The Sanctuary: A Design for Mind, Body, and Spirit

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I. Table of Contents ..................................................1-3
II. Introduction .....................................................5-8
III. Proposal ..........................................................9-13
IV. Background .....................................................15-19
V. Research ..........................................................21-27
VI. The Program ....................................................29-33
VII. The Presentation ..............................................35-57
VIII. Reflections ....................................................59-61
IX. Bibliography ....................................................63-65
The intent of this project was to look at religious architecture from a new perspective. One has said that perception is the fulcrum upon which every idea/concept is pivoted. Similarly, religious architecture, namely Christian architecture, can also be perceived in many different ways. First, it can be viewed as a sanctuary; a place where men, women, and children can go to find rest for their souls and peace for their minds.

Secondly, it can be perceived to be a place where man meets God. It is a place where, no matter the social status of an individual, no matter the race, no matter the color, no matter the economic stance, "man" can meet God. Thirdly, it can be a place where the lines can be blurred beyond just the spiritual aspects of the soul, but it can also be a place where interaction, fellowship, and physical activity can be combined into a healthy mind, body, and soul.

The scripture talks about the fact that "for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (II Corinthians 6:16). So, can all these aspects be incorporated into a church? Can all perceptions be revealed within the design scheme of a facility that is meant to house the presence of the Almighty God?
The purpose of this project is to take Christian architecture to a new dimension; not so much as to recreate the wheel, but to take historic precedent and portray it in an abstract way; from the progression through space, to the tower/spire, to the awe inspiring scale of the sanctuary space.

The material palette will be concrete promoting the feeling of cool permanence to give the perception that this facility is meant to last for eternity, combined with a warm feeling of wood that gives an invitation that this is a place of belonging and comfort. The possibilities of direction were endless, yet, in my opinion, I embarked upon a journey to design a church of the 21st century.
Church architecture is something that is rapidly changing in some areas, but remaining traditional in others. New Castle is an area that represents an area of Christian architecture that is remaining more traditional with historic buildings such as St. Anne's Catholic Church.

The possibilities that contemporary church architecture brings to the area are many, including building upon the historic precedent of the surrounding religious context, as well as bringing a new view of church architecture. The way the church effects the community is changing, people are changing, we are going through a metamorphosis of style, thinking, mindsets, mannerisms, attitudes, and character; therefore the way the church should look in the eyes of the community should also go through a metamorphosis. This transformation is something that is very relevant to the culture of today, and I believe that it is something that we should seriously consider in the design of our churches.
This has been transpiring for some time now in Indiana. Some facilities even date back into the sixties and seventies. But because of the vast cost of the these style facilities and the building costs that are rising, this type of contemporary church architecture is not as high a priority as it should be.

There are those types of churches that portray denominational affiliations and there are those which are opened to the community to love and care for the people. The challenge in portraying denominational affiliations is it places a fear upon the potential users of the site; a fear that they will break the traditions of their families, or even the fear of the response of the user group.

I believe opening the church to the community to love and care for the people is the direction that will be important for the present as well as the near future. This thesis project will attempt to solve this problem and will look at alternate means and methods of church design. The project used to explore this will be a church for approximately 500 members.
The other aspect of this project deals with understanding and interpreting what makes a facility of this magnitude work, and the quality of the experience that one has when coming to the church. We need to understand what it is about a church that makes it a sacred space and a place where God abides. Concurrently we need to understand what it is that makes a church a place where people want to come and "touch" God.

Searching for this understanding will be a part of the design process. Aspects such as color, iconography, light, texture, and smell all comprise the quality of space. The iconography, color, and light are the qualities that will be most affected by this design, and, therefore, the sense of arrival.
The site I chose for this design is located on Indiana State Road 3 at County Road 200N. It is located in the area of New Castle that is just seeing new growth and development. Memorial Park is in close proximity and the new YMCA that is approximately one mile south on State Road 3. It is my position that the south side of New Castle has had redevelopment and growth and a new face given to it, but now it is time for the north side to until from its undeveloped status. This site does, however, present some difficulties, as well as some opportunities that were considered and touched upon in the design. The view into the site lies among a housing addition, a state correctional facility, and a trailer shop.

The first challenge is to provide security to withstand the pressures and fears that are posed by the correctional facility. This challenge might suggest that the site should not be an option for such a large scale project, but a more optimistic approach would be to provide a facility that could be an opportunity for a desired change in the individuals that are residing within the walls of the correctional facility, with the opportunity that they might "meet God” in the sanctuary.
Another challenge that this site poses is the surrounding residential scale and the desire that this facility has to be at a larger scale than residential. All instincts within me tell me that the building scale should relate to the housing, but that the sanctuary space itself to jump out of the center of the facility. be an icon, a "jewel" that is held on the ring within the "prongs" of the surrounding spaces.

A third challenge then arises within the site is that the church should not have views into the neighboring sales lot. So the intent is to block the view of this lot from those using the facility.

Yet another challenge that arises is the existing empty house and barn that are located on the frontage of the site. It could be remodeled and turned into a parsonage for visiting ministers, but it then stands as the first impression given by the site and the design. The option chosen is to demolish the dilapidated buildings and create a grand view into the site.

A final design challenge was the rolling terrain of the site. My first thought was to let it remain and to let the site create the facility, but then I considered letting the building form the site and make it a part of the holistic design.
The major contextual ambiance of the surrounding areas is of agricultural influence of grasses and crops. One goal of this facility was to continue that influence into the exterior façade of the building to hide the hard, geometric shape of the building with a berm of grasses to allow the sanctuary to look as though it is rising out of the earth.

As a basis for design, I did some research on the history of Christian architecture that spans from the predecessors of the Christians, the Jews, to the current, most contemporary Christian architecture of modern day. The research studied the precedents, the building materials, the scale, the iconography, and the layouts of the facilities.
Upon researching the history of Christian architecture, I felt it important to narrow down the focus, or prioritize the main points of my design. The five main points of design were:

- the iconography and sense of place

- the blurring of the lines between the sanctuary and the activity spaces

- the idea of a central, enclosed courtyard that will house multiple activities including the main circulation for the space

- the idea of green architecture and energy conservation

- the idea of abstracting historic precedent into a contemporary church facility.
In the earliest example, the Tabernacle in the Old Testament had different spaces which serving as a procession through the whole. To enter into the Tabernacle in the wilderness one would enter into the east gate. The spaces were composed as follows: after the main entrance in a space that is about "12 cubits x 20 cubits" (Levine 20) this space was separated from a space called "the Holy of Holies" by a "veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen" (Exodus 26: 31). In other words, the Tabernacle was separated into two spaces which were "the Holy (i.e. the Tent of Meeting, which takes up two thirds of the Tabernacle), from the Holy of Holies" (Levine, 38). In the Holy place there were three main items, the table for showbread, the golden altar/the altar of incense, and the golden candlestick. In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, in which was placed the Ten Commandments, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. Surrounding these spaces of the Tabernacle was what is known as the court of the Tabernacle in which was the brazen altar and the brazen laver. The main ornament in the Tabernacle was that of the veils which were similar to tapestries which were woven by craftsmen. Surrounding the court was a solid colored veil, similar to "net-work" (Levine, 74) that served as a protection from the harsh desert winds. The court was mainly used as a gathering for the congregation of Jews.
Continuing through history in the Jewish synagogues, there was no shrine for the Torah-scrolls; instead, they were placed in a receptacle which was brought into the room as needed" (Orlinsky, 98). As time went on, there were modifications that were made to this plan as a second group came into existence. This group allowed for a shrine for the Torah-scrolls to be placed. There was a "niche in the long wall facing Jerusalem for the Torah shrine to be placed" (Orlinsky, 98).

In the Early Christian Churches, mainly had "portable furnishings, including a wooden table where the consecrated Mensa stone was placed for instance to celebrate Mass, and ambo from which to read the epistles and the gospels" (Sanderson, 9). It contained an altar on which "served as the place for the offerings of the community to God.

In the Byzantine time period, in the Hagia Sophia was found some of the "greatest vaulted space without intermediate supports that had ever been built" and "all who entered it were overwhelmed by a central dome that hovered high above them" (Fletcher, 271). It hovered so high that it gave an impression of grandeur and awe, as in a place where God meets man; and it was almost like a shroud that was "suspended by a golden chain from heaven" (Fletcher, 271).
During the Renaissance there was a change, the church planning was "influenced by symbolism, liturgical change, reforming movements and the new religious orders as well as by the aesthetic preferences of architect and patron." It was an architecture that was synonymous with the culture of the times. "Decorum was the fundamental rule and the function of a church was crucial to its plan" (Fletcher, 815). Still the plan was centralized.

During the Counter Reformation there was a new introduction of the pulpit. Then in the more contemporary church architecture, E.A. Sovik wrote in his book Architecture for Worship describes the church in a way that follows this principle of the "non-church."

"A house of worship is not the table that makes a sacrament; it is the people and what they do. The things are adjuncts, conveniences, symbols, utensils. The presence of God is not assured by things or by symbols or by buildings, but by Christian people." (Sovik, 33)

It is in this principle that we begin to see a shift in the introverted characteristics of church, to that of something that is more extroverted. The shift shows the desire of church architecture to run main-stream, similar to everybody else, and to have to follow a specific pattern abandoned. It is in this "phenomena of present day change" that we find "denominational differences in liturgical practice are being blurred" (Sovik, 34).
"The principle now operative is that change is to be continual, and continually responsive to changes of people, occasion, and cultural circumstance just as the liturgical practices of the early churchmen were varied and continually changing" (Sovik, 35). Some things do remain constant in churches (e.g. altar, table/pulpit for ministry, and seating for the people), but in these, the method of designing and program layout does not have to be the same.

Philip Johnson in his Crystal Cathedral uses the tower with "combining shapes and layering geometry" (Fox, 203). Also, in this architectural feat, he got away from the column and beam structure to that of space-frame technology. This was also a means of blurring the barriers between the sacred and nature and places of activity.

New thinking in religious architecture is no longer about how they can be the same, but how a church can be different and be able to expand and be able to change as times and cultures shift. Among these few examples are elements that tie back to the heritage of yesteryear, yet, through time an evolution of philosophy has brought about a change in design.
The program is an initial step into the process of the church design. It is a means of defining the scope and the desired spaces for the building. It captures the essence of the multiple uses of the facility and the vast potentials and opportunities.

The organization of the spaces within the facility is broken down into separate zones of utilization.

- **The Sanctuary**..........................13,000 sq. ft.
  - The platform
  - the musicians
  - the choir
  - the ministers
- **The baptismal**
- **The sound booth**
- **The altar area**
- **Seating for 500 people**

- **Sunday school**
  - (6) Classrooms without toilets.............2,754 sq. ft.
  - (2) Toddler/infant classrooms w/toilets:1,100 sq. ft.
  - (2) Toilets:1,025 sq. ft.
  - Sunday school worship........................3,400 sq. ft.
- Office Suite ..................................................... 8,835 sq. ft.
  - Pastor's office
  - Pastor's wife's office
  - Pastor's secretary's office
  - Church secretary's office
- Guest study
- Audio/Visual office
- General office (open concept for (8) cubicles)
- Youth pastor's office
- Associate pastor's office
- Sunday school office
- Teacher's training
- Conference area
- Music office
- Conference area
- (4) Small practice rooms
- Ensemble practice room
- Reception
- Conference room
- Kitchenette/Lounge

- Youth
  - (3) Classrooms ........................................... 3,125 sq. ft.
  - Youth worship ............................................ 3,620 sq. ft.
  - Toilets ..................................................... 1,200 sq. ft.
- Prayer Room ........................................ 4,200 sq. ft.

-Education
  - Computer lab .................................. 760 sq. ft.
  - (3) Multipurpose classrooms .......... 1,950 sq. ft.

-Support
  - Main restrooms w/ janitor's closet ... 1,000 sq. ft.
  - Coat and choir robe closets ............ 1,620 sq. ft.
  - Nursery ....................................... 775 sq. ft.
  - Bookstore ................................... 1,650 sq. ft.
  - Storage and mechanical spaces ....... 40,962 sq. ft.

-Total ........................................... 173,035 sq. ft.

-Spaces
  - Corridors
  - Atrium
  - Walls
the presentation
This image represents the current conditions of the site. The image is positioned so that North is up. To the East is the Correctional facility. To the South southeast is the Raintree addition. This image was conveyed at the interim presentation to gain insight for the best possible location for the facility.
This image represents the current contours of the site. The image is positioned so that North is up. The intervals of the contours are at 10 ft. The highest elevation that can be read is approximately 1060 ft. above sea level. It was shown at the final presentation for clarification of site issues.
The current image is the final design for the site. It portrays the
facility with the main entrance to the North. The main entrance
to the site is from State Road 3. Parking capabilities allow for
approximately 175 vehicles. The main adjustment made to the
site was to flatten the terrain and to reuse the dirt in locations as
necessary.
The floor plan allows for the main sanctuary space to be the central aspect of the facility with the support spaces surrounding. Once again the position of the drawing is such that North is up. There are three access points to the lower level which is the location for the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing, as well as, the storage spaces for the facility. Under the surrounding burns are fan rooms to service the buildings.
The building sections are vital to the design of this space. They give the height ratios as well as show the spatial patterns. The lower level is the mechanical spaces. The atrium and the sanctuary are on a floating floor under which is the space for the duct work and the piping for water. The exterior support spaces are covered with a "green" roof.
The building elevations portray the main building materials: concrete, wood, and glazing. It was the intention to make the sanctuary space, or the jewel to be held up by the Earth. The roof is constructed in such a way as to be the "cut of the stone" and the intention was to make it look as if it were floating above the building.
The wall section is of the exterior wall which is a chase for the exhaust as well as the air intake for the hvac system. Also, it is the chase for the roof drains to the exterior. The details are of the skylight system which is a Controlite system which allows certain intervals of light into the space either by the user manually setting the level, or by sun sensors which electronically change the levels of sunlight coming into the space.
This detail shows the connection of the skylight system to the main exterior wall. All details for the system are from the CPI website.
These images of the final model show the complexity of the project which, at times, hurt the overall study of the project. The scale of the project was quite large, yet manageable, but I feel some detail could have been studied at a greater detail with a smaller design thesis.
This photograph is of the main entrance in my final design. It shows the facility three dimensionally and really puts a realistic picture of how this facility will work on the site. The sanctuary space pops out of the center of the facility like a diamond within a wedding set.
As we embark upon our journey through the facility, we begin by looking from the North West edge of the parking lot looking toward the main entrance where some are entering the facility. The entrance is as arms opening up to those coming into the facility.
We continue into the crowd at the main entrance getting ready to enter. The atrium and the entrance are as an interim space into an enclosed space. The purpose of the transparency is to blur the lines between the interior and the exterior. Yet it is also intended to allow for use of the interior courtyard 365 days of the year.
Entering into the building it is visible the process of arrival that one must take to get to the main worship space. Attention is drawn to the main entrance of the sanctuary space by the catwalk above. It is a journey through the space that allows for a complete experience of the facility.
The facility is designed to accommodate Pentecostal worship. The enthusiasm and charisma of such worship required me to take a look at the spacing of the seating and the size of the aisles. It also required me to look at the altar area as an overflow space for those worshipping.
Another challenge of the facility was to allow for the seating to be formed in such a way as to allow direct view and access to the central area of the platform. One major aspect of a Pentecostal church is the preaching that takes place within the facility. The ministry is brought forth with such enthusiasm and passion that the space needed to accommodate this. Also, looking through the south facade of the sanctuary, one sees a 20' crucifix that is located in a meditation pool. The inspiration was given from Tadao Ando's Church on the Water.
A challenge that most churches face is the capability of expansion. What happens when the church becomes full or over its capacity? Do we build a new facility? One opportunity that I took within the design was to allow for two sets of Nana Walls at each side of the main entrance of the sanctuary, which open to allow for expansion into the atrium space which could possibly increase the capacity of the space by 50%.
The atrium is intended to make one feel as though he/she is in a community streetscape and the activity of the area is driven by the church that is in the center of the community. This atrium is designed to allow for multiple activities such as arcades and tables for just "hanging out" in the youth lounge area.
The sanctuary walls are glazed to continue the idea of blurring the line between the "community" space of the atrium with the more sacred space of the sanctuary. It is intended to change the fabric of the community and to let the sanctuary filter through the community.
The other activities that occur within the "community" space is a playground that can be used throughout the year by the children who use this facility. It is a continuation of the idea that this is a design for mind, for body, and for spirit.
This space is the continuation of the heartbeat of the space. It is a space that is considered to be the sacred space of the facility. It is the location of the meditation pool and the crucifix.
The sacred space is a continuation of the sanctuary. It is similar to the "chapels" or the "niches" which allowed for private meditation and was a space that housed the important items that represented the faith of the people. This is a space that can be considered that niche where man can also meet God which is the purpose of the church; where man communes with God.
In the presence of the Lord, In the presence of the Lord,
That's where you find everything that you need.
And when we seek his face, he'll draw near to us,
in the presence of a Holy God

My soul longs for you, and nothing compares to you
I will wait on you, until I feel your presence surrounding me.

"In the Presence of the Lord".................Aaron Shields


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