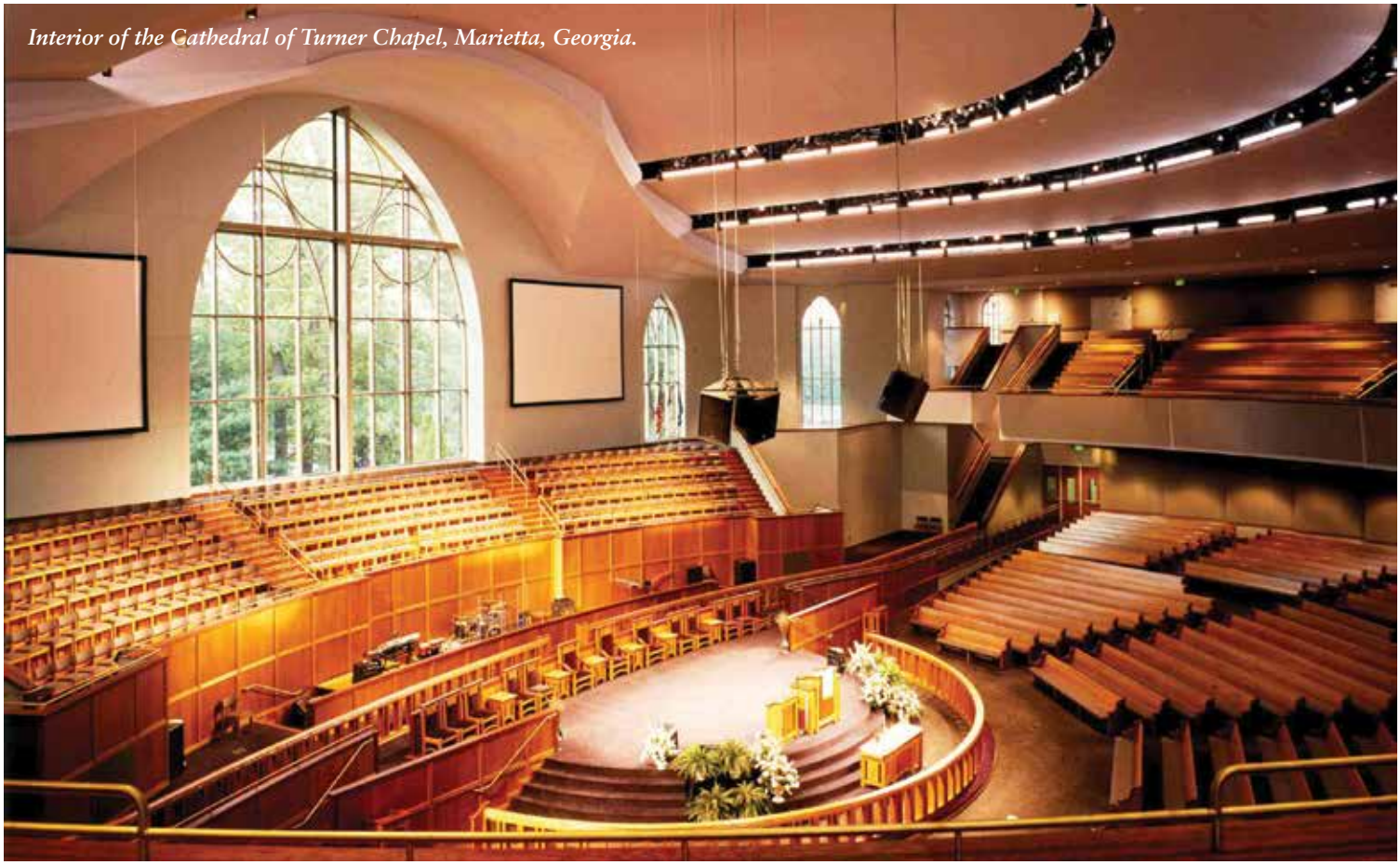
WJS: The pastors we have worked for who have needed to move their churches from one place to another, to be transformative (the Nehemiahs of the world), that has been key. You have to gain their trust and assure them you have the best interests of the church at heart.

IL-S: The clergy and lay leadership have been the link. They have the vision. But it's not about them but what they are going to leave behind; it's about the future of the church and the congregation and the community. The frustration is when a church comes to you wanting everything. There is the point where they find that they can't have it all. Then you have to go back and do a reality check and boil it down to needs versus wants. You need to revisit the choices and see how the project can perhaps be phased so that the core requirements are completed first.

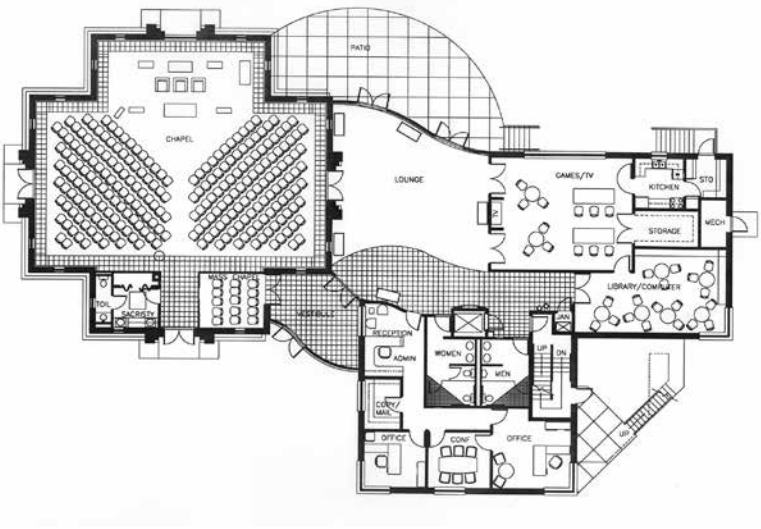
WJS: It's important to connect the church back with the community. We have never done a "black box" church, where there are screens and no connection to the outside. We design with nature, preferring to see the trees' seasonal changes, the occasional flash of lightning. The New Horizon Sanctuary at Ebenezer Baptist Church is a very Afrocentric building. They wanted stained glass windows, which would tell the history of the diaspora from Africa, the slave trade, through to the civil rights movement; they even conducted a competition for the designs. We designed the window openings to receive those stained glass windows. In the end, they just couldn't afford them for the first phase. But what the congregation sees now is the city, the skyline, the community beyond the church. And people can see in. The church is connected to the community, and the community is connected back. They are inclusive in every way.

MJC: What is it about designing religious buildings that has been most rewarding for you?

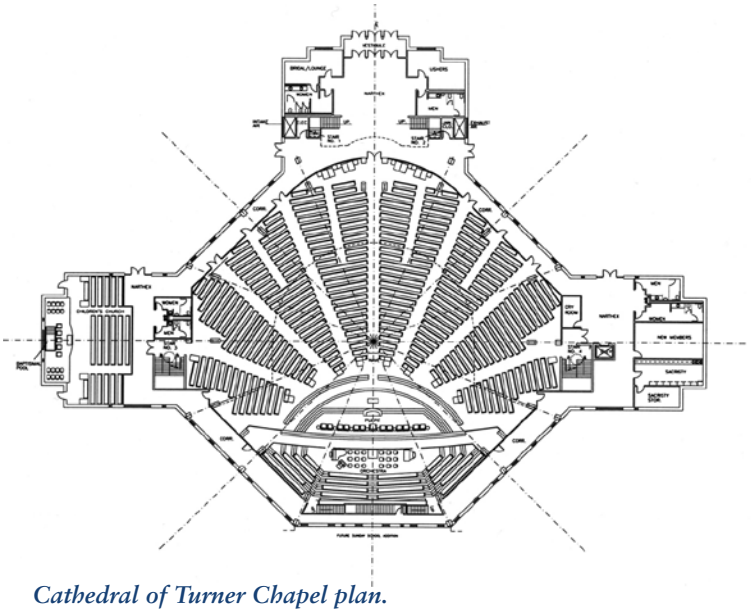
WJS: For just about any project an architect designs and builds, two things will very likely happen: the building will be transformed (find a second or third use) and eventually it will be torn down. With religious buildings, this is rarely the case. Most of our religious work has been done with African-American communities. They will build a school and a church, which they will always point to as symbols of their community. That is a huge joy for us as architects. It is such a great feeling— to design places that have been successful, where the church



Interior of the Cathedral of Turner Chapel, Marietta, Georgia.



Lyke House first floor plan.



Cathedral of Turner Chapel plan.

buildings are working well, all while they are aging gracefully. That's why for most of our churches we choose materials—stone, brick—that have a great sense of permanence.

IL-S: In terms of masonry or concrete construction, from a perception standpoint it's important for a congregation to feel that this is a one-time investment. It has to do with what will be lasting and work best for the church.

MJC: I don't think many architects think about their practice in this way, but your work with churches sounds very much like a ministry for you both.

WJS: It is. Do I pray about projects? Yes. Do I pray especially hard about our church projects? Absolutely. You pray that you don't miss your calling with them. You can become so involved with your ego, and be so stiff and ornery about driving home a point, that you miss the blessing and meaning of approaching the problem another way. You can miss what God might be trying to tell you. Sometimes you have to wait for an answer to come, in its appointed time.

IL-S: Our religious architecture is very much about who we are and what we do. I think we were meant to do it, in terms of the ways we work with the congregations. It boils down to the trust level. Ministries happen in different ways. For us, it has a lot to do with the faith that we have. Maybe this work is ordained. We may have been predestined to bring life to the community of faith.

GENDERED MOSQUE SPACES
Cultural, Religious, or Accessibility Issue?

By Tammy Gaber

Photo: Giuseppe Milo/flickr

With renewed and continual efforts to ensure, regulate, and legislate accessibility in all architectural spaces there remains the curious matter of gendered spaces in contemporary mosques.

A gendered space is the clear demarcation and limitation of each gender who are prescribed allocated spaces through the use of architectural devices such as walls, balconies, separate rooms, separate doors, etc. and often accompanied with explicit signage directing where each gender is allowed access.

In Islam, the Qur'an clearly states that forbidding anyone from entering the mosque is contemptible. All believers have the right to go to the mosque for prayer[1] and there is great punishment for those who forbid believers to worship in the mosque.[2]

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Historically in Islam women and men participated fully in mosque spaces, without explicitly gendered spaces as demarcated by architectural elements. Documentation in several ahadith (authentic sayings and actions of the Prophet) support this, indicating clearly that no one could forbid women from going to the mosque[3] and outlining accommodations made for women to participate.[4] As well in the earliest ahadith collections (8th-9th centuries, CE) are anecdotal examples of the arrangement of men in women in performing ablutions (wudu)[5] and prayer together –which noted expected behavior, not spatial demarcations. In subsequent ahadith collections, interpretations were added, some of which encouraged women to pray at home instead of the mosque, such as the 13th-century collection of Ibn Jawzi.[6] Popularizations of these interpretations were paralleled in regional developments of mosque spaces.

Architecturally, in the earliest of mosques including Medina, Fustat, Basra, and Kufa singular spaces were designed without physical elements to divide the genders. The house of the Prophet's mosque in Medina was built without any type of architectural division of space as noted in several ahadith[7] and in architectural reconstructions by scholars.[8] At the Meccan Sanctuary there existed and still exist spaces for both men and women to worship and perform Hajj without spatial differentiation based on gender.

'Tradition' of Exclusivity

However, in certain regions there emerged architectural designated areas for women in the mosque. Possibly the most influential on this development was the Ottoman proliferation of a new mosque typology heavily related to the Byzantine Hagia Sophia. Elements such as the composition of plan, arrangement of domes and the gynaeceum were absorbed and modified in subsequent Ottoman design of mosques in Istanbul and throughout the Ottoman empire. The Byzantine gynaeceum, a place designated for use by women, quickly became the norm for designating gendered usage of mosque spaces and was an element that architects, such as the famed Mimar Sinan, freely modified to suit compositional purposes regardless of the impact that reduced areas, visibility, and access would have on the act of prayer.[9]

As the norm of gendered mosque spaces spread throughout the Islamic world, other methods for segregating women were developed. In the past century mosques that originally did not have separate spaces for men and women have had additions such as walls or screens made by contemporary local users and by governing bodies who have installed changes to these spaces.[10]

There are varying contemporary institutional recommendations such as official fatwa from Egypt and Turkey suggesting separation but from behind a latticed screen[11] to required audial and visual inclusion (noting that separation was "Bid'ah" [invention] that has no evidence in the Qur'an or authentic Sunnah) in fatwa from Saudi Arabia and the Fiqh Council of North America.[12]

The multitude of architectural approaches to clearly demarcate spaces for women and men in the past century has not only increased in numbers, but in variety as well.

A mosque in Kingston, Ontario, designed in 1996 as a single worship space for men and women, has since been crudely divided with a makeshift barrier of bookcases obstructing views.

Photo: Samantha Wilman

Not only are various types and proportions of balconies used to allocate specific spaces for women to pray in the mosque, but also separate rooms to the side, behind, or below the main space (often with little or no visual connection) as well as various opacities, materials, and heights of screens to divide a main space. Few mosques choose to exclude women entirely, but very few allow for all members to enter the same space and divide themselves without any type of architectural element.

In North America, and specifically Canada, the history of mosque construction goes back nearly a century, with the first mosque, Al Rashid, built in 1938 in Edmonton, Alberta.[13] In the century since, over a hundred purpose-built and repurposed mosque spaces have been created across the country. Al Rashid remains a singular space used by all members of the community. However, in the majority of mosques in Canada there exists the alarming trend to either add architectural elements to clearly divide the genders or to design distinctly separate stages.

Architectural Dilemma of Exclusivity

There are a number of problematic issues regarding this situation, most notably the creation of barriers in spaces – an instituted lack of accessibility. The veil of perceived sensitivity (and political correctness) for presumably quasi-religious edicts that require segregated spaces has somehow superseded fundamental human rights to have full un-barred access to spaces. It has also superseded fundamental Islamic rights of equality and accountability – creating an architectural dilemma. This clearly architectural issue has been repeatedly critiqued by a number of activists including Zarqa Nawaz, Asra Nomani, Shahina Siddiqui, Amina Wadud, and others.

Nawaz's documentary film "The Mosque and Me"[14] unraveled the frustrations of women in Canada and the United States with separated prayer areas – and how the prayer areas designated to women was so disconnected from the main space (and service) that women were frustrated and made to feel subordinate in these places of worship.

Nomani, who was also in Nawaz's film, has used various media to highlight her struggle and quest to have equal access to her hometown mosque in Morgantown. In Nomani's book, *Standing Alone in Mecca*, she outlines "An Islamic Bill of Rights for Women in Mosques," which includes 10 concise points – the first four of which are clearly architectural, including the right to enter the mosque, to enter through the main door, to "visual and auditory access to the musalla [main prayer space]," and to pray "without being separated by a barrier."[15]

Siddiqui created a booklet with the support of several prominent Islamic councils and societies in North America[16] entitled "Women Friendly Mosques and Community

Photo: Tammy Gaber

View of women's area with glass railing above men's area, in the Masjid al Salaam in Burnaby, British Columbia, designed by architect Sharif Senbel in 2008.

Centers Working Together to Reclaim our Heritage,"[17] which is freely accessible in digital form online. The booklet was intended as a guideline and a clear call to mosque leaders to address this issue of women's accessibility to the mosque. Siddiqui outlines several points in regard to "Access to Masjid Facilities" including the need for "dignified accommodations for women," designated spaces for women in the main prayer hall, and access to all functional spaces of the mosque. Siddiqui follows this with requirements for complete access to program planning and to mosque governance and management.

Wadud is an Islamic Studies scholar and professor who has published *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*[18] and in 2005 led a congregation in Friday prayer in New York. In her proactive scholasticism and desire to address to community she has also highlighted a critique of mosque spaces. In her book *Inside the Gender Jihad Women's Reform in Islam,* Wadud notes that:

> *The mosque reflects aspects of gender relations and conflict…. It is not uncommon for stricter gender separation to exist within the mosque, especially here in the USA and other minority Muslim communities, than is ever sustained at any other place outside the mosque. Within the sacred space of the mosque, gender disparity is almost always reflected, and sometimes a mosque seems to prove itself genuine by increasing these rituals of separation.*

Wadud goes on to note that flexibility in mosque design and usages allows for "longevity and advancement of Islam" and "makes the mosque an important site to initiate change and mark transitions in the context of the Muslim community."[19]

Many other activists have voiced these same criticisms and more. None of these women are architects, yet the critique is architectural. However, the principles of contemporary mosque design are rarely discussed in architectural circles or forums and if they are the realities of full accessibility are often ignored. The disjunction between user dialogue and designer is clear.

Mosques of Inclusivity

The landscape is not entirely bleak, however. There are moments of proactive change made by both patrons/community members and by architects. Of note are four mosques in Canada representing not only a span of region and building typology but also of demonstrating the impact of proactive roles played by architects and patrons/community members.

The community at Kingston, Ontario and the mosque board insisted on maintaining full accessibility for women during the design phase of the mosque in 1996. The architect, Gulzar Haider, who had designed a number of other mosques on the continent[20] designed a singular space where women were expected to pray at the back, without any kind of dividing wall – their space was highlighted by placing the vertical element of the minaret above their space. In Haider's subsequent mosque designs he pursued various methods of integrating women in the main space without the use of physical dividers.[21] Surprisingly, a change in mosque board membership in recent years prompted the addition of a small, completely separate space for women with no visual connection to the main space. Thus, proactivity is needed not only in the design and construction phase on the part of patrons and the architect, but to be continually considered.

The community in Sudbury, Ontario and the prominent voice of long-time Imam Abul Haq Dabliz and his wife guided the local architect to the design and construction in 1994 of a singular space for men and women – without physical divisions.[22] Here,

women are expected to pray behind the men in the open singular space; however, during non-worship activities such as learning sessions, weddings, and dinners there is respectful mixing of genders in the spaces.

The patron, Hassanali Lakhani, purchased the previously used Japanese cultural center in North York, Ontario and requested the original architect, Raymond Moriyama, who designed it in 1963 to repurpose it as a mosque and community center in 2003. Lakhani insisted on a singular space for men and women to pray in[23] and the result is an open room where women are to pray on the right side and men on the left, separate by only a space between their carpets.

Architect Sharif Senbel has designed and constructed a number of mosques in British Columbia (one of which won a Faith & Form/ IFRAA Design Award). His frustrations with the board of one his earlier mosque projects who insisted on clear separation of men and women resulted in his proactive approach of teaching the community and boards of subsequent projects the history of mosque design and inherent freedoms and possibilities in design beyond cultural preconceptions.[24] He continuously sought design solutions that would allow women to have full visual and aural access to the main space. The 2008 Masjid al Salaam in Burnaby is an example where Senbel designed a mosque space with a women's level above – nearly equal in size to the men's, separated by a completely clear glass railing. Although the spaces are still separated by level, the architect made all efforts to allow for inclusion.

The voices of users and architects need to be parallel to ensure that the rights of full accessibility and inclusivity in mosque spaces are designed, maintained, and become the norm. How the community organizes itself internally during prayer or other activities should be a social construct, not an architecturally limiting one. Mosques with architecturally segregated and often subordinate gendered spaces do not reflect religious edicts or inherent human rights of equality and accessibility outlined in Islamic religious texts. Instead, they demonstrate in architectural form the prejudices of human beings, and should be removed.

NOTES

1. The Qur'an. Intrepretation of the Meanings in the English Language. Trans. Muhamed Mushin Khan and Muhamed Al-Hilali. (Riyadh: Durussalam Publishers and Distributors, 1999). Chapter 7: Verse 29, Chapter 7: Verse 31.
2. The Qur'an. Interpretation of the Meanings in the English Language. Trans. Muhamed Mushin Khan and Muhamed Al-Hilali. (Riyadh: Durussalam Publishers and Distributors, 1999). Chapter 2: Verse 114, Chapter 8: Verse 34, Chapter 22: Verse 25, Chapter 48: Verse 25.
3. 'That the wife of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, used to ask him for permission to go to the mosque. He would keep silent, so she would say, 'By Allah, I will go out, unless you forbid me,' and he would not forbid her'. Ibn Anas, Malik. 'Book of Qibla,' Al-Muwatta.Translated by Aisha Abdel Rahman and Yacub Johnson. (London: Diwan Press, 1982).
4. 'The Prophet (PBUH) said, "When I stand for As-Salat (the prayer), I intend to prolong it but on hearing the cries of a child, I cut it short, as I dislike to trouble the child's mother.' Imam Bukhari. Summarized Sahih al-Bukhari. (Arabic- English) . Trans. Muhamed Muhsin Khan. (Riyadh: Maktaba Darussalam Publishers, 1996). The Book of Adhan (10:420).
5. 'During the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) men and women used to perform ablution together.' Imam Bukhari. Summarized Sahih al-Bukhari. (Arabic- English) . Trans. Muhamed Muhsin Khan. (Riyadh: Maktaba Darussalam Publishers, 1996). Book of Wudu (4:146).
6. 'Women are allowed to go to the mosque, if she fears disturbing the minds of men, it is better for her to pray at home' Ibn Jawzi. Ahkam al Nisa [Arabic: 'Rules Governing Women'], (Cairo: Al Maktaba al Tawfiqqiyah, 2002) Chapter 24, section 1. pp 46-49.
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Accessibility as Empowerment

"For my house shall be a house of prayer for all people."
Isaiah 56:7

By Mark I. Pinsky and Ginny Thornburgh

Sanctuary of Bet Shalom synagogue, designed by Bentz/Thompson/Rietow with a building committee that included those with disabilities.

In 2000, when the Reform Jewish synagogue Bet Shalom in Minnetonka, Minnesota, began considering plans for a new building, they made a far-sighted decision. Jackie Hirsh – a longtime congregation member with multiple sclerosis who used a wheelchair – was appointed to serve on the congregation's architectural advisory committee. "Jackie was invited to be on the committee because our community did not want to do something for her," recalled Rabbi Norman Cohen. "We wanted to do something with her, and get the inside view from her experience, expertise, and sensitivity to the need to be inclusive." This decision was a success, and a model for inclusion, with "a series of congregational meetings inviting everyone to participate and give input, based on what they would like to see in our new space."

The new building, designed by Bentz/Thompson/Rietow in Minneapolis, included a gently rising floor to the pulpit so that everyone in the congregation – regardless of their physical ability – would approach that holy place the same way. And although Hirsh died about a year after the new sanctuary opened, she enjoyed worshipping there, and is remembered by the congregation with affection and gratitude (her memorial service took place in the space that she helped to make possible).

Articulating the need for accessibility and inclusion is one thing. Implementing it is quite another, and anticipating it yet another order of magnitude. Relationship experts – in the home and in the workplace – like to point to the critical benefits of an early buy-in. "Aboard for the takeoff, aboard for the landing," they say. That is, projects achieve the best results by involving, in a meaningful way, all affected parties at the outset of the process. That's especially true when faith communities build, renovate or retrofit their sanctuaries, social halls and rest rooms to make them fully accessible, as is recommended by the book *Accessible Faith: A Technical Guide for Accessibility in Houses of Worship*, published by The Retirement Research Foundation. By including people with disabilities on building, grounds, and facilities committees, congregations are more likely to prepare their faith communities for future members who might come, as well as retaining those who are already members.

Admittedly, including someone with a disability in meetings of the building committee may not be as easy as it first sounds. If done thoughtfully and effectively, however, this inclusion can be an educational benefit to the entire committee. Once the decision has been made, some additional thought must be given to the very functioning of that committee: If the person added uses a wheelchair, scooter, walker, or cane, the meetings will need to take place in an accessible location. This may eliminate the religious leader's study. If the person added is hard-of-hearing, the committee may need to budget funds for hearing enhancement during its meetings. Or if one of the added members of the building committee has chronic pain, meetings may need to be held during the day and never in the evening when the pain is most severe.

Notwithstanding, more and more congregations are making concerted efforts to make their facilities accessible to all, although in most cases this is not required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. In the past few decades the need for physical accommodations in houses of worship has been raised by people with disabilities, together with their families, friends, and caregivers. In some cases, the latter group has also provided some or all of the financial support for these modifications. However, until recently, people with disabilities have not been widely included in the design process as members who work directly with architects and builders. The critical issue

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here is meaningful inclusion - and empowerment. Who knows better what it takes to make houses of worship accessible and welcoming?

Architects will also benefit from working directly with people with disabilities. "In serving the client, it's important for the architect to work alongside people with different abilities in order to directly accommodate their needs," says Hiba Bhatty, a third-year graduate student in the Yale School of Architecture. "Had I not grown up having a brother who uses a wheel chair, I wouldn't have noticed how inaccessible public buildings can be.... Our mosque in Chicago has recently been renovated, and is now more accessible," in part because her family and others with disabilities advocated for access. "The field of architecture isn't usually associated with civil rights or empowerment. Architects need to be aware of the diversity of users and always design with accessibility in mind."

Encouraging people with disabilities to participate in facilities planning at the beginning, and in a formal way, is evolving. However, some tentative steps have been taken by some extraordinary people. In the rural community of Borculo, Michigan, not far from Grand Rapids, the Christian Reformed Church occupies a 125-year-old building built in a style familiar to the area. The sanctuary is a few steps above ground level, accessible by a concrete ramp and a motorized lift. But until a few years ago, the basement – where the bathrooms, social hall, library and classrooms are – could only be reached by steps and an awkward chair lift. So, with numerous seniors in the 300-member congregation, the church began to study how to best make the basement accessible.

One of the key members of the committee was Pat Huisingh, who had grown up in the church. Huisingh, who has Muscular Dystrophy, began using a manual wheel chair in college and, as her condition has changed, has moved to a power chair. Until a few years ago, Huisingh was an insurance agent and active in her church, singing in the choir, teaching Sunday school, and working with young people. Now she serves as a regional representative on disability issues for her denomination. She made the case to the building committee, and then to the congregation, that they needed a full-sized elevator, no small expense for a church of that size. In part, Huisingh believes, "because I've grown up in the church, and they've seen the extent of my disability," they voted to approve the elevator which also accommodates other power chair users including a college student and an elementary school

Photos: Philip Prouse Photography

Generous hallways outside the synagogue's sanctuary not only ensure easy passage for those using wheelchairs, but also convey a sense of welcome.

girl. All of this, Huisingh believes, sends an important message to people from the areas who visit Borculo Christian Reformed Church for weddings, funerals, and vacation Bible school: "We don't exclude." As a result, such visitors may consider becoming members.

Sometimes it takes repeated efforts – and perseverance – to succeed. Mary Lou Luvisa grew up hard of hearing in Phoenix, Arizona. She attended her Episcopal church from childhood, and it is where she found a source of particular support. She attended regularly. With hymns posted by number near the front of the sanctuary, Luvisa knew what page to turn to to sing, and she memorized the liturgy. But, following the sermons in the cavernous parish was an acoustical nightmare. In her adult years she attended Saint Barnabas in Scottsdale, where she then lived. Again hearing the sermons was difficult even with the two hearing aids she now wore. So she went to the rector of Saint Barnabas and raised the issue. She got a respectful hearing, but she was unable to mobilize other people or convince the clergy of the problems in the sanctuary and in the parish hall. Later a change in rectors brought forth one that was vitally interested in the problems as others in the congregation also began to voice the same complaints.

In 2008, when the congregation made plans to renovate the parish social hall, she was appointed to the building and grounds committee. This time Luvisa, who had been frustrated by her inability to hold a conversation in the room, made certain that included in the improvements were special, sound-absorbing ceiling and wall panels, which made an enormous difference. There remained the problem of worship in the sanctuary. So she researched various sound enhancement systems, and got a member of the congregation who was an engineer to prepare a report on what it would take to address the problem. Luvisa approached the new rector with her research. In 2010, when the congregation was planning to refurbish the sanctuary, she was called on to address the committee. Thus, in addition to redoing the altar area and buying new carpet, pews, and cushions, the building committee agreed to install a hearing loop--an unobtrusive sound system that Luvisa recommended and she and others use to this day.

The architectural design of a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque needs to reflect the heart, mind, and soul of all people who gather in worship, prayer, and study. The best way to ensure that people with physical, sensory, and cognitive disability feel welcomed and valued once the project is complete is to include their voices at the start of the design process. As is often said by disability advocates: "Nothing about us without us."

Bringing East & West Together

By Been Z. Wang, AIA
Photographs by John Horner

Multiple gable forms (common in Thai temples) and a 185-foot steeple blend Eastern and Western design themes.

Throughout my professional career, my design perspective has been influenced by my early grounding in Eastern cultures. As such, the design for the Wat Nawamintararachutis (in short "Wat Nawamin" or "NMR Meditation Center ") - a new $60 million Thai Buddhist Temple and Meditation Center in Raynham, Massachusetts - was a wonderful opportunity to bring together Eastern and Western cultures for both design influences as well as the project team, which spanned from Massachusetts to Thailand.

The idea from the start was to design and build a welcoming place for those from all cultures seeking education, celebration, and spiritual growth. Visitors to the 55-acre campus, which opened last June, can tour the facility, take a meditation class, enjoy festive Thai holiday celebrations, walk through tranquil gardens, or attend a weekend retreat. For both children and adults, the NMR Meditation Center offers traditional Thai dancing lessons, Thai language lessons, and classical Thai music classes.

This welcoming spirit is represented in the architecture of the building, a conscious blending of influences from both the Thai Buddhist traditions found in the East and the New England architecture traditions found in the region's gabled-roof residential and institutional buildings.

The author is a Principal of ARC/ Architectural Resources Cambridge, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Vision and Collaboration

The NMR Meditation Center was built to honor King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, who was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1927 while his father was studying medicine at Harvard. The first tangible inspiration for a design direction came when Abbot Phra Promwachirayan, (Board of the Council of Thai Bhikkhus, Abbot of the Royal Temple Wat Yannawa, President of Wat Nawamintararachutis, NMR Meditation Center) was searching for a site in the Boston area.

One afternoon, the abbot noticed a brick building along the Charles River, a biopharmaceutical manufacturing facility owned by Genzyme, about a mile up the river from where the King was born. He asked his driver to stop in order to get a closer look at the contextual design of the four-story industrial structure. Phra Promwachirayan's inquiries about the architect for this project led him to our firm, ARC/Architectural Resources Cambridge, and to a fascinating conversation with us about his vision for what would ultimately become the largest Thai Buddhist temple outside of Thailand.

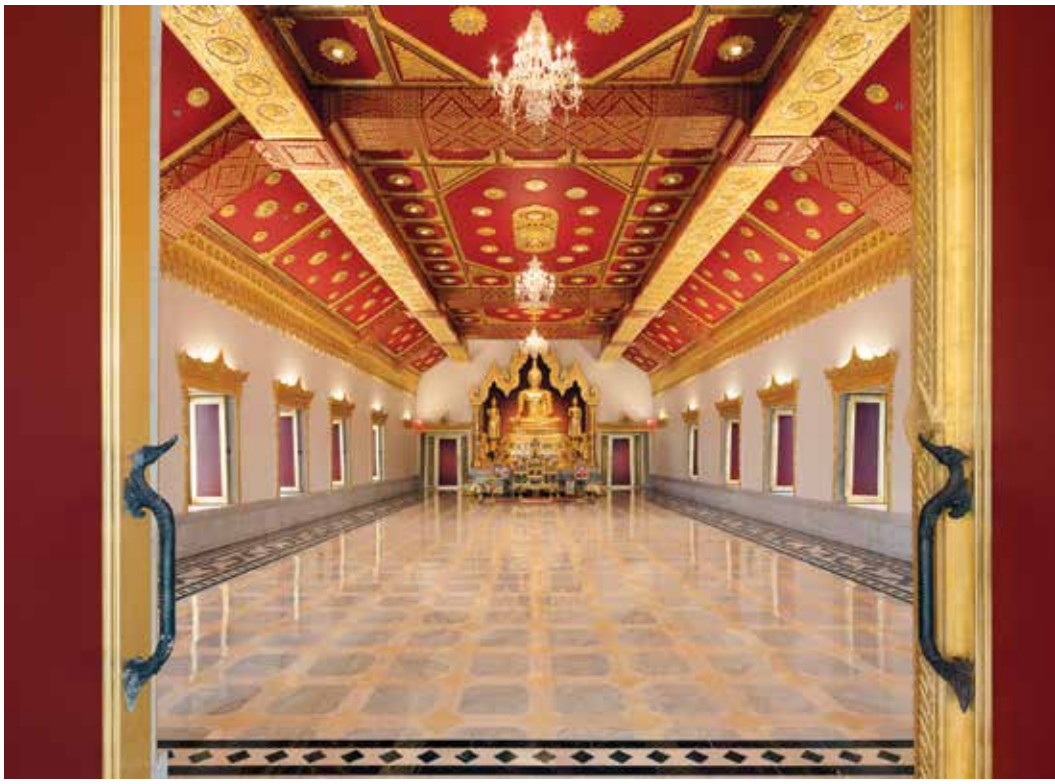
The design process following this conversation was a most complex and collaborative journey. Beginning in 2006, our Cambridge-based team worked with Thai-based architects handpicked by the abbot to design a building that incorporates interior ornamental finishes, staircases, Buddha statues, ornate gold leaf ceilings, and royal artifacts envisioned for the Center. Although team members were 8,500 miles

apart, we made multiple trips to Thailand and hosted our Thai colleagues in Cambridge to collaborate side-by-side in design workshops.

Communication obstacles went far beyond language. The entire design and construction process, including building codes, zoning laws, materials standards, and even the basic methods for producing plans and drawings, is dramatically different in each culture. For example, traditional Thai religious craftsman and designers create construction plans on a full-size, 1:1 scale. This is how they have practiced for thousands of years, and it is an essential part of their ancient craft.

The collaborative, team-based approach was inspired by Buddhist traditions, which teach us that every interaction is an opportunity to appreciate and cultivate our relationships, and to carry these strong relationships forward into the next life. Our team included Project Manager Matthew Lewis along with a unique blend of Western architects, designers, engineers, and builders with Eastern artists, craftsmen, and contractors led by Wiwatchai Prangpituk, Designer. All set aside individual self-interests and preconceptions in order to achieve a shared objective based on group needs.

The design of the NMR Meditation Center brings together Eastern and Western design influences in a New England setting.



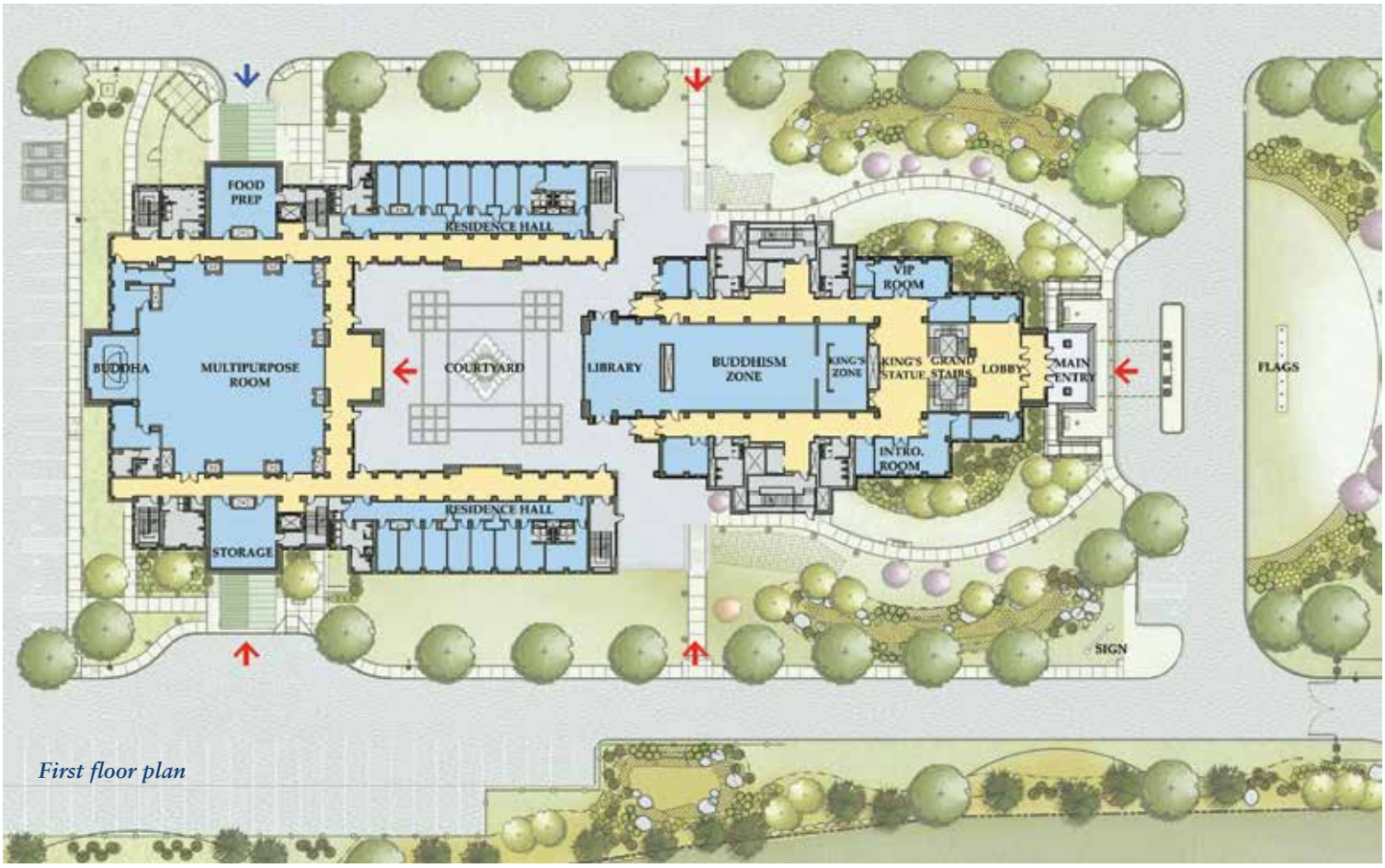
Ubosot Hall on the third floor of the temple is the apex of the Center's worship spaces.

Form Follows Faith

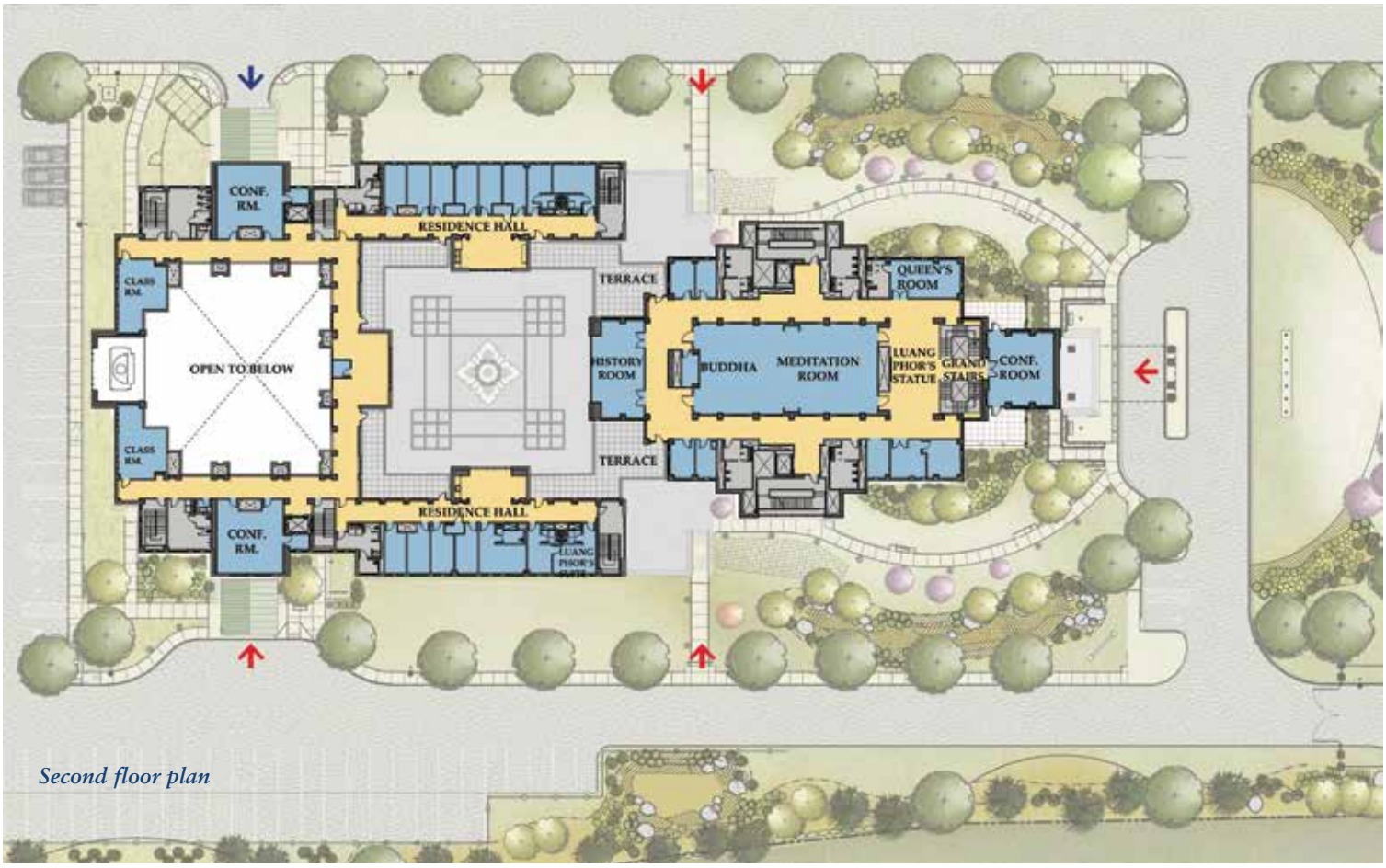
The NMR Meditation Center includes facilities for monks, a meditation center, and a cultural center for Thai arts and learning. The NMR Meditation Center also serves as a place for people of all races, nationalities, and backgrounds to benefit from Buddhist meditation and practice according to the doctrines of the Lord Buddha. We visited other Temples, in Thailand and the US, to gain a deeper understanding of function and daily routines. We asked a lot of questions about how and where the monks worshipped, meditated, dined, and socialized. One of the outcomes of this investigation was to design a multi-purpose room with the flexibility to adapt to changing needs and the space to welcome large gatherings for holiday celebrations and special events. A commercial kitchen was designed to fulfill the hospitality vision: sharing meals while hosting special events and celebrations. Lodging for monks and visitors was designed as a separate wing of the campus, and connects with landscaped flower and vegetable gardens.

Another design driver was providing the appropriate setting for the priceless artifacts and Buddha statues that are central to the visitor experience. A three-and-a-half-ton, gold-clad bronze Buddha statue was installed in the main temple, one of seven Buddha statues in this space. With its base structure, it reaches a height of 20 feet.

The building envelope design integrates design elements familiar in Thailand and New England. The original discussion was to use a brick exterior, based on the Genzyme structure and traditional buildings found in the Boston and Cambridge area. Over time, the design evolved to a four-story steel-frame building with a precast and limestone exterior.



First floor plan



Second floor plan

A library on the ground floor faces a central courtyard.

It features five gables descending in elevation on an east-west axis. In keeping with Thai Buddhist tradition, only a royal temple can use five gables.

The rooflines and exterior patterns are less ornamental than seen in Thai Buddhist temples. The building elevations were simplified to blend into the New England setting. The decorated, small windows of traditional temples are replaced with larger windows that are a central design feature throughout.

Topping the building is a 185-foot Chedi, a striking gold-colored steeple providing a deeply symbolic connection to all other Thai Buddhist temples. In the Buddhist religion there is a fundamental belief that there is no separation between oneself and the environment, therefore, creating a welcoming and natural environment within and around the Temple was a guiding design principle. Everything from daylighting and material selection within the building to the landscape and rain gardens featured outside are a reflection of the importance sustainability played in the design. The Center is expected to earn a LEED Silver Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Celebration, Hospitality, and Spiritual Fulfillment

At its grand opening celebrations over several days last June, the Wat Nawamintararachutis NMR Meditation Center welcomed 2,500 visitors from around the world. Five-hundred monks gathered to celebrate the event and guide visitors through the building and share the new library and museum dedicated to the King and his family. The central courtyard was the scene of joyful music and dance performances. Guests dined on traditional Thai cuisine and enjoyed impromptu conversations with other visitors from near and far.

During the dedication ceremony, nine granite balls adorned with gold leaf dropped from rattan scaffolds through openings within the floor and walls of the third floor temple Ubosot Hall. More than a hundred granite balls offered by donors were also buried along the sidewalk around the temple. This is a cherished dedication ritual--the dropping of the balls into the earth symbolizes the inaugural wishes for good fortune to inhabit the new temple and is a once in a lifetime experience.

Since the June 2014 opening, the NMR Center has hosted countless other visitors, all welcomed whether they are simply interested in touring the building or come to seek spiritual fulfillment and education. Response is so strong that the Center is expanding its campus to accommodate more events, meetings, and interested outside groups.

The founding idea – designing a place not only for worship and mediation, but to also bring together Eastern and Western traditions – is creating new appreciation, understanding, and joy to people of multiple cultures and religions. As a Buddhist and an architect, to see this potential realized reaches new heights of personal and professional satisfaction.

Is Your House of Worship Welcoming?

By Mark G. Boyer

Photo: Mary Constance/flickr

How do houses of worship across all faiths create welcome and hospitality? While the following perspective comes from a Christian—Catholic and Protestant—point of view, the principles are applicable to Jewish temples and synagogues and Muslim mosques, not to mention any other places that people name sacred and gather in for worship.

The building for Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu worship can either help or hinder welcome and worship. Because worshipful actions are communal celebrations, they are enacted in the presence of and with the internal and external active participation of the people. Therefore, when people make decisions about the design of a new church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or the renovation of an old one they should consider how their choices will affect the ability of the people to be welcomed and to participate fully.

This means that the design of the building must welcome congregants and reflect the various roles and functions of all the people. While all present participate in worship, not all have the same roles. People should be welcomed and then fully involved in worship led by a clergy member, others who assist the clergy, musicians, song leaders, cantors, etc. The physical building should reflect not only the welcome and unity of the assembly and its clergy and foster its active participation, but also provide the space for each person to exercise his or her ministry.

One thing that may hinder welcoming and participatory space is the arrangement of the seating. Certainly, pews lined up in rows so that worshipers can see only the backs of the heads of other worshipers do not foster welcoming or participation. Stadium-style seating with worshipers arranged so they can see others' faces does welcome and invite participation.

Exterior Qualities

People are first welcomed by the exterior of the building. Is the grass cut, are the leaves raked, the bushes trimmed, the snow removed? Bits of paper and other things littering the outside of the building do not provide a welcome; seasonal plants near doors, awnings above doors, and inviting entryways do welcome people. Drive around a neighborhood and look at all the ways homeowners decorate their front doors with wreaths, living plants, yard decorations, etc. All those items invite others to the front door of the house. What is true of the home is also true of a house of worship.

Gathering Space

After the building's entrance, the next opportunity for welcoming is often referred to as a gathering space, narthex, or vestibule. Before any person welcomes others, the space itself welcomes them through its large doors, ample room for socializing, and well-lighted interiors. Especially welcoming is natural light streaming through glass. In some traditions, stained glass or colored glass windows provide just enough color and light to invite and foster quiet, but serious, conversations. The gathering space of a church is where social media are replaced with

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face-to-face conversations. This is a church's living room, where people enter into a space that is filled with natural light, natural plants, and plenty of room to stand around and talk, usually in a circle or semicircle.

The gathering space is not unrelated to the rest of the facility. It is a decontamination chamber. One leaves everything from the rest of the world—household chores, laundry, family feuds—in this space, which one passes through to enter the sacred worship space. Thus, there is a unity of the space which houses the assembly of worshipers when it gathers for worship. The building should be designed and constructed to express the order needed by the members of the assembly. Likewise, when leaving, the members of the congregation leave the worship area and pass through the gathering space, preparing to re-enter the world that was left behind.

This in-between space must be uncluttered. It is not a place for overburdened bulletin boards covered with layers of brochures. The chaos of the bulletin board tells everyone to stay away; no one wants to attempt to create order from the multitude of brochures and documents pinned there. Restrooms, the crying room, and the doors into the worship space should be clearly marked. Table displays should be kept to a minimum with no clutter, frequently attended in order to straighten, and removed after the first or second week they are displayed. Clutter is not welcoming.

The gathering space facilitates the formation of the entrance procession with the minister, if there is one. For example, in Roman Catholicism, the Rite of Becoming of Catechumen is celebrated in the gathering space. Parents and godparents with a baby to be baptized are welcomed, and those who have died are welcomed for the last time with funeral rites. In warmer climates, the gathering space can consist of a square or a cloister where candles, palms, and fire can be blessed, and from which processions can be formed. In other words, before people actively engage in worship, they first participate in greeting and welcoming each other and taking care of basic human needs.

Worship Space

Instead of thinking of a church as a physical structure, one might consider it the gathering of the assembly of worshipers. The building is a house for the community when it gathers for worshipful celebration. As such, the building is like a skin sheltering the worshipers. It should be an incarnation of the spirit of the people of a parish or a worship community, of the spirit of the larger community in which the building is located, of the spirit of the diocese to which the parish belongs, etc. In other words, the building makes visible the worshipers living in a particular time and place. The construction of a new sacred space or the renovation of an old one does not begin with the building and then attempt to fit the people into it; the design begins with the people and their worshipful activity and forms a structure around them.

The doors of the worship area have both physical and symbolic dimensions. First, they serve to make the building secure from the weather and other dangers. Their appearance in terms of size and weight add dignity to the building. Second, the doors are a sign of welcome to all who wish to come in and find a safe and secure place.

Floor Plans

Based on the Temple in Jerusalem, over time Jewish synagogues and temples developed a basic floor plan whose elements remain to this day. Likewise, Islam developed a design for a worship space that continues to influence the construction of mosques to this day. From the days of house churches (homes where the first followers of Jesus of Nazareth met) to our own day and time, several general floor plans have emerged as practical designs for worship. One of the earliest, adapted from the Roman courts of law, is the basilica. Usually square or slightly rectangular, the basilica provided an outer cover or skin for the assembly. Originally, basilicas provided no seating; people stood; this facilitated the welcoming. They could move closer to the areas of activity so they could hear. They could adjust their place so they could see. This fluidity enabled participation because people could see and hear each other.

Gradually, the basilica emerged into a cruciform floor plan. The top end of the cross housed the sanctuary. The arms contained shrines and altars, and the bottom or long end of the cross contained pews or chairs for the people. While there might be a door in one of the arms, the entrance was usually at the long end of the cross. Pews were arranged so that they resembled the two columns of text found on pages printed after the invention of movable type. The members of the assembly watched the action take place in the sanctuary, the top of the cross, where the minister, representing Christ the head of the Church, enacted the liturgy for the people. Members of the assembly saw only the backs of the heads of the persons sitting in the pews in front of them. Thus, both welcome and participation were at a minimum. The focus was on the altar at the front. The huge Gothic cathedrals of Europe and the U.S. are cruciform in shape and limit participation not only with pews or chairs lined up in rows, but with pillars that block the line of sight, and a long distance from the back row of pews to the sanctuary. The closest one can get to the sanctuary is the rail that separates it from the rest of the church.

In the past 60 to 80 years, the theater design has emerged. Christian worship spaces are built in squares, semicircles, hexagons, or octagons. The sanctuary is placed in a corner of the square or against the wall of a semicircle, hexagon, or octagon. Pews or chairs are arranged so people are on three sides around the sanctuary. Even though worshipers can see each other, see more around them, and find themselves closer to the action, they still face a single platform sanctuary, reminiscent of a stage, against a wall. Furthermore, a stage, like that found in movie theaters, performing arts centers, and live-performance theaters, does not foster welcome or participation; people come to watch, to be entertained, to be passive. Even when performers leave the stage and mingle with the members of the audience in order to foster welcome and participation, once the performer returns to stage and the house lights go down, people become quiet and resume their roles as observers. Churches with huge video screens reinforce the nonparticipation of members of the assembly.

A floor plan more welcoming and participatory is that of the stadium, which is circular or elliptical. People are arranged all around the center of action. No one faces a wall. All are in full view of each other and all interact. The stadium model is nothing other than the living room model on a bigger scale (house churches revisited). In most people's living rooms, furniture is arranged in a circle or an ellipse so that people can see and hear each other, enjoy mobility, and participate in whatever is taking place in the room. About the only place in sacred architecture where the stadium model has been employed is in monastery churches or chapels, where it is referred to as antiphonal seating. Monks sit together on opposite sides with usually a presider's chair at one end and an ambo or reading stand at the other. One side listens to the other recite a strophe of a psalm, then the other side listens as the next strophe is recited from the opposite choir. All are led by the presider and all focus attention on the reader's lesson. Not only can the monks hear each other, but they see each other. The space between the two choirs is usually stark or minimally decorated, because anything in between would hinder active participation.

The building or worship space should facilitate various gestures, postures, and processions because these enhance welcome. The space

should facilitate sitting for preparation, listening, and silent prayer; standing for prayer and song; and even kneeling in adoration and penitence. On some occasions, such as Palm Sunday, the congregation may gather in another space and process into the worship area. The aisles in the worship area should facilitate the movement of congregation and clergy into their spaces.

Five Basic Principles for Welcome

1. Suitable Worship Space

The building in which worship takes place should be dignified, noble, and welcoming. It should be worthy and a sign and a symbol of heavenly realities because it represents both the immanence and transcendence of God (or Allah), a God who chooses to be live with people yet who cannot be limited to any one space. This means that particular attention must be given to the congregation's area along with the musicians and the sanctuary area, whatever is needed for worship. The space must make it clear that the entire congregation worships as one.

There are three aspects to the principle of suitability: First, the space must facilitate the action—processing, standing, kneeling—of the worship, no matter what it may be. In a gathering area, the space must facilitate the action of gathering, talking, moving. Second, the space must enable the welcome and the active participation of the congregation. Active participation requires that people can both see and hear each other. Third, the general arrangement of the sacred building must be such that it conveys the image of the gathered worshipers, allows the appropriate ordering of all the participants, and facilitates each in the proper carrying out of his or her function.

2. Simplicity

Simplicity refers to the state of being free from ostentation or display. It is applied to the decor of the building. Worship invites through noble simplicity rather than ostentation; in other words, less is more. More is clutter, and clutter impedes the welcome of all. In fact, clutter does instruct the congregation; it tells people that the worship in which they are engaging is not important. If it were, there would be no clutter.

3. Genuineness

In a plastic, throw-away society, it is easy to neglect genuineness. The materials used for construction and furnishings should be genuine. Genuine means that a thing possesses the apparent qualities of appearance. Wood should look like wood. Stone should look like stone. There is an authenticity to live flowers and plants that silk and plastic cannot begin to convey. There is a genuineness to wax candles that electric candles or tube candles cannot approach. Fake appointments of any kind imply that the worship is fake, too. That which is genuine invites worshipers into sacred spaces.

Works of art must nourish faith and devotion, be authentic, and come together with elegance. While it is easy to buy silk flowers, genuine living flowers and plants foster a greater appreciation for the gift of life that God has given to the community. Like human life, real flowers wilt and die. Likewise, any type of statuary, iconography, light, shrine, symbol, or sign must be genuine. There is a lesson to be learned from what is genuine.

4. Audibility and Visibility

Two of the primary requirements that ensure participation by the total assembly are audibility and visibility. In order to foster active participation in any kind of worship, members of the assembly must be able to hear everyone. Yet, microphones needed to amplify voices should be arranged discreetly. In this modern age of technology, with wireless microphones and multiple speakers, it should not be too difficult to ensure that everyone can be heard if the acoustical design of a building is kept in mind.

Audibility entails more than simply hearing what is being said. While modern amplification devices enable one to hear at a great distance, that does not imply that one is actively participating in worshipful action. The assembly also needs to be able to hear itself, especially when it sings.

Visibility implies that the worshipers can see the clergy and that the clergy can see the members of the assembly and make eye contact with them. No seat should be so far away from the place of worship that the distance and lighting level impede participation in worshipful action. Visibility also means that members of the assembly can see each other. Worship spaces should be designed so they do not imply passivity and impede active participation for all involved. The arrangement of seating must call the congregation to active participation and provide space for those in wheelchairs or with walkers.

5. Dignity

The place of worship is distinct. It is deemed worthy, honored, or esteemed by what takes place there. Not only is the space dignified, but the furnishings within it contain an inherent dignity. Any materials used for sacred furnishings must be considered to be noble, durable, and well suited for sacred use. The principle of dignity must also be applied to anything else used in worship, such as candles, Bible, scrolls, Qur'an, books. Welcoming people to worship is one way the dignity of every person is upheld.

The principles of suitability, simplicity, genuineness, audibility and visibility, and dignity inform the ability to create welcome and inclusivity. They also guide those who are charged with maintaining places of worship to eliminate whatever impedes them. By implementing the five principles explained above, the members of a congregation will be welcomed to worship and will actively participate in it.

Another of the 'Last Supper' series depicts a shared meal by Turkish figures.

'PLAYING IN THE DIRT' The Inclusive Icons of a Self-Taught Artist

By Mary Jane Miller

For two millennia icons have encouraged vibrant soul transformation through image and prayer. The Orthodox Church used this method of image and prayer as a teaching tool for the community while illustrating their doctrine. It is said that the first icon painters, called iconographers, cultivated wisdom while experiencing mystical revelations within the practice.

Mary Jane Miller is an artist who resides in Mexico. More of her work can be seen at: modern catholiciconography.com.

Egg, Dirt, and God

The early icon painting technique is called egg tempera: egg yolk and water mixed with million-year-old stone, ground into a fine dust called "earth pigments." Egg yolk represents the raw potential for life and the earth

A portion of the Masters portion of the work 'The Dialogue,' which depicts world historical figures; from left to right: Moses; Mother Teresa; Christ; Buddha; Mohammed; Copernicus.

'Last Supper, India,' depicts the global nature of a meal shared around the table.

pigment represents eternity, mixed together to create divine image. The idea of painting with egg and pigment is one thing, but using it to portray divine sacred images is quite another. The process itself begs the question: Where is the divine experienced, through the mind, through the hand, or through the image? In my case, it is through all three and in the divine dirt of the earth itself.

Painting icons can be a refuge, a place to retreat and maybe touch the mysterious force within humanity and the divine. Ancient images from around the globe provoke us to wonder what the artist is trying to say, and what kind of vision do they have. The earth pigments spoke to me about humanity's desire to document the divine. For me, pushing around small particles of earth to create sacred images continues to be an extraordinary experience. Every brush stroke, every color choice, and every swirl of paint in the dish is mystery.

Painting icons has prompted me to broaden the tradition. I want to explore the edge of traditional iconography in the hope of bringing a few new images to a wider audience. My goal as an artist has been to paint ideas and images for the contemporary Christian in an expanded sense, one that is more inclusive of the world's religions, and also different ways of expressing one's belief, such as sign language. I believe there are still new ways to say the same thing: God's love is everywhere.

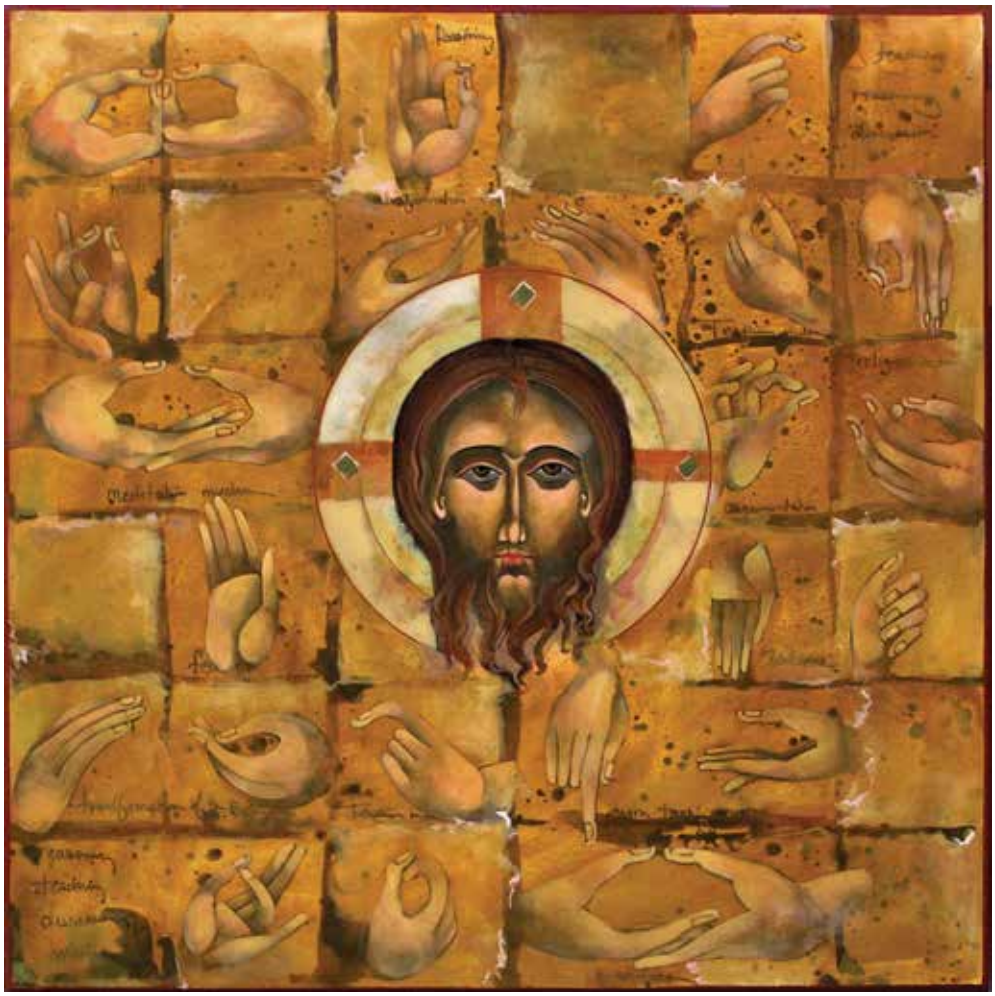
Gathered Around the Table

The "Last Supper" series is an example of how pushing the boundaries within this tradition. My intuition overrides the tradition, telling me (at least with this series) that we must learn to live and eat together as one family. The Last Supper is not only about Christians and Christ. It is our meal of the day filled with crisis, turmoil, contradiction, and decision. We are overwhelmed at the table and need new preparation for what is coming. We must learn to eat again together in spite of our failure and incompleteness, and again experience God's redeeming love for us.

Gradually I became increasingly aware that there are commonalities between faiths and practices. We are diverse and wonderful creatures all looking for this God in different ways. I decided to take a sabbatical from painting Jesus, put all the icons away, and simply explore what the dirt was like in another language, another culture, and another belief. I started with the Mayan corn god to honor the Mexican culture where I live, then the Navajo culture, then the Sumerian gods, then onto the Hindu gods. I finished with 17 images of gods and goddesses from around the world. I moved on to paint significant people that had influenced today's societies around the globe: Moses, Lao Tzu, Copernicus, Confucius, Christ, Mother Teresa, Atisha, Plato. I believe they each made magnificent contributions to human understanding.

Language of Sacred Signs

The foundation of traditional iconography is experiencing resurgence as it grows and



Left, and below: Two icons in the 'Language' series, which explores Christ as the silent language, expressed in the hands.

expands to include wider visual theological ideas through the efforts of new iconographers like myself. Clearly one reason icons are important to humanity is housed in their ability to strike at the heart and not at the head.

The "Language" series affirms this awareness and new freedom. The series began with one icon about sign language or silent hands in general. Saying we are Christians does not always come off as interestingly as when we might say we are Buddhist. Working on the first icon merged these two spiritual avenues because of the hands and what they represent. The idea that we are held by some invisible embrace, by a sound of vibration greater than ourselves, is obvious to anyone on the spiritual journey. Who is it that holds, speaks a silent language only our soul can understand?

We have a deaf gardener, and one day he tried to teach me a few words in sign language. I found not only his hands to be expressive and graceful, but I saw his were like my own, but more flexible. The idea God was living in this young man's hands, expressing ideas, inviting understanding yet making no sound, was an epiphany. We are being held, spoken to, and invited constantly.

The entire collection was designed using the square shape to represent the four cardinal points with the face of Christ in the center. Christ is silent sign language, expressed in the hands, what we touch and what touches us. The image and consciousness of Christ is found in the silent space, the touch of a handwritten word and symbol. I came to realize no matter what the tradition, in the physical realm or the spiritual, the energy of Christ dwells in the center. Through the touch of our hand or written language around the world, there is potential for Christ consciousness.

Last Thoughts

Twenty years of playing in the dirt and asking God to help me find love and be at peace has enabled me to realize exactly how spirit and image are linked. We are humans trying to identify what it is to be spiritual. Painting with dirt and egg has taught me marvelous things. I know from watching paint dry we are all connected, I know repeating the same images in different ways for two decades with the same dozen pigments is not only a discipline but also freedom. I know that everyday grace fills us and inspires us to do what we do and we are never alone.

Iconography is a tradition without a ceiling.

Equivalent Experience
Keys to truly accessible worship spaces

By Robert D. Habiger, AIA, ACLS

Barrier-free environments have been a staple of architects and interior designers since the passage of the American with Disabilities Act in 1990. However, in a majority of church projects the focus has primarily been to provide the minimal accommodation for people with disabilities. The current accessibility dialogue fails to distinguish between accommodation and "equivalent experience." Equivalent experience is not about doing barrier-free design better. Rather, it is an approach that seeks to learn and understand the connections between disabilities, accessibility, emotional participation, and inclusiveness.

Compared to 25 years ago, people with disabilities today do find it easier to access a church building. But still missing is the understanding of how the psychological aspect of people's experiences impacts their sense of inclusion and hospitality. One of my favorite songs is "All Are Welcome" by Marty Haugen (GIA Publications). The song's refrain "all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place" invokes in me a personal desire to design worship spaces that truly welcome everyone. Marty's cry for a place where love can dwell, where prophets speak, where all are named sets the tone for equivalent experience and the design that supports it.

Often I am disappointed when visiting a recently completed church project. I find wheelchair ramps tucked out of sight, a lectern with no height adjustment, water that is unreachable from a wheelchair, or mandatory segregated seating. It seems in these cases that the architects, builders, and the church community have taken an "only if required" approach to merely meet the minimal ADA requirements. Such an approach is inappropriate when the purpose is to welcome and enhance the worship experience of everyone. Inclusiveness, emotional accessibility, and hospitality for all demands we pay more attention to how we design.

To bridge the gap between ADA compliance and true equivalent experiences, we need to consider a new design approach. I use five steps to work toward the goal of equivalent experience:

- Be intentional in discussing prejudices
- Start with a focus on emotional participation
- Explore situations people with disabilities face in a worship environment
- Design for hospitality
- Don't succumb to the belief that it is too difficult to accomplish

Be Intentional

The first step is to recognize that prejudices still exist and often result in the unintentional exclusion of people with disabilities. Stop to reflect for a moment. Have you avoided meeting someone with a physical disability? Do you speak to the person who is with a disabled person rather than speaking directly to them? Do you know the story behind a

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Photo: Rob McHenry

Floor texture, material, and color change at baptismal font at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dodge City, Kansas.

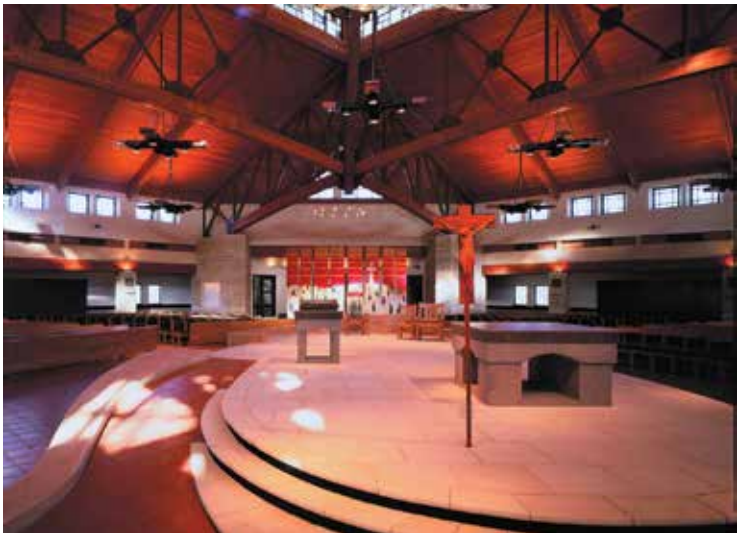

Photo: Rob McHenry

Sloped floor at left side of photo is same material as main floor for access to sanctuary platform at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dodge City, Kansas.

Photo: Rob McHenry

Pull and push door handles at ceremonial doors into worship space are sized for both children and adults and permit multiple modes of grasping at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dodge City, Kansas.

person's disability? Have you accepted a person's mental capacity as being God's plan? We must recognize that prejudices still exist when only lip service, not sincere consideration, is given to the subject of accommodating people with disabilities.

People with disabilities can feel ignored or isolated. The design professional is responsible for bringing these people into the conversation, asking from the beginning what causes them to feel unwelcomed. Be intentional about including and listening to all people who form the community of a project. It is our responsibility to facilitate a design process that explores prejudices and misconceptions. Success is accomplished when honest examination occurs, and new beliefs, attitudes, and approaches are established when we meet the needs of everyone.

Focus on Participation

The liturgical reforms of the Roman Catholic Church promoted that all the faithful benefit from a full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy (as noted in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, paragraph 14, 1963). This concept – that fullness in a worship experience requires active participation – is now embraced by the majority of faith communities. But how can a person with a disability participate in the same way as a normal functioning person? Is the worship experience the same for someone in a wheelchair, who uses a walker, who trucks around an oxygen tank, or who is deaf or blind? Of course, not! So we must examine how equivalent experiences shape a person's fullness of participation, realizing that this varies from person to person. While it is impossible to create the same experience for everyone, we can make sure that a person's worship experience is supported by thoughtful design and an environment that accounts for various needs. In that way, we can accommodate a positive emotional and psychological experience that enables people to fully participate in their worship.

An example can illustrate this point. In most religious buildings the almemar, chancel, or sanctuary is elevated several steps above the central space or nave. Too often accessibility to this elevated platform is relegated to a ramp or wheelchair lift that is tucked out of sight to the rear or back of the platform. When a person in a wheelchair, walker, or crutches must take a different path into the designated special space than the minister, acolyte, reader, server, or Elder, then not only is their physical experience different, but we have also tacked on a different emotional experience. Symbolically we have indicated that a difference exists because of a disability. When we isolate like this, we create exclusions. In this example, if an equivalent experience is to be achieved, the mode of access to the raised platform must be the same for everyone. A gradual sloped floor, rather than a ramp is inclusive and invites full participation.

Photo: Robert Habiger

For the deaf community, the signer is positioned adjacent to the ambo at St. Mary Cathedral, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Explore

To better understand what would create an equivalent experience, it can be helpful to place ourselves into simulations that mimic those faced by people of various abilities. Strap on a full leg brace and try to move into and then sit in a typical pew, and you realize that a seat without any front obstructions would have worked better. Try to pass opposite moving wheelchairs and realize how a restrictive a narrow side aisle can feel. Wear a blindfold and try to navigate around a baptismal font, and you learn that a floor texture change would help you maneuver and find your way. A designer cannot understand potential difficulties until fully exploring situations people are likely to face. The best advice is to carry out experiential research before you design.

What I suggest is meeting with disabled people at the worship space in question. Such a meeting will allow you to develop a design that meets their needs and gives you new insights. Take into consideration their concerns; look into issues that hinder their ability for both physical and emotional participation, and focus on the psychological aspects that these people face. Of course this requires more effort than merely applying codes or regulations. I can attest that not every meeting will feel comfortable or productive. But I am convinced that new opportunities and innovations will surface. The added bonus is that over time each project adds substance to your design repertory.

Think Hospitality

In the proceeding paragraphs the most important principle is the recognition that inclusiveness occurs when people's experiences are similar and overlap. How is this accomplished? What is needed is to move beyond accessibility to a condition of empathy. Simply put, to implement equivalent experience comes from our empathetic understanding of another person's emotional experience. I already pointed out how the hiding of a ramp to a central platform does more harm than good, and now I offer more examples to spark your imagination towards achieving an equivalent experience in places for worship.

Doorways mark entrances and can symbolically exclude. The door the celebrant uses to enter the worship space should be available for use by everyone. Don't imply that a worthy few can use a door or can access any space within the environment. Doors should open easily. Even if the door has an automatic operation, people prefer to open the door without extra assistance. The desire is to be a fully capable person, and the wrong door handle can create unnecessary anxiety. Therefore, ceremonial

doors should not be the required exit doors. Then the designer can specify push-pull handles that are easily grasped and allow children and elderly the ability to open the door.

Changes of floor texture or pattern allows the visually impaired to know they are entering the worship space. Special areas in the worship space, such as a shrine or place of importance, can be highlighted with a floor color or texture change.

Seating options provide major advantages for equivalent experience. Fixed pews allow stability when sitting, kneeling, or standing. But having no obstructions in front of some seating accommodates people whose mobility does not allow them to move sideways into the narrow space between rows. Chairs allow easy accommodation of wheelchairs by allowing a person in the wheelchair to place themselves where it is best for their family instead of being relegated to a designated location. Make aisles wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass. This will not only help people in wheelchairs, but also people with walkers and canes.

Uniform ambient lighting helps the visually impaired when moving in the space. Avoid large sections of low-level windows in locations that will silhouette people. Eye strain is reduced when a person does not have to compensate for the high levels of contrast while trying to focus on a face that is in shadow.

These examples serve to illustrate how designing with an eye towards emotional accessibility is also designing for inclusiveness and hospitality.

Don't Give Up

By now you may be thinking this is a herculean task, that you cannot possibly accomplish everything that is needed. Your budget is simply too restrictive, or your client says no one in their community needs special accommodations. Such arguments have repeatedly been proven false. I admit that promoting a sloped floor versus steps is hard because it requires valuable floor area. But I believe it is the design professional's responsibility to not only address physical accommodation but to go beyond and address emotional accommodation too. The alternative is to unknowingly perpetuate inhospitable design.

No building or space will ever produce the same experience for all people. I submit, however, that designing for an equivalent experience is possible and serves to support people's emotional, psychological, physical, and participatory experiences. We must make every effort to create worship environments that enhance similar physical and emotional experiences so as to become a fully integrated environment. By embracing differences and understanding how to create inclusive experiences as much as possible, we can design churches that connect people to each other and to their place of worship.

The Vision of a Blind Priest

By Annie Dixon

My job description is difficult enough: offering custom-designed luxury items to a charity. Stained glass, mosaics, and precious metals underwritten by donations is not the basis of a practical business plan. Add to the formula a blind pastor calling to discuss a commission in the visual arts. He is a tough customer, not because art and architecture do not matter to him, but because they do. I met Fr. Mike Joly at a gathering of the priests of our diocese some years ago, when he was a parochial vicar and campus minister. His pastor guided him to our studio's exhibit booth where the three of us talked about liturgical art. He asked to touch a statue of Mary we had on display; with her praying hands enclosed within his, he declared, "She's beautiful." Sharing a shrug and a smile, his pastor and I agreed. She was beautiful. But how did Fr. Mike know? And why did he care? Since then, Fr. Mike has become a pastor and a client and has given me a new perspective on the appeal and impact of beauty in worship. I asked him to share his point of view regarding church art and architecture, on both its aesthetic value and on its practical application for all.

Annie Dixon: Why are the visual arts important to the Church?

Fr. Mike Joly: No matter what senses we have or what our sensibilities are, they differ from one another, just as our sense of the sacred does. From a Catholic perspective, we are people of the word, the word-made-flesh in Christ and in our lives. In our human lives, our spirituality demands the intangible God be made tangible, not only in the eucharist and the gathered community, but in physical manifestations of sound, light, color, imagery, and proportion.

AD: It seems that you value art and architecture personally, rather than just an effort to be inclusive of your sighted parishioners' needs. How do you judge artwork or an interior space?

MJ: I have art in my rectory; it fills out a home. I tend to favor art with texture like tapestries, stone, wood inlays, which I can appreciate with my senses. Because I don't have sight, I rely more upon and pay more attention to my other senses: how a space sounds, smells, feels. I notice the surfaces, the temperature, and humidity. I can tell if a space is clean, well organized, not cluttered, if the furnishings are placed properly, sensibly. I can tell if there is artwork on the walls by the acoustics. I can tell how bright a place is; I don't know how I do but I sense it. I get a whole picture of a place through all my senses; some places just don't breathe and others are beautiful.

AD: There was a need to remove a skylight in the sanctuary of your church, and it mattered to you aesthetically, didn't it?

MJ: Yes. It affected the space. Everything I sense in a secular space, I sense in the house of the Lord. I appreciate how the sacred needs to be made beautiful, since it will speak a message of who God is to whomever enters there. I am aware of sacred imagery and its ability to affect even those who cannot see it, or those who don't think they are affected by it.

AD: You decided to install doors between the commons and the worship space. Why?

MJ: Our church was a large contemporary building with the worship space open to the commons. We needed to differentiate the spaces because they have very different purposes. Within the worship space we should be looking vertically upward, to God; in the commons we should be focused horizontally, bringing God to one another. We needed a physical threshold to transition from one purpose and one space to another.

AD: Some of the committee members, with 20/20 vision, could not see the sense in custom-designed doors when the parish had to pay to replace the roof; they encouraged you to go with a less expensive catalog option. Why did you insist on something beautiful and unique?

MJ: Spending more doesn't require spending the most. I just didn't want cold, metal, industrial or commercial doors. I wanted warm wood handles and large, heavy, important and impressive doors. Of course they have a practical purpose regarding space and noise, but they impart a spiritual message regarding the transition from one realm to another.

AD: What were your guidelines for the design of the doors?

MJ: I wanted large, tall, double doors in the center for processing, with shorter doors flanking them for latecomers, and all doors open for egress. I wanted some glass panels for practical purposes of being able to see through from one space to the other and to allow for light transmission. Doors without glass would be like the stone in front of the tomb.

AD: How have the doors affected the worship experience at your church?

MJ: They have changed the acoustics. The choir sounds different; it fills the space and is contained within the space. There is no invasion of outside sounds during Mass. They have heightened our glorification of God and are building up the community. We have well-trained Ministers of Hospitality who stand at open doors and welcome worshipers into Holy Mass before the processional. Some of them remain outside the beautiful doors to greet latecomers and invite them to worship together there, until there is a suitable moment to enter the worship space that will not take away from the proclamation of the Word of God or from the oration of sacred prayer. The Hospitality Ministers remain as attendants at the doors during Mass and open the side doors only when appropriate for latecomers. Parishioners are acquiring sensitivity to the solemnity of the liturgy and to the needs of their fellow worshipers by listening to the Gospel over the speakers in the commons instead of distracting others by casually walking in while the Word of God is proclaimed.

AD: On a practical level, what works for you and what is difficult regarding the architecture and interior design at your church? I assume the lack of steps is a good fit for you.

MJ: You know, people do make assumptions about the disabled. I like steps. In the worship space they indicate a different purpose, different place; you are ascending. There is an aesthetic and a function for steps. Ramps are helpful but they change the acoustics and if you have a church in the round with a sloped floor, it increases the difficulty of including kneelers at the outset or adding them later.

AD: Do you feel that sighted designers and regulators are more concerned about this than you are?

MJ: In my line of work, the physical needs and disabilities are not the focal point but can be considered incidental; addressing the spiritual needs and disabilities and hungers is far more important. Physical limitations have the potential to lead us to the Cross and put us in touch with the crucified Christ. We will all be limited at some point, in some way, by age, illness, or injury. But we all come together in worship. You know what I envision when I walk through the doors into to the worship space? When those vertical doors open and we process in, I imagine a horizontal door above the space sliding open to heaven and all the angels and saints lifting our hearts and minds upward and Christ pouring Himself down into the bread and wine, into his people. It's like Jacob's Ladder and it's a beautiful image.

Fr. Mike Joly is pastor at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Yorktown, Virginia, where he previously served as parochial vicar while also campus minister at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. For more on his ministry, go to: fathermikejoly.com. Annie Dixon is project manager at Dixon Studio in Staunton, Virginia. She is an editorial advisor to Faith & Form and serves on the board of the Catholic Virginian newspaper. For more on her work, visit: anniedixon.com

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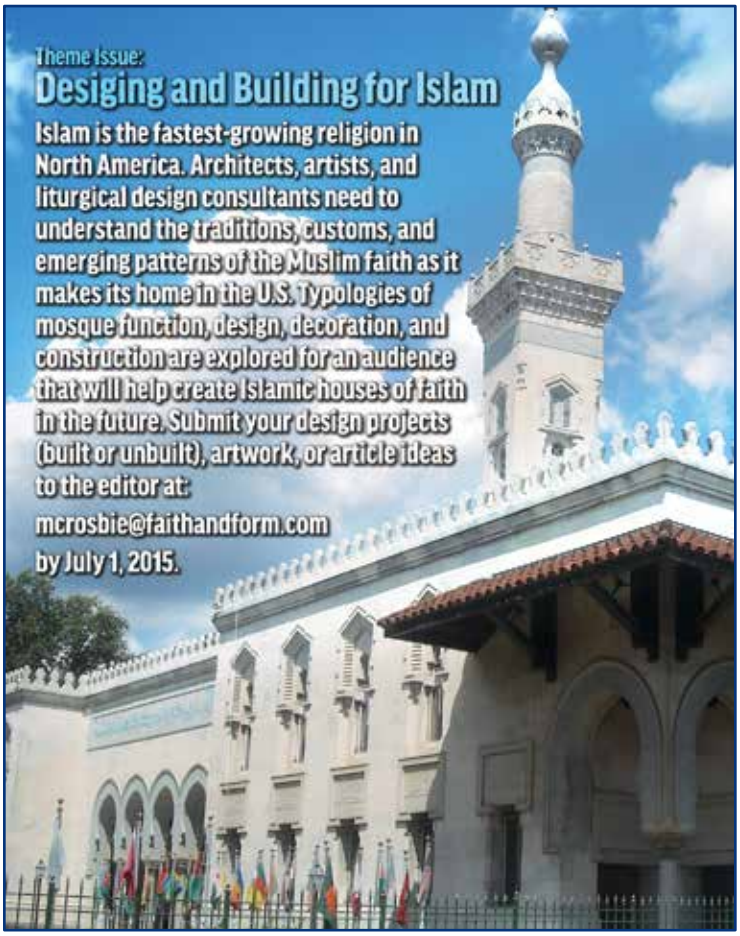

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Notes & Comments

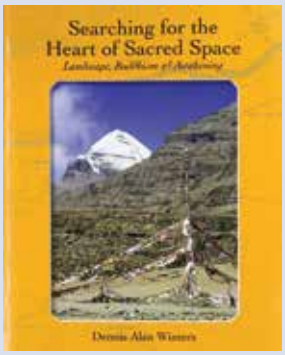
Book Review: A Personal Journey into Sacred Landscape

Searching for the Heart of Sacred Space: Landscape, Buddhism & Awakening, Dennis Alan Winters, (Richmond Hill, ON: Sumeru Press), 2014.

This book by landscape architect and Buddhist practitioner Dennis Winters is both a travelogue of sacred places and a scholarly study of why they are. The book focuses on two locales: the karesansui gardens of Kyoto Zen monasteries, and Mount Kailas and its associated sacred places in Tibet. On one hand, the book's evocative descriptions of people and places share an affinity with travel books by Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, and the spiritual journals of Peter Matthiessen. On the other, it is a scholarly study where the author applies his mature spiritual practice and knowledge of Buddhist scriptures to decipher natural and built landscapes. Lastly, it reads at times like a heroic quest, with clues presented by the places the author visits, the people he meets, and the texts he seeks to understand.

The reader is invited along the way to search for Tibetan sources for Japanese garden designs using the device of a quest for 8,631 upright stones described in a Japanese garden design text. All of which is in service of exploring the author's main and recurrent questions and investigations: Do harmonious and sacred landscapes have the capacity to aid in spiritual development, and to what degree does one need to be spiritually developed to design sacred landscapes? That said, the book is not about design per se, but the impetus to render the world more legible and meaningful that drives our creative pursuits and passions.

The book begins with the author's presentation of a new Tibetan center in Vermont, his masters thesis, to His Holiness the Dali Lama, and the latter's question about its design. "From where does it come; what is its source?" The search for the source – of Japanese garden design, of the author's design, and of the nature of being in the world – define and guide his journeys. Along the way he incorporates the Chinese geomantic practices of feng-shui, Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, Tibetan mandalas, and even numerology, geometry, and proportion. Messengers often mysteriously appear. One, a Tibetan monk, intones, "Your body and mind and the surrounding landscape exist in a profoundly interactive way."



The book is most compelling and convincing when the landscapes of western Tibet are both spiritually and scientifically described. Here the author's conversational voice effectively links outer journeys with his inner work – western knowledge with esoteric wisdom. Indeed one of the strengths of the book is its episodic nature, with the reader regularly introduced to new themes, places, and observations. But, this is also a weakness. I wished at times to more deeply understand the connections the author was seeking between often-disparate subjects and his overall thesis.

But, one of the book's virtues is that it doesn't offer easy answers or personal reconciliations to the author's primary position: that the "truth of design" is only approached through sincere and serious inner inquiry, but is also accessed by the experience and making of sacred places. As such, the book will appeal to designers who seek to create more spiritually embodied places, laypeople interested in more deeply understanding the built and natural environment, and readers who simply enjoy a well-told story of a seeker's journeys.

–Thomas Barrie, AIA

The reviewer is a professor of architecture at North Carolina State University and the author of *The Sacred In-Between: The Mediating Roles of Architecture* (Routledge, 2010) and *Spiritual Path – Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual and Meaning in Architecture* (Shambhala, 1996).

'Decoding' the Christian Temple

At the end of last September, the Liturgical Institute presented a Roman Catholic church architecture intensive for students, friends, and affiliates, aptly titled "Decoding the Christian Temple." A daylong workshop was comprised of four study sessions advancing insights, directives, and practical help with dilemmas familiar to church building and design.

Sensitive to the pluraform character of buildings dedicated to worship, the conferences progressed along exegetical, aesthetic, and theological lines. Rev. Douglas Martis, Director of the Liturgical Institute, delivered the opening session on the text of The Rite of the Dedication of a Church. The prayers and commentaries of that document were established as a blueprint for understanding what a church building, inside and out, is meant to be. Conceptually richest, this session culminated in casting churches as built forms of "Christ Himself the Perfect Temple," as figures of the "Heavenly Banquet and of Heavenly Jerusalem," as Domus Dei and as Domus Ecclesiae.

Building on this plan, Dr. Denis McNamara continued by exploring the mystery of sacrifice central to both Jewish and Christian ritual. McNamara revealed typology of the Jerusalem temple for its significance to Christian architecture. From this talk, church building emerged as fundamentally and necessarily a temple of sacrifice and special presence of God's glory. Further incorporating the visions described in the Book of Revelations, McNamara pointed to possible creative paths opened to architects and artist striving to communicate these realities through visible forms.

The afternoon sessions given jointly by Chris Carstens and McNamara explored ordinary liturgical elements of church architecture such as portal and tabernacle. The presentation combined reflections on the theological underpinnings and ensuing norms for design and placement of these elements within the body of the church. Focusing on portal, baptismal font, seating, choir, ambry, altar, and tabernacle, these sessions were the most practical offering a tutorial on learning to see furnishings and sanctuaries artistically but in perspective deeply informed by the liturgical practice of the Church.

Rather than proposing ready-made answers, the sessions aimed to recommend questions helpful at the beginning of the design or renovation process: How well does a proposed church building or a renovation plan communicate the sacramental mysteries, the glory of God, the hope of the things to come? How well does a particular architecture, design, material, or level of craftsmanship strengthen and inspire the faithful in their pilgrimage to Heavenly Jerusalem?

(continued at bottom of page 34)

Modernism's Gold Egg?

The Sacred and the Mundane
Walter Sedovic, FAIA, LEED AP, and Jill H. Gotthelf, AIA, FAPT

What a paradox has landed on our doorstep! At the very time the Catholic Church is closing dozens of historic churches, and Modernist churches are just turning 50 (and eligible for landmark status), an important new study indicates that Millennials are searching for a more traditional church experience "in a building that is steeped in history and religious symbolism, but...in a modern space that feels more familiar than mysterious," according to a recently released report by the Barna Group. In stark contrast, the Archdiocese of New York, as part of its "Making All Things New" initiative, highlighted a central goal to "move the Archdiocese into the 21st century, and meet the needs of the people as they exist today, and not simply rely on the planning and structures that were done 50, 100 or 150 years ago."

Is the Archdiocese throwing out the baby with the bathwater? Moreover, are we in danger of losing the very buildings that are central to the sought-after religious experience of current and future generations? One silver lining of this dilemma is confirmation of the power of architecture and history in the religious experience. Another is the light shed on the intrinsic benefits of mid-century Modern religious sites, and the potential that they may be just what is needed to bridge this Millennial gap.

More than any other building type, religious buildings embraced mid-century Modernism because it offered a break from European tradition, connection with the surrounding environment, and spaces for personal contemplation. Now a half-century later, they are beginning to circle back on themselves, offering an unparalleled combination of traditionalism and familiarity. In that sense these sacred sites could be viewed as mid-century Modernism's golden egg.

However, as products of an era of cheap energy and celestial aspirations, they now face an overarching and manifest concern: how well do mid-century Modern structures perform when measured against the plethora of current international codes and our focus on global sustainability and resiliency? In a word, they prove to be noble performers, and surprisingly adaptable when handled appropriately. As our earlier columns have illustrated, the key to stellar performance in heritage sites lies in collecting data, understanding original design intent (systems, siting, spatial), and researching material technology to ferret out adaptations and refinements that tailor new with old; mid-century Modern buildings are no different.

The signature difference between Modernist and traditional buildings is the longevity of materials employed. Defining and expressive elements such as cast-in-place concrete, flat roofs, glazed facades, and mechanical systems represented material and engineering technologies that, while state-of-the-art, did not have the benefit of the test of time. Many of these have since failed, making them unfair targets of campaigns to demolish or significantly alter them, often stripping them of their unique form and effect. Often it is simply the subcomponents of a large system—roofing membranes, glazing seals, mechanical upgrades, corrosion control, thermal breaks—that require attention.

Architects and allied professionals need to be able to competently and confidently identify elements of design significance, separating what to retain, what to refine, and where there is freedom for significant design intervention. To date, many attempts to preserve or "modernize" Modern buildings have been insensitive and heavy-handed, wrestling with unresolved issues both technical and philosophical, often eliminating the inventive, even joyful, advancements that define them as a unique part of our nation's architectural and engineering patrimony. Our vigilance needs to extend beyond material and form to encompass time, context, and authenticity, elements so vital to creating the sense of "history and familiarity" that seems to both captivate and resonate with an emerging Millennial audience.

Walter Sedovic and Jill Gotthelf are principals of Walter Sedovic Architects, an award-winning firm specializing in sustainable preservation. They can be reached at: wsa@modernruins.com

Notes & Comments (continued)

The proposed "temple code" methodology eschews falling into the usual pitfalls of church architecture such as undue infatuation with superfluous ornament or minimalist functionalism. Offering a balanced yet firm formation in line with the reforms proposed by the 20th Liturgical Movement and documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Institute's approach is an interesting and well-structured alternative to the more extreme architectural solutions of the Post-Conciliar era. As such, its program is certainly attention worthy and relevant to all practitioners and others involved in the field of church architecture and interior design. *–Kinga U. Lipinska*

The writer is a Project Consultant for Granda Liturgical Arts and is based in Chicago.

In the Glass

Walking in, I feel cold and separate from the masses of people that fill the church. While everyone talks to one another I walk on unsteady legs around them, trying to find somewhere to sit. I find a spot in the far back near the corner, away from the sea of people that swarm around me like bees in a hive. Unaware of an intruder in their midst, I walk—ignored and unseen. Thankfully, everyone is prompted to find their seats by the surrounding hum of organ music signaling the beginning of the morning service—after a few hymns the pastor gets up to give his sermon. I am so far at the back that by the time the pastor's words reach my ears I pick up only the soft mumbles and echoes the room provides.

I look toward the stained glass windows; they had looked so beautiful before, yet now they are like bars trapping me in. Their stories exquisitely depict scenes of holiness that I could never dream to understand; tales of love, loss, forgiveness, and redemption, and I feel alone in my daydream of colored glass. As the service ends, I feel a rush of miraculous freedom as I walk out the church doors—like a restless bird finally free from a colorfully cold and cluttered cage.

Weeks pass as they always do, with nothing exciting happening. My usual Sunday morning stroll seems the same until I pass by the church. I stop and watch from across the street as people slowly walk in. I hadn't been back, though a part of me wanted to; maybe it would be different this time and before I can talk myself out of it I begin to cross the street. I quickly slip into the church and maneuver around a few groups of people.

Light filters through the windows, bathing everyone in a colorful light that glows warm on my skin. I look for a seat at the sound of the organ's guttural trill, again deciding on a pew in the far back. Worry enters my mind -- the possibility of a repeat performance leaves a sickening feeling in my stomach. But half way through the first hymn, an elderly man enters from the back of the church and sits beside me. He turns to me and smiles; grateful for the interaction, I return his smile. When the morning sermon starts, I happily ignore the incomprehensible mumbles and instead focus on the windows.

"Aren't they beautiful?" the old man whispers, drawing my attention.

"Yes, they're simply wonderful," I reply, leaving us in a few moments of silence.

"I love sitting in the back," he says, bringing me back into our hushed back-pew conversation.

"Why? You can't even hear the sermon."

"There's more to church and faith than being able to hear the sermon," says he.

Silently I nod and agree; for the rest of the sermon we speak in hushed tones, starting an unusual friendship. When the service ends, I say goodbye to my new friend, promising to see him next week and when I stand to leave, I feel no rush to get outside into the cool air. I no longer feel the compressed and trapped feelings I did before, for my prison is no more.

The author is a senior at Seattle Lutheran High School. She enjoys writing stories and hopes to pursue the study of archeology and history in college.

Coming Up: KOINÈ 2015

Preparations have reached a fever pitch for Koinè, the biennial world fair for church supplies, liturgical and ecclesiasitcal art, the next edition of which will take place in Vicenza, Italy, April 18-21, 2015.

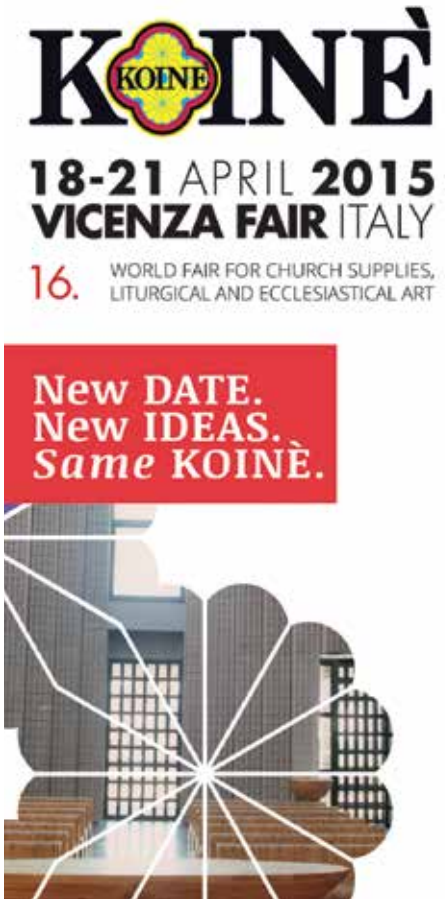
The Koinè fair gathers together around 12,000 visitors from all over the world. The exhibition includes a large selection of furniture and items for the liturgy which are easily exhibited, in three pavilions: Pavilions 1 and 2, "Faith and Devotion" will display products by the manufacturers of devotional articles; in Hall 7 "Church & Liturgy" will show products of church suppliers (vestments, statues, building components, and the latest audio technology.

This new arrangement for 2015 will recall the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the pastoral constitution "Gaudium et Spes" on the Church in the modern world, one of the Council's documents whose spirit gave birth to Koinè Research. To celebrate the anniversary, the events programmed will focus especially on the theme of the Church in dialogue with the contemporary world.

Among these events, there will be a new exhibit dedicated to stained glass windows for churches in which important international studios will display works created in collaboration with contemporary artists. There will also be a "Study Day" dedicated to the Council's principle of "noble simplicity" enunciated from the very beginning in the Constitution "Sacrosanctum Concilium" on the sacred liturgy, which then became a reference point for following documents.

The conference will take up the pre-conciliar debate and its successive development from the Council to today. An important part of the conference will center on reflections concerning the design of celebratory spaces and the renewed elaboration of vestments, furnishings, and objects of liturgical use as seen through the experiences relevant to various European countries. This will be offered especially for architects and designers and will be open to the international public thanks to a simultaneous translation service.

Complete information is available on the Koinè website: koinexpo.com



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