

Worship Space as Communication from Ancient to Post-Modern

❖ Every church may be categorized into six distinct spaces

- **Gathering Space**
- **Movement Space**
- **Congregational Space**
- **Worship/Proclamation of the Word Space**
- **Altar-Table Space**
- **Baptismal Space**

❖ Gathering Space

- Question: What emphasis have recent churches placed on gathering space in the last 20 years? What about 100 years? Can you think of a huge difference in this? Why the change to larger foyers (some with food courts and cafes in them)?
- The goal, however, is building the experience of worship through gathering together with the community of faith.
- Hospitality ministries are becoming increasingly utilized to help fit this need.
- Gathering space must say “we want you to be one of us.”
- Gathering Space Pictures reveal some of these things.

❖ Movement Space

- Movement Space IS worship space.
- Churches did not sit down in worship until the Middle Ages so there was space to move everywhere. It signaled much lower congregational participation in worship.
- But even if pews are used, they must be accessible. For this reason, many churches are opting to place comfortable chairs in worship spaces for the flexibility of moving them. This became more popular around 1960.
- Processionals, communions and baptisms, etc. require ability to have adequate movement space.
- The Frontier era and revivalistic churches require the ability for persons to be able to “walk the sawdust trail” to the mourner’s bench.

❖ Congregational Space

- This is the space where the church is generally filled with seating, platform area, altar-table, baptismal, etc.
- It is more specifically where the congregation sits, stands, kneeling in order to concentrate on seeing, hearing, speaking, singing, and making gestures that don’t require much movement.
- PARTICIPATION SPACE- this is where the gathered church is actively involved.
- However, this can be hindered for numerous reasons.
 - Poor sight-lines (no slopes, stadium seating, balconies, etc.)
 - Room is so large the congregant feels remote
 - Bad lighting
 - Poor acoustics
- How can this be remedied?

- Circular pattern
- Square pattern
- Arch pattern
- Sloping floor (not very practical in an existing space!)
- Goal is to bring the congregation as close as possible to the “liturgical centers”

❖ Worship/Proclamation of the Word

- Music gives voice to praises and prayers to God.
- Also strengthens the bond of Christian community.
- The type of congregational song used is often evident in the congregational space of the church. What might one typically find in the following worship services?
 - Huge Pipe Organ, choir loft either at front of the church, side or in balcony, ornate stained glass and gothic architecture, pews are in two front facing sections only. Pulpit and lectern adorned with liturgical color of season. Baptismal font at back of worship space or prominently in front.
 - Large auditorium church with large electronic organ, orchestra pit for thirty five, 120 person stadium seating choir loft, altar table with open Bible, candles, large demonstrative pulpit on raised platform, comfortable wingback chairs on platform in front of choir rail.
 - Warehouse with platform only two feet off the ground, full rock band set-up and gear, minimal decoration, moveable seating.
- Regardless of style of congregational singing, there should be some visual or auditory cues from the worship leadership to the congregation.
- Choir’s most salient asset is the support of congregational singing.
- They may be in the front of the church in a loft, side of church, or back of the church.
- Choirs in the back or side of the church are seen in several churches-after Baroque period. The one benefit to this is a lack of attention that is drawn to them (many bands in the emerging church also employ this technique).
- The proclamation of the Word is made through reading of Scriptures, songs, hymns, dramas, responses, videos, testimonies and the like.
- It is imperative that the congregation be able to connect with the proclaimer
- Where the pulpit and/or lectern are located, the size, even the height of its location can oftentimes reveal the importance of the Word or even the person proclaiming the Word.
- The lectern is a Victorian version of medieval architecture because of its flexibility and functionality. Some today just use a lectern or a smaller version of the pulpit, which reached enormous sizes in the eighteenth century. Some modernists believe the pulpit should be acrylic, revealing the transparent nature of proclaimer.
- Split of lectern and pulpit makes little sense theologically. Why separate the reading of the Word from the proclaiming of it?

❖ Altar-Table Space

- Usually in front of the pulpit today in Protestant churches.

- Space where the worship leader may give announcements or receive the offering.
- If this is where communion will be received it must be well lit, visible as well as accessible to the congregation-balconies or long tunnel-like gothic churches make this more difficult.

❖ Baptism Space

- Locations vary from church to church
- Smaller fonts have the flexibility of being moved
- Stationary ones do not
- Again, visibility for everyone (this is a faith community event)
- Audibility- (hear the trickle or the splash)
- Proximity- makes it more participatory

Immanence versus Transcendence

- How does this worship space reflect God's Sovereignty and/or Creatorship? i.e. The Crystal Cathedral is a perfect example of both inside and outside transcendence.
- How does this worship space make the presence of God feel near and present? Willow Creek Community Church-outside is hospitable and seeker-friendly while the inside seats are thrust toward the relatively low platform.

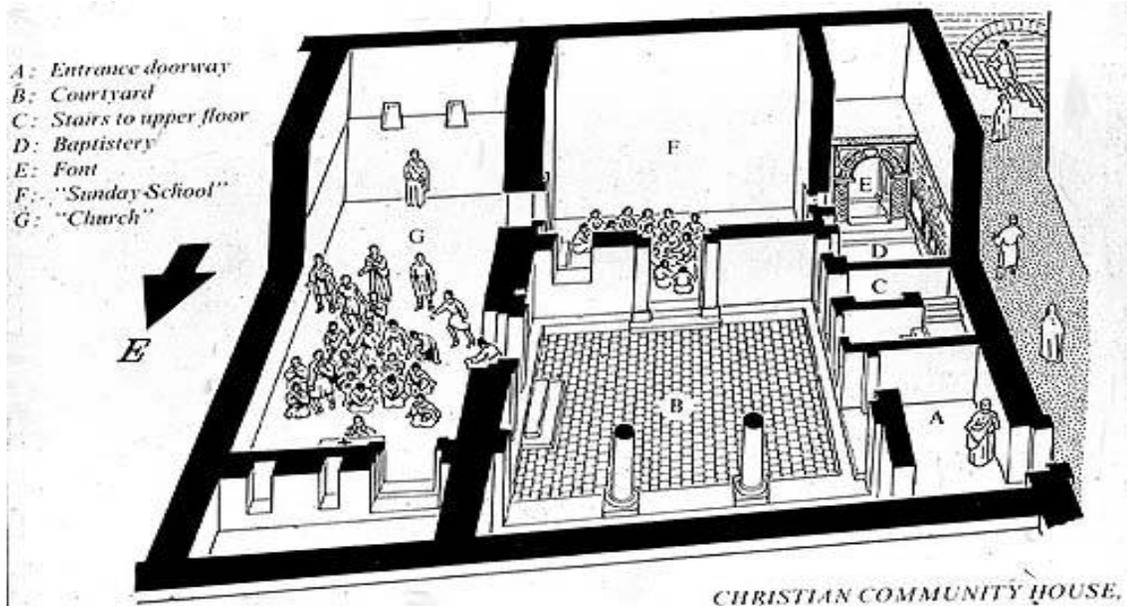
Horizontal versus Vertical

- Is the worship space about creating community or only personal worship to God?
- How does the seating and placement of elements lend themselves to horizontal or vertical worship?

A Brief History of Churches-Ancient to Post-Modern

Ancient

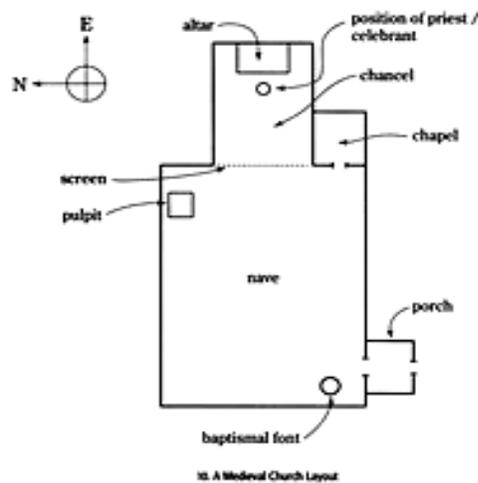
- Physical Setting of the church was a home of a well-off Christian where the *Ekklesia*-the Lord's body-congregation could gather.
- Common meal was served and could accommodate around 40-50 persons.
- Kiss of love- *Agape* (the love of God or Christ for mankind)- regular liturgical gesture.
- *Ekklesia*-the Lord's body-congregation.
- Eucharist was most common form of public worship. In conjunction with an Agape Feast, which was often a wild party.
- Open to all genders and social classes and involved but very exclusive as well
- Supernatural divine powers.
- What does this space tell you about their worship of God? Use the six worship spaces for a guide.



Medieval

- Stems from influence of Constantine in obtaining/building worship spaces
- Basilica
 - Large number of people accommodated in a central space free of pillars
 - Central space could be expanded laterally
 - Raised area on east side of Basilica
 - No seating in central space, only standing or kneeling
- Baptism is separate from confirmation. Baptism seen more for personal salvation rather than joining a community of faith.
- Sacrament of baptism infuses faith-due to high mortality rate- do it as quickly as possible.
- Eucharist was the most common form of public worship although the mass became more remote as the altar table becomes pushed back further and further. Choir became a buffer between the people and the liturgical action.
- Audibility was a problem because the priests were so far away (often behind roodcreens).
- In this sense the congregation was only there to be present and sit in silence-very low participation. Must make penance in order to receive communion.
- However, the churches themselves were painted ornately with a quasi pictorial bible of the history of the church and the saints from which they could learn.
- Pews were brought in, which limited movement- in sixteenth century.
- Polyphonic singing for congregational song.
- Monks set the agenda for much of medieval worship.
- Light and glass used in the Gothic architectural design by Abbot Suger to allow for mystical ambience i.e. the light of Christ.
- Gothic architecture was designed to portray a hierarchical, transcendent, while suppressing humanity's connection with God.

- Location of baptismal font at the front associates baptism with joining the church as well as a didactic tool (still common in Anglican).



- ✚ What does this say about worship space in Medieval in light of what we just discussed?

Reformation

- Anabaptists and Quakers (who didn't believe in the sacraments) only used believer's baptism. Others still insisted on infant baptism. All were still highly public for the community.
- Luther's reform of the Mass to German and printing press meant everyone had access to the Word and could participate more fully in worship and personal devotion.
- Prayer (offices) became more accessible to people.
- Greater emphasis on preaching of the Word and the centrality of the pulpit.
- Congregational song (metrical psalms, Lutheran hymnody) was either highly used or not (Zwingli).
- Quakers -no communion or baptism, modest buildings, focus on the people with benches sitting next to each other, no art or other visual distractions. No use of instruments. Everything geared toward the community gathered for worship.
- Shakers-lots of movement space.

Baroque Era

- Roodcreens disappear.
- Choir is moved out of sight.
- Acoustics were important in order to hear the preaching better.
- Whole space becomes a theatre for the mass.
- Dominant theme became altar-table, pulpit, and font gathered in one place near the front.
- By 1630, many altar tables were re-placed against the east wall enclosed by a new item: communion rails, which are still used in many liturgical churches today.

Frontier/Revivalism (18th century-Today)

- Focal point of campground was the preaching stand.
- In front of it before the crowd was a straw covered space, known as the altar, mourner's bench or anxious seat. "walk the sawdust trail."
- Preacher interacted with mourners during the invitation dubbed "altar call."
- Highly evangelical and conversion central preaching and singing.
- Great emphasis on congregational song. All music was supposed to warm up the preaching.
- Pragmatic approach rather than Biblical-Charles Finney.
- Age of Enlightenment.
- Approach of architecture was more utilitarian-for instance, the development of the amphitheatre type auditorium space was by revival preachers.

Auditorium Style Churches (late 18th-current century)

- Finney's Chatham Theatre and Broadway Tabernacle (Auditorium style churches)
 - ✓ Auditorium like, large and formal
 - ✓ Circular in shape
 - ✓ Excellent acoustics, thus usually high ceilings
 - ✓ No pulpit so he could move around-platform approach
 - ✓ Stage not raised high so he could "look everyone in the eyes"
 - ✓ Comfortable seats
 - ✓ Mostly unobstructed views but focus is still on platform as liturgical center
 - ✓ Balconies did have steps to come down for conversion
 - ✓ Catered furnishings and décor to urban elite
- Moody Memorial Auditorium Church- 1925

Modern Period-(Twentieth century-Today)

- Neutrality
- Comfort
- Contemporary feel and look
- Cleanliness
- Excellence in everything
- Move towards secular architecture
- Use of "transparent" plexi-glass lecterns
- Even within the Liturgical Renewal in both Catholic and Protestant religions, emphasis is on congregational participation.
- Resulting in fan or semi-circular shaped seating areas around a slightly elevated platform or common focal point.
- Effort is to bring congregations closer to the altar table, elements, platform, etc.
- Visual arts, such as stained glass or paintings, serve a didactic purpose.

Liturgical Renewal Movement- (Twentieth century)

- Attempted to recover the idea of the gathered church representing the mystical body of Christ-Gothic Revival.
- Began with Vatican II- Mass translated into vernacular.
- Use of liturgical colors and other relevant symbolism.
- Altar table closer to the people and the priest faces the congregation.
- Pulpit and lecterns were divided on either side of the altar in Presbyterian and Methodist churches after Lutheran, Catholic, and Anglican churches.
- Centrality of the Bible to worship and less on culture.
- Aimed to celebrate Eucharist weekly.
- Church year and lectionary more commonly used.
- Communal sense of worship- more active participation in worship (especially music).
- Neo-Gothic style-contemporary elements, such as construction materials (concrete, steel and glass), and different shapes, such as A-frame designs.

Postmodern

- Movement space is invaluable; the building must invoke a sense of place. Less concerned with space overall than living out the mission of the church.
- Focus on community so arrangements of seating are focused that way.
- House churches rise again.
- Missional, relational, and incarnational.
- Ancient-future by unearthing historic worship forms and bringing them up to date.
- Embracing all five senses.
- Candles, visuals, fabrics, art create a holy atmosphere. Often lighting is dim to convey a sense of spirituality.
- Painting as free expression.
- Story-telling is the primary mode of proclamation and teaching. Seeking scriptures to search out primitive worship practices.
- Communication has shifted from a verbal/print-oriented form of communication to a more symbolic way of communicating through participating in the event.
- Will incorporate ancient elements (such as stained-glass or cross) in with modern architecture (Prestonwood) to promote a sense of spiritual reverence. The ancient cross is prevalent.
- Authentic worship, band may be hidden off to the side.
- Concerned with the environment. Any buildings are eco-friendly and “green.” Organic forms.

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