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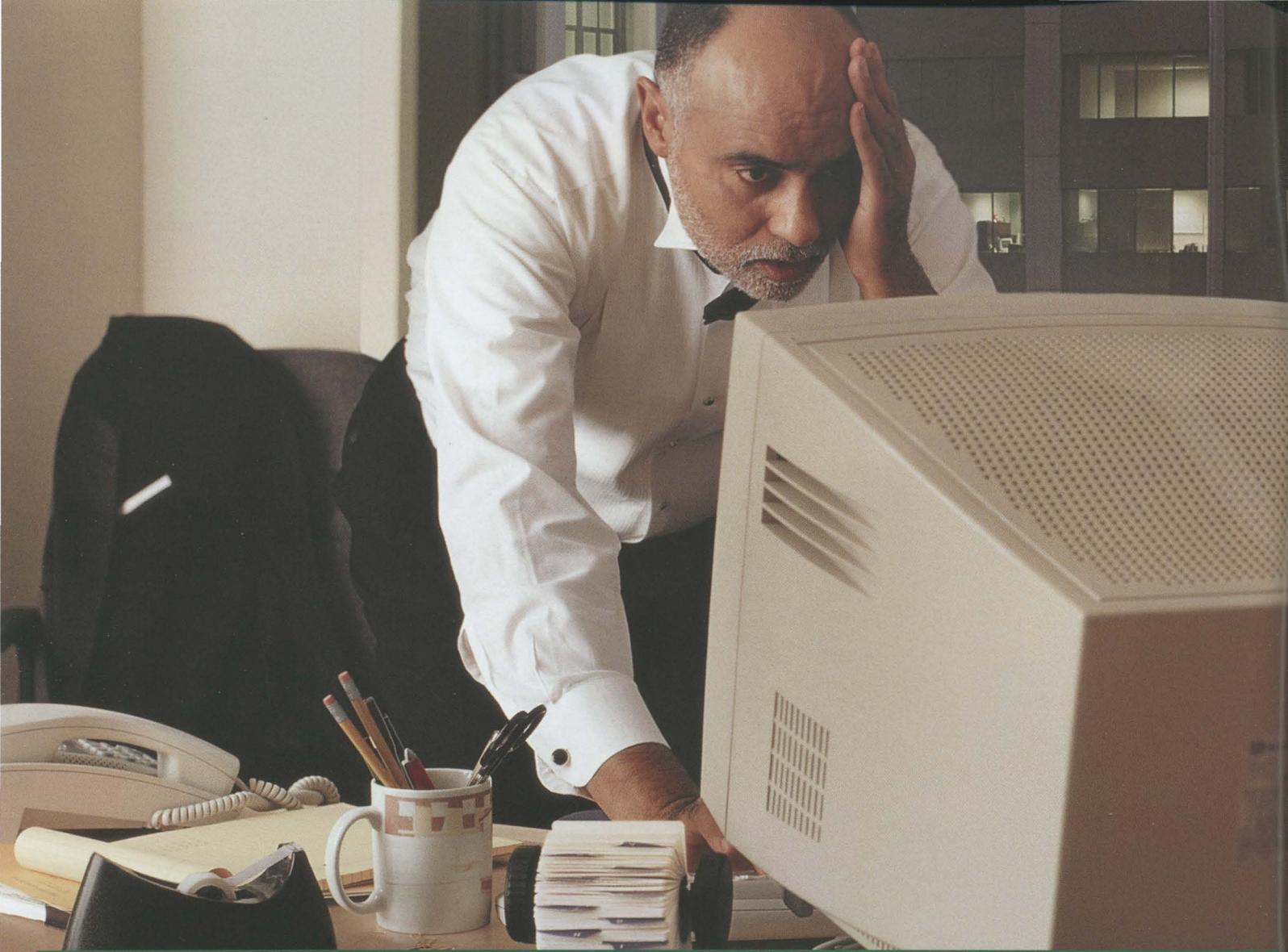
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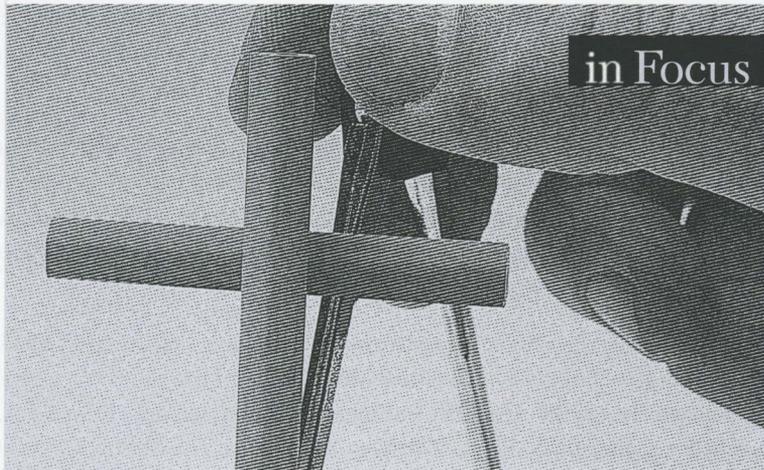
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SPRING 2003

Sacred Space



in Focus

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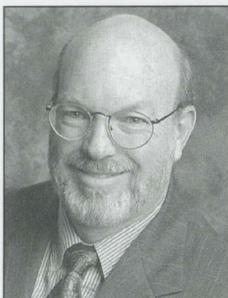
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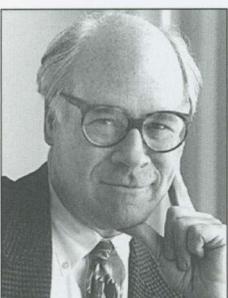
J. Brent Bill



Kathleen A. Cahalan



Nancy DeMott



Charles P. Henderson



Simon Hyoun

J. Brent Bill serves as executive vice president of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. He also is a minister in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and has served as a local church pastor, denominational executive, seminary faculty member, director of a not-for-profit agency, and parachurch organization staff member. Mr. Bill has written 13 books and more than 100 magazine pieces of fiction and nonfiction. His most recent book is *Imagination and Spirit: A Contemporary Quaker Reader* (Friends United Press, 2002).

Dr. Kathleen A. Cahalan is assistant professor of pastoral theology and ministry at St. John's University School of Theology Seminary in Collegeville, Minnesota. She served as evaluation coordinator for the Lilly Endowment's religion division from 1996–2000. Dr. Cahalan earned her doctorate in practical theology from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1998.

Dr. Nancy DeMott is resource director of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. She serves on the Congregational Resource Guide team (a joint project of the Alban Institute and the Indianapolis Center) and works as a resource consultant to congregations. Dr. DeMott is an American Baptist Christian educator and pastor and was the founding director of the Jubilee Resource Center, an ecumenical ministry in the Lafayette, Indiana, area.

Rev. Charles P. Henderson is executive director of CrossCurrents, a national organization that encourages people of faith to integrate religious conviction with the life of the mind through educational programs and a quarterly journal. He is the author of *God and Science* (John Knox, 1986) and has written widely for publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *Commonweal*, *The Christian Century*, and *CrossCurrents*. Rev. Henderson, a Presbyterian minister, has served as a pastor to congregations in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, and as a chaplain at Princeton University.

Simon Hyoun is the publishing assistant at the Alban Institute. He holds an M.F.A. in creative writing from the University of Michigan and was the 1999 recipient of the Avery Hopwood Award in fiction. Prior to joining the Institute, Mr. Hyoun worked at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., where he currently resides.

Rev. John Janka is an ordained United Methodist pastor and the director of consulting and education at the Alban Institute. Prior to joining Alban in 2000, he was employed as a member of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference staff, responsible for resourcing congregations, and as district superintendent, responsible for deploying and supervising clergy. He also assisted congregations in redevelopment, advocated for new roles for laity in ministry, and developed resources for clergy and congregations in times of transition.

Roger L. Patterson currently resides in New York City where he writes, lectures, and consults with congregations on the design, construction, and alteration of religious structures. During his years as an architect in private practice, he designed over 300 churches, and for the past 21 years he has served internationally as an architect for the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. He continues to be an active consultant and member of design teams for new church buildings across the country.

Sarah F. Pevejer has served at Partners for Sacred Places as director of special projects since 1997, managing the design, production, and field-testing of the "Your Sacred Place Is A Community Asset Tool Kit." She has helped shape Partners' training initiatives, including the recently launched New Dollars/New Partners for Sacred Places, and has designed and conducted numerous training experiences for seminary continuing-education programs and historic preservation conferences.

Rev. Dr. Donna Schaper is senior pastor of Coral Gables Congregational Church in Coral Gables, Florida. She received her M.Div. from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and D.Min. from Hartford Seminary, and has extensive experience as an interfaith liturgist and educator. Dr. Schaper also writes and speaks extensively and conducts creative writing workshops.

Standing on Holy Ground



Congregations

PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER

James P. Wind

EDITOR

Lisa Kinney

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Richard Bass

Brent Bill

David Lott

Alice Mann

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Simon Hyoun

DESIGN

Concept Foundry, Bethesda, MD

The Alban Institute

7315 Wisconsin Avenue

Suite 1250W

Bethesda, MD 20814-3211

Telephone: 301-718-4407

Fax: 301-718-1958

Editorial Inquiries

To submit articles or letters to the editor, send an e-mail to lkinney@alban.org or send a letter to Lisa Kinney at the address above. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for writers' guidelines or visit our Website at www.alban.org.

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I've been thinking quite a bit about sacred space lately as I have considered where to hold my wedding at the end of June.

The church my fiancé and I belong to is housed in a brand new, box-like building. In the sanctuary, there are spare, unadorned brick walls with huge, clear windows, and a high ceiling with exposed lighting fixtures and ductwork that resemble a typical urban Starbucks. We joined the church right around the time that they moved into this new building, and I remember thinking: If they had the money to build a new church, why would they choose something this sterile? Why would they use all this brick and glass? It reminded me of a high school or some other kind of institution.

And yet, truly, I can't imagine being married anywhere else. Through my participation in worship and fellowship with this congregation Sunday after Sunday, this ultra-modern space has become imbued with meaning for me—it is holy ground, and being there reminds me that I am a part of the body of Christ. It turns out that I don't need stained glass, or pews, or gorgeous wood, or even the image of the cross; what I need is to hear the message that God and I are one, that my neighbor and I are one, that there is a way to peace and hope and love. And I need to experience this message in the presence of like-minded people who can support me on my journey, as I also can support them. Would I like some Christian symbols or a little more sense of mystery in the worship space? Yes, but I also can experience that mystery as I look out the huge window and see spring taking hold of the landscape after a long winter. To me, what is most important is that my marriage occur in a place where both my future husband and I have experienced the love of God in fellowship with others, for ultimately this is what I would hope for our marriage journey.

Marriage is also a central metaphor in one of the articles in this issue, "Crossing the Threshold" (p. 14) by Alban staff member Simon Hyoun. This is a fascinating story of how a Jewish congregation and a Presbyterian congregation first "cohabited" (meaning one rented from the other) and then "married," when both purchased new worship space together. How they negotiated use of space and display of symbols is inspiring, showing how each faith tradition remained true to itself and sensitive to the other—a lesson that is most timely, given the events unfolding in the world today. In our "In Focus" article, "A House That Will Last Forever" (p. 22), Charles P. Henderson says that one of the elements that make a place sacred is that people experience it as "a unifying focal point" in the world, and that another aspect of the sacred is "how what happens within relates to the world without." He illustrates his points powerfully with St. Paul's Chapel in lower Manhattan, which was merely blocks from Ground Zero and served as a place of refuge and respite and hope for relief workers, families, and people of many faith traditions.

Sacred space has its earthy, practical concerns, too, and several articles in this issue address them. One, by Indianapolis Center for Congregations staffers J. Brent Bill and Nancy DeMott, provides practical tips for facility repair and working with contractors in "Leaking Gutters and Sacred Spaces" (p. 10). Another article by Sarah F. Peveler of Partners for Sacred Places, "Sustaining Sacred Places by Telling Their Stories" (p. 18), describes how congregations can develop partnerships with their communities by making the true value of their services known. Tabor Lutheran Church in Philadelphia is a shining example of the success of this approach, and one that I hope inspires you to dream about the possibilities for your own house of worship.

In gratitude for sacred spaces everywhere,

Lisa

Lisa Kinney

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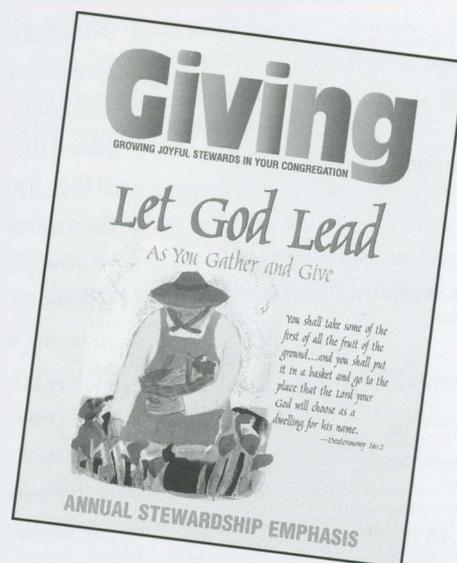
The offering itself is the focus of this year's **Giving**, the annual periodical of the Ecumenical Stewardship Center (ESC). It features "Bring an Offering," an inspired collection of resources that emphasizes giving as worship.

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Space Matters

A recent visit to Independence Hall in Philadelphia reminded me of how much space matters. Standing in the room where our nation was invented, where the Declaration of Independence was debated and signed, and where the Constitution was hammered out, I got a powerful sense of the importance of place. As I stood there watching tourists from around the world and young lovers from Philadelphia vie for photo-ops, I thought of this room as a special container, a safe place where democracy could come to life. Over time, it also has become a symbol, a space set aside that reminds Americans of who we are and what we aspire to. To lose such a space would be to lose a piece of ourselves.

These are days when we all are more conscious of the significance and the precariousness of our spaces. Every important national symbol has been fortified with new security systems and new protective barriers in the wake of the terrorists' successful destruction of the World Trade Center. That space defined New York and the world economy—a part of who we are. Had the terrorists been fully successful on September 11, 2001, we would have lost the Pentagon and possibly the United States Capitol as well, and with them an even greater portion of who we are. (As I write, our nation anxiously waits under Code Orange alert, F-16s fly overhead, and portable missile launchers are positioned around the Washington metropolitan area—sure signs of both the importance and the vulnerability of our special spaces.)

Space for Our Humanity

We need these spaces and containers if we are to be fully human. And as important as our national symbols are, they are not the only spaces that matter. Our concerns to protect our environment, to set aside national parks and monuments, to preserve wetlands and purify streams, are all about our need for natural spaces—environments in which we can live, breathe, and be the creatures we were designed to be. These spaces too are threatened and vulnerable.

Our homes are other kinds of spaces—smaller containers and symbols that make room for us to be particular people and forge particular kinds of relationships. Their hearths and tables open up spaces for intimacy, identity, and love to emerge. These spaces, so indispensable

and so fragile, face their own pressures and dangers.

And then there are our religious spaces. These special places make room for our spiritual selves to emerge, for sacred stories to be told, and life-giving practices to be learned. They make room for us to meet God, rekindle hope, experience self-emptying love, and face the dark side of our humanness with the light of grace. From these places, justice and mercy are set loose in the world. But high-steeped places of worship now think of themselves as targets, and their lower-profile neighbors are joining them in a concern to protect these spaces and the people who enter them.

Facing the Challenges

Setting aside our preoccupation with terrorism for a moment, we see other challenges. Many of our important religious spaces creak under the burdens of age and neglect, after decades of deferred maintenance. As some of these spaces disappear, room for human community goes with them.

A very different kind of challenge comes from our nation's growth. As our cities become more densely populated and our suburbs continue to sprawl, there is often less room for congregations. Office towers, corporate parks, strip malls, and planned communities compete for land, and congregations often lose. Zoning battles over whether

or not congregations can build in certain areas are signs of a cultural argument about which kinds of space are most needed.

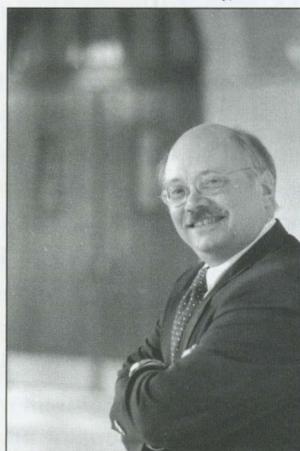
At a time in history when so much seems to crowd and threaten our precious spaces, what should we do? We must begin by protecting and caring for the spaces we have. That task, by itself, is daunting. But we must do more. Across centuries, our great religious traditions have reminded us that people must have such spaces. They can be as grand as St. Peter's Basilica in Rome or as sparse as Thomas Merton's hermitage, but they are indispensable.

The tradition that I know best, Christianity, has a legacy of space-making unequalled by any other. Judith Dupré's stunning *Churches* (HarperCollins, 2001) is a beautiful reminder of that legacy. On one page is the great stone cathedral at Chartres, on another the wooden stave church of Borgund, Norway. In forms as simple as the Shaker Meetinghouse at Sabbathday Lake in Maine or as elegant as Louis IX's Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, this tradition has opened space for human being in remarkable ways.

Now, in the face of pressures to destroy and crowd out, we must reclaim our commitment to care for and create. More is required of us than generic replicas of New England village churches or Gothic clichés. Soon we will recognize that the megachurches designed as barren clones of the mall or the corporate auditorium will take us only so far. Our challenge is the same as that faced in every era: to keep clearing imaginative space and keep building new

kinds of sacred containers and symbols that will release healing in the world.

Rev. Dr. James P. Wind is the president of the Alban Institute. Prior to joining the Institute in 1995, he served as program director at the Lilly Endowment's religion division. Dr. Wind is the author of three books and numerous articles, including the Alban Institute special report on leadership.





Evaluation as Collaborative Inquiry

KATHLEEN A. CAHALAN

Before planning the third season of a hospitality project, St. Paul's minister of outreach suggests at a committee meeting that an evaluation might help the group to make improvements for the upcoming year. Committee members nod in agreement. One enthusiastic member suggests, "Let's design an evaluation form participants can fill out at the end of each session." Another member offers a dose of realism: "Great idea, but we don't have the time or the expertise to make up a survey. Let's just hire an expert in evaluation." A third member opposes the very idea: "What a waste of time, we already know how it's going and what we need to do for next year." And a fourth member dares to voice an underlying concern of many: "Are we sure we want to ask people what they think? What if the wrong people speak up and they distort what is really happening? Won't that possibly harm the project?"

The committee members' responses reveal some common attitudes about evaluation: it consists of immediate feedback after an event; it is extra work added on to an already full agenda; it requires experts; and it's challenging or possibly dangerous. Each of these attitudes reveals an element of truth about evaluation; however, they are not a complete or adequate picture of what evaluation is and what it can do for a project. Evaluation is much more. I think of evaluation as a kind of collaborative inquiry that builds on three important dimensions of strong organizations—learning, leadership, and accountability.

Standard textbooks in evaluation define the word *evaluation* in one of three ways: to assess the worth or merit of a particular object (Is this project worthwhile?); to assess objectives and outcomes (Did the project do what it promised?); or to gather

information in order to make decisions (Based on what we know about the project, what aspects should be improved, added, or discontinued?). Each of these definitions highlights an important aspect of evaluation, but there is another dimension that I think supports all three. It might be best described as a meta-purpose—why an organization engages in assessment and decision-making. The primary motivation to engage in project evaluation is a desire to learn.

An Opportunity to Learn

But what does a project and organization seek to learn from evaluation? Quite simply, a comprehensive approach to evaluation allows us to learn something about each aspect of a project's design and, in so doing, contributes to the refinement of the project's rationale. Evaluation builds up a body of knowledge that can help project leaders refine activities, select appropriate resources, identify results, describe impact, and hopefully understand more fully the condition being addressed. For example, project evaluations can teach us something about the relationship between activities, resources, and impact: what resources are necessary to successfully undertake an activity, and what is the activity's real impact on participants. In short, what we learn from evaluation can become the evidence that further substantiates the project's claims about the condition it is addressing, as well as what the project is doing to address it.

Leaders set a tone for evaluation; their attitude toward learning influences how others will receive and use evaluation information.

St. Paul's Church claims that hospitality is necessary in a large parish where people have a hard time meeting others face to face. The hospitality committee believes that newcomers need immediate assistance in finding their way into parish life. Furthermore, the church believes that mentoring relationships are the most effective means of connecting people to parish activities. As the committee looks to evaluate their efforts, they can begin with the question: What is it we most want to learn about our project? Committee members might be wondering about a number of issues: What areas of parish life are newcomers attracted to and what are they most likely to become involved in? How do existing ministries welcome newcomers and draw on their knowledge and experience? Do any newcomers take initiative to start new groups and ministries? Questions such as these illustrate what project planners might desire to learn, and evaluation is one of the most effective means by which people can learn about their work together.

Many of us are accustomed to filling out an evaluation form at the end of a meeting, event, or conference. It provides the host with immediate feedback on what people liked and

disliked. Oftentimes this is valuable information and an effective means for gathering participants' immediate feedback, but in most cases it does not constitute the full range and scope of evaluation.

When evaluation is a means to learning, it is both a formative and summative practice. Evaluation that occurs over the course of a project is generally referred to as *formative evaluation*; when evaluation occurs at the conclusion, it is called *summative evaluation*. Both types of evaluation provide helpful ways of seeing what happens in a project. Formative evaluation, for instance, gives project leaders an accurate picture of what is taking place as the project activities unfold, and may assist them in making changes over the course of the project that will insure goals are met. Summative evaluation looks back on a project and seeks to learn how and in what ways project goals were met and what kind of impact the project has had on its participants. Summative evaluation is often used for purposes of accountability or accreditation. It also provides information to strategic planners that can aid in decision-making about future efforts. Evaluation, then, can have a broad scope beyond the evaluation forms we are asked to fill out at the end of a conference.

Overcoming Resistance

If evaluation is going to do what I claim it can, it matters who in an organization is responsible for it: who leads it, who cares about it, and who uses it. Evaluation is the responsibility of organization and project leaders who help staff members, board members, and constituents understand that evaluation is important and useful. Leaders set a tone for evaluation; their attitude toward learning influ-

ences how others will receive and use evaluation information. It is no surprise that evaluation is often resisted; it can be threatening! A project, in fact, may not be living up to its claims, or securing the results it aimed for. Some people fear that evaluations will turn up negative findings that will lead to punitive measures against the project or organization. Others, on the basis of previous experience, may view evaluation as a waste of time and of little use. And some may see evaluation primarily as additional work on top of an already full set of tasks.

Evaluation may feel for some like negative judgment or being graded on their performance. A project leader may feel they have to prove something to others in order to get high marks. It can be uncomfortable to have a project judged, particularly in regards to work we care deeply about. We might feel that evaluators are looking over our shoulder and pointing out problems and failures. Because of our close involvement and commitment to the work, we may hear criticism or suggestions as negative indictments rather than as constructive proposals. And we may fail to separate what the project is and does from our personal investment and contributions to it.

When evaluation is truly understood as learning, the project's weaknesses, mishaps, and failed attempts are not threats, but opportunities.

Leaders can reframe evaluation to help overcome these resistances. For instance, when evaluation is truly understood as learning, the project's weaknesses, mishaps, and failed attempts are not threats, but opportunities. Leaders can invite people to step back and reflect on the project's goals, and identify the obstacles that are blocking success. If leaders allow people to see the project design as flexible and adaptable, evaluation opens up alternative strategies and activities. In fact, if plans do not change over the course of a multiyear project, it may be a signal that learning is not taking place. Because every element of a successful project cannot be identified at the outset, evaluation is indispensable for answering the questions: What have we learned from the project thus far? What's missing from what we are doing? and What needs to change?

In addition to a spirit of learning and openness, leaders can insure that evaluation is worth the time it takes. Evaluation is an activity that requires resources such as time, money, and material goods, so people must be able to see that the use of additional resources has merit for the project and organization. In essence, evaluation can create a spirit of collaborative inquiry among the project's stakeholders. A key aspect of evaluation is determining who these stakeholders are, what they want to learn, and how the project can engage them in conversation. Again, in a well-designed project, stakeholders are people invested in the project's rationale: they are committed to helping the organization successfully execute activities, secure needed resources, and achieve the results and impact necessary for changing a condition. Evaluation is a way to provide comprehensive information to the project's stakeholders so that they see more clearly, understand more fully, and learn what is necessary to do the work effectively.

SIX STEPS TO EFFECTIVE EVALUATION

The steps outlined below are sequential, progressing from one set of activities to the next. In most cases, steps 1 and 6 are the responsibility of project leaders who help to define the purpose and audience for the evaluation (step 1) and disseminate the findings to stakeholders and other audiences (step 6). Steps 2, 3, 4, and 5 are the responsibility of the person or team designated to carry out the evaluation, and they include identifying, gathering, interpreting, and sharing information from evaluation findings. The six steps constitute a cycle of work that requires time for planning, patience in executing, and a commitment to learning.

Step 1—Focus the Evaluation

- Determine the subject and purpose of the evaluation.
- Describe the audiences the evaluation seeks to inform.
- Identify key evaluation questions.
- Select a person to lead the evaluation.

Step 2—Create an Evaluation Design

- State purposes, audiences, and key questions.
- Describe the data-collection activities and the persons responsible for the work.
- Determine type of reports necessary for various audiences.
- Develop a schedule for evaluation activities and preparation of reports.
- Establish an evaluation budget.

Step 3—Obtain and Record Data

- Gather information through written materials, direct observation, interviews, surveys, and tests.
- Create a written narrative as the project evaluation unfolds.

Step 4—Analyze and Interpret Information

- Compose an accurate picture of the evaluation's subject.
- Interpret the meaning of evaluation findings.

Step 5—Report and Disseminate Findings

- Prepare written reports appropriate to various audiences.
- Create conversations around evaluation findings.

Step 6—Revise the Project's Rationale

- Make improvements to the project design.
- Restate the project's rationale.
- Incorporate insights into future work.
- Make changes in the evaluation design for the next phase of evaluation.

Making Good Projects Better

Evaluation is a means of being accountable to the organization's mission and the project's purposes. Obviously, few organizations have the luxury to be wasting time and resources on unnecessary or ineffective projects. Evaluation helps to build the case for a project and strengthen an organization's commitment to sustaining it over the long term.

Project evaluation, then, has the potential to make good projects better. It increases understanding about the conditions the project seeks to address, and strengthens the claims about the

activities and resources necessary for effective response. In addition, project evaluation helps us to see the project's impact on constituents and the organization. In essence, evaluation helps to refine the rationale that provides a project with meaning, purpose, and direction. ♦

This article was excerpted and adapted from Kathleen A. Cahalan's forthcoming Alban Institute book, *Projects That Matter: Successful Planning and Evaluation for Religious Organizations* (AL 266). To order, call 1-800-486-1318, ext. 244, or visit our Web site at www.alban.org.

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Leaking Gutters and Sacred Spaces

Practical Tips for Facility Repair

BRENT BILL AND NANCY DEMOTT

First Baptist Church of Cumberland, Indiana, had a gutter and roof problem. At least that's what the trustees thought. They knew they had storm damage, and during the past few winters they had noticed that ice was backing up. This may have had something to do with the various ages of the roofs and gutters. Over the years, new wings had been added to First Baptist's building—not unlike the additions to many churches dotting the metropolitan Indianapolis landscape.

So the Rev. Kevin Rose, associate pastor, called the Indianapolis Center for Congregations,¹ looking for someone who could do church guttering and roofing

work. Since its inception almost seven years ago, the center has fielded thousands of requests from congregations in its nine-county service area as part of its mission of helping Indianapolis-area congregations find solutions to their practical problems. We who work at the center do that by connecting churches with excellent resources, both local and national.

Building issues are among the top requests. Center staff members have handled more than 75 congregational cases related to building concerns in the past six years. These include questions on selection of architects, facility expansion, accessibility issues, and stained-glass

window restoration. Many other cases that come to the center are indirectly related to sacred space issues—such as capital fund drives for new or expanded buildings, strategic planning, worship, and relocation issues. In addition, the center, through its innovative Resource Grants Program,² has awarded more than \$70,000 to 16 area congregations for building-related resources and projects.

Looking at the Big Picture

As the center's resource director, Nancy DeMott took First Baptist's case. After talking with Kevin Rose, Nancy gave him the names of some guttering firms recommended by other Indianapolis-area congregations. The Indianapolis Center for Congregations frequently relies on the experience of area congregations in compiling a list of best resources for other congregations. That's part of the center's work—serving as a sort of “consumers' report” for congregations.

Equipped with these references, the church's trustees met. Afterward Kevin called Nancy and reported that the trustees, after discussing the guttering problem, had decided that they needed to find a general contractor who could give them some overall help with maintenance. They wisely realized that they needed someone who could help them with a “building big picture,” rather than a firm that could do only a bit of guttering and roofing.

Nancy asked the associate pastor if the trustees might want to consider doing a facility assessment. Center staff members have learned that various types of facility assessments can be made—something that most congregations don't realize. Types of assessments include Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Assessment (an evaluation of a building for compliance with that 1990 federal law), energy efficiency studies (see the box on page 13 for more information), historical renovation assessment for older buildings, and analysis of a church's space needs. Nancy recommended for First Baptist an assessment in which a consultant comes in and identifies what immediate repairs are needed and develops an ongoing plan for repair and

maintenance. Specifically, she recommended using a local nonprofit group that calls on the expertise of experienced retired and semiretired executives and professionals who work for low or no fees.

First Baptist went with that recommendation, and a retired architect from that organization was assigned to work with the congregation. He surveyed the facility and helped the trustees find three high-quality facility assessors that did the kind of work needed. The trustees then selected an inspection firm to analyze their facility thoroughly, to create a priority list of immediate repairs, and to develop a multi-year preventive

maintenance plan. The consultant was also present during the assessment to “ask the right questions.”

As the project progressed, the inspection turned up major building problems. They were all related to shoddy work done when the church added classroom space 10 years earlier. To completely repair the water damage and prevent future damage, some of that work would have to be redone.

By then, the folk at First Baptist were fairly frustrated. What had seemed a simple problem had grown into a full-scale investment of time and money. But to its credit, the congregation did not back away from the problems that had been identified. Empowered by having reliable information on the nature of the problem and positive solutions to it (what sort of work needed to be done and who could do it), the trustees moved from frustration to action. They hired the appropriate contractors to repair their facility and did it right. In the end, they were well satisfied—and their gutters no longer leaked.

What First Baptist Learned

Looking back at the process, members of

First Baptist Church of Cumberland reflected, identified, and shared with the center the following five essentials they learned—steps that can help your congregation maintain and repair your facilities.

1. Get an inspector. First Church members learned that when their “new” classroom space and narthex were built more than 10 years ago, they should have hired a professional inspection company before signing off on any work. This practice is extremely important for church building committees or trustees who oversee such projects. Limited expertise or knowledge on the part of well-

Limited expertise or knowledge on the part of well-meaning volunteer committee members often creates a situation in which unscrupulous contractors and shoddy work can be overlooked.

meaning volunteer committee members often creates a situation in which unscrupulous contractors and shoddy work can be overlooked. A high-quality professional inspector will quickly catch improper procedures and poor workmanship. An independent inspector should be involved throughout any building process. “The cost of hiring an inspection company is worth every penny,” said Kevin Rose.

2. Do it right the first time. They learned that temporary fixes and short-cuts only postpone and often multiply the expense of repair. While a short-term fix may be less expensive, it is always better to make repairs thoroughly and correctly the first time. If the job is done right, a five-year period of fixing gutters doesn't end up concealing that make-do fixes were driving water up under the roof, ruining decking and plaster beneath.

3. Get a facility maintenance report. The congregation learned that getting a full facility maintenance report gives a committee the big picture. This point is important because it relates to the temporary-fix temptation cited above. Building problems are often intercon-

nected. A full report helps a group avoid focusing on one small problem and spending money to repair it, only to discover a year later that a previously unidentified but related problem must be corrected before the initial problem can be properly dealt with. Without a comprehensive report, costs can quickly spiral out of control, and repairs will fail to produce a unified solution.

4. Refer to your inspection report when hiring contractors. The congregation found that obtaining an outside inspection report gives a common focus to a property ministry team, as well as a list of needs to check off when interviewing potential contractors. One contractor often has a different idea from another on how to repair the presented problems. Methods used to gather information about your needs and goals vary from contractor to contractor. Contractors may also take different views as to the primary issues, concerns, and challenges presented by your church's project. With such a report in hand, your

First Baptist Church learned valuable lessons. And while experience may be the best teacher, one congregation may find it more prudent (and less frustrating) to learn from another church's experience than to discover the pitfalls on its own. What First Baptist found from its experience may well save you time, money, and frustration as you encounter similar building-related issues.

Guidance on Building Issues

You can learn from the Center's experience, too. We've learned (and are constantly relearning) in our work with local congregations that simple building questions (fixing the gutter or repairing windows) often don't have simple, straightforward solutions. In many cases, while immediate building problems are being repaired, deeper problems are discovered. Congregations need to be aware of this possibility and to be prepared to invest the time, energy, and frustration to address the emerging deeper problems.

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committee can more easily determine which suggested solutions meet the inspector's description of needed repairs and help prospective contractors stick to the tasks you believe need to be done.

5. Be patient with the process. First Church learned that it takes time to move through the interviewing, inspection, and reporting process. Those congregation members who just want to "get things fixed" need to be reminded of the benefits of the process, and not just the fix. Yes, it can seem as though nothing is happening—especially when the roof is obviously falling down. But patience and process are keys to arriving at a successful solution to any sacred space issue.

We offer the following guidance to help you as you begin addressing any building issue—whether it be gutter repair or redesign of interior space or major additions or renovations. The answers will help you as you work with an outside consultant or contractor. You may find, though, that not all the questions apply to your situation or that some of them are answerable only as your project progresses.

1. Describe the problem. Begin by carefully describing your church's problem. It's not enough to say (especially to a contractor), "We have a gutter problem." Be as specific as you can. Is the problem that the gutters are falling down? Leaking? Leaf-laden? Not draining?

2. Decide how to solve the problem.

After you've defined the problem, ask what you think needs to happen to solve it. Is it something members can do themselves, or is outside help called for? If so, what kind of outside help? In First Baptist's case, the retired consultant helped trustees differentiate between the need for a project manager or for a general contractor, and to determine which was best for their situation. Both approaches can work. First Baptist, following the consultant's recommendation, went with a proven contractor with his own crew.

3. Determine your time investment.

Carefully consider how much time and energy the congregation is willing to invest in fixing this problem. This calculation has a lot to do with preparing the congregation for how much time it will take truly to solve the problem. Remember, many people will want to "just get it fixed." You need to have clear answers to 1 and 2 on this list to help them realize that it won't be fixed tomorrow—unless, of course, it will (as in the case of a youth group member's crushing a basketball into a building gutter, which needed only to be replaced).

4. Ask financial questions. Ask two money questions: "How much can we realistically afford to spend?" and "How much can we afford *not* to spend?" To understand the second question, remember that the quicker fix may be less expensive in the short run but more costly in the long term. A simple gutter patching may solve the leakage problem—but not the problem of ice building up under the roof. When dealing with finances and buildings, you may have to look at special arrangements—going outside the regular budget, drawing from congregational endowments, borrowing from a bank or church-extension service, or embarking on a special fund drive. When you know what you can spend, communicate that clearly to the contractor—and stick to it! And realize, too, that unless you've had a thorough inspection of the problem, you may not have a realistic idea of the actual cost.

5. Determine your time frame. Consider another time issue. How soon would you like the problem to be addressed? "Yesterday" is not the right

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answer. The problem, most likely, did not develop overnight. And the solution won't be found quickly either. Still, you need to think carefully about a time frame that will work for your congregation—considering both the problem and your church calendar. Ask yourselves, “Are there rigid time constraints?”—especially in relation to congregational events and holidays. As you negotiate with prospective firms, ask them how busy they are and how interested they are in your congregation's project. Discuss whether they think they can meet your proposed schedule. Then get them to put the dates in any contract you sign. You'll need to communicate all of this information to the contractor or firm you're working with.

6. Clarify roles. Decide early on who will represent the church as the primary contact with those involved in designing and building your project. If too many cooks can spoil the soup, too many church members offering too many ideas or proposed changes to the contractor can botch a building project. At the very least, such advice can slow the job considerably. At most, it can lead to cost overruns, confusion, and dissatisfaction with the final job. Likewise, settle up front who from the firm will work directly with your congregation.

Dealing with Vendors

Finally, ask, “What are we looking for in a vendor?” If you're like many church building volunteers, you may have no idea how to answer that question. From our own experience with congregations, contractors, and sacred space issues, we offer the following two suggestions for thinking through this question.

1. Find out whether the vendor has ever worked with a congregation. Ask what percentage of the firm's practice involves projects with congregations. Those of us who are involved with

congregations know that they are very different from most other organizations. They have peculiar characteristics and a culture unlike that of other groups. To us, but maybe not to a contractor, there are obvious ways of dealing with business—committees, boards, sessions, and so on, depending on the congregational polity. Then certain finance issues are often common to many congregations—like years of underbudgeting for routine maintenance or renovation, dwindling operating income, or unrealistic expectations of how much professional renovations (versus volunteer efforts) really cost. Finally, the emotional and spiritual investment of the congregants may be high. Some of them may have served on committees that made previous building decisions. Ask prospective vendors for a list of past church clients and the names of contact people they worked with at those congregations. As you consider your budget issues, check the firm's track record with cost estimating (and confirm it with the other congregations it has worked with). Ask for samples of actual construction costs versus budget costs for recent projects. You'll also want to find out whether the firm has completed projects such as yours for other congregations.

2. Make sure that any vendors carry the proper limits of liability and other insurance. If a project-related accident occurs, you want to ensure that the congregation isn't liable. Likewise, if the job is botched, you want to know that you have recourse. You hope you'll never need to use the insurance—but it's important for your peace of mind. Also contributing to peace of mind during the project is knowing that the vendors have all the proper licenses (such as an architect's license) and permits for your locality. Ask for copies of all these documents.

Sacred space issues—whether they be leaking gutters or major renovations—can

seem daunting. Putting to good use the lessons learned by First Baptist Church of Cumberland, Indiana, and the Indianapolis Center for Congregations can ease some of your concerns, leading to the completion of a project that is both satisfactory and satisfying. ♦

NOTES

1. The Indianapolis Center for Congregations, Inc., established in 1997, was founded to help strengthen congregations in the central Indiana metropolitan area. The center is affiliated with the Alban Institute, a research, publishing, education, and consulting organization based in Bethesda, Maryland, which provides resources for congregations nationwide. The Center is a gift to the greater Indianapolis area from Lilly Endowment Inc.
2. The Center's Resource Grants Program is designed to help provide congregations with the financial ability to find and use the best resources available for addressing their challenges and opportunities. Grants can be used for resources ranging from print and digital media to consulting services, educational programs, and workshops. These matching grants are awarded in amounts up to \$15,000, and cover half of the cost of a project or resource.

Do You Need an Energy Audit?

The Indianapolis Center for Congregations has been working with congregations on many facility-related issues, including energy use. Find out if an energy audit belongs in your congregation's future. Go to www.alban.org/journal.asp and click on “Current Issue” to read more.



Crossing the Threshold

How a
Presbyterian
Church and
an Independent
Synagogue
Share Space

SIMON HYOUN

In a new book coauthored with her husband, Steve, Washington journalist Cokie Roberts recalls the moment at a highway rest stop when, over an angrily eaten pastry, she forced a choice upon her then-boyfriend: marry me now, or I'm moving to California. "I said this is the time. If you want this girl, *this* is the time." The two had been dating seriously, considering marriage but worried about, among other things, the possibility that her Catholic and his Jewish beliefs would be incompatible.

In May of 2001, married for over 30 years, the couple gave witness to the blessings of interfaith union at the dedication ceremony of a worship space designed, funded, administered, and used together by Christians and Jews—probably the first structure of its kind in the United States. Covenant Hall, in Bethesda, Maryland, is the culmination of a 30-year partnership between the 700-member Bradley Hills Presbyterian

Church and its cohabitant, the 300-member Bethesda Jewish Congregation.

Both congregations have extensive plans to use the building as a site of faith dialogues, concerts, and other intercongregational events, some of which have already been successfully implemented. In fact, the presence of the Robertses may have echoed a thought crossing the minds of some members and visitors—that the dedication was also a kind of marriage ceremony, recognizing the intent of two sometimes-disparate peoples to reach past their differences toward physical and spiritual partnership.

Breaking Ground Together

The relationship between the two congregations began in 1967, when a practicing group of liberal Jews (under the leadership of Rabbi Edwin Friedman) approached Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church (then led by Rev. Dr. Arthur Hall), looking to rent worship space. Although Bradley

Hills was already providing space to two Christian congregations, it agreed to lease to Bethesda Jewish as well, since the weekly Jewish services would occur on days when the church was free. The resulting contract determined Bethesda Jewish's financial contributions based on the days and hours it used the building space. With time, Bethesda Jewish became Bradley Hills' only renter, and as the two congregations continued to arrange for cooperative use of the building, they developed a friendship.

When in 1997 Bradley Hills began considering plans to renovate its complex and develop its outreach program, Bethesda Jewish was offered a part in the endeavor—as a participant in the project's financial obligations, with representation on the finance and design committees. Plans for renovation soon expanded to a vision of new joint space, and by the time the groundbreaking ceremony was held five years later, the project had required three designers and grown from a \$1.75 million to a \$3 million commitment.²

The spiritual stakes had risen as well. During those five years, the leadership of the Jewish congregation had changed. Both communities had experienced growth in their memberships and, more tellingly, in their faith identities. What had begun in a general attitude of tolerance and an uninitiated trust in the virtues of collaboration now rose undeniably before them, with six walls, no locks, and a view to the west: Covenant Hall.

Commonalities and Differences

The space has been thoughtfully named, bringing to mind the promise God made to the people of Israel:

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jer. 31:33)

The name also resonates in the present, signifying not only the commitment made

by Bethesda Jewish and Bradley Hills in building the space together but also the covenant signed between the congregations in 1992. Displayed prominently within the building, it reads in part, "We wish to acknowledge and celebrate commonalities and differences. We see this relationship as a living example of understanding and respect among people of different heritage."

There is meaning behind the architecture of Covenant Hall as well. Washington, D.C. designer Stephen Muse of Muse

building a worship space. Even when the project is done, it should leave you with a sense of something beginning."

Cross-Training

Institutionalizing inclusive language and learning to negotiate each other's symbols were essential early steps for both these congregations. Bradley Hills learned to be more judicious about where crosses were shown and to use less Christ-centered language when participating in joint events. Bethesda Jewish implemented

only subtle displays of Jewish icons, and always conferred with Bradley Hills about "must have" items.

One such item was the mezuzah placed at the entrance to Covenant Hall. This symbolic object, which by Jewish custom must be fixed on all exterior doorjamb, consists of a small tube or box containing an inscribed paper scroll. To someone who has never seen one, it could appear as an oddly placed thermostat or night-light. Printed on the scroll of all mezuzas is a verse from Deuteronomy 6 called the Great Shema: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength" (v. 5). This is the same Jewish teaching that Jesus proclaims (Matt. 22:38) as the first and great commandment, and it seems a good one for a church and a synagogue so intimately engaged.

Another negotiated object can be found in the main sanctuary of the complex: a large banner featuring a Star of David that—on Jewish High Holy Days and occasions when the congregations worship in the sanctuary together—descends to obscure the stationary cross located over the altar. The decision-making process that led to its implementation was a noticeable moment of growth for the congregations, and of hard-and-fast learning for the members.

What is the cross to me, a Christian, or to me, a Jew? Why do I want to see it? Why do I want to cover it? Once opened, questions like these required guided unpacking.



Architects gave Covenant Hall a hexagonal shape, both to accommodate the surrounding structures and to introduce a Judaic theme. A Star of David pattern, formed by the diametrically connected vertices, is echoed in the angles of the roof. Since the church, in traditional cruciform shape, is nearby, a bird's-eye view shows the star and the cross side by side.

"If all they wanted was more room, we wouldn't have taken the job," says Muse, who spoke at the dedication. He wanted the building to capture the unique partnership between the congregations and to contribute materially to their vision: "From a design perspective, that's the challenge of

that you enter, marked by crosses, stained glass, or an eternal light, has a measurable effect on the quality of your life. Your thoughts grow quieter. Your body slows and moves with more care. But ultimately, what makes a space sacred is not the experience of the people within it.

In fact, the most sacred of spaces mentioned in the Bible are consistently those that disallow entry, or are somehow compromised by human use. Think of the healing pool at Bethesda. My Bible calls the waters “disturbed” by an angel, first of all meaning that they were agitated or trodden upon, but also implying a momentary *disordering* of a boundary between earthly and heavenly space that produces the miraculous effect. To enter the pool is to be cured of illness, but only once, since touching the water settles it again. Even the bodies of the faithful are unnatural in heavenly spaces. But Christ is in this story as well, offering the other cure: *refuse* separations, don’t desire miracles. “This is the time” means the same as “It’s up to you” or “Dost thou want to get well?” (John 5:6).

The key to the present story of Bradley Hills and Bethesda Jewish seems to lie in the profound lack of miracles in the history of their relationship and the absence of disturbing forces intervening to make their company exceptional—the opposite of what one yearns to hear when told that a church and a synagogue decided, somehow, to come together. I listened eagerly for that other story but did not hear it.

So here’s what I think. It has been through their immediate encounter with the physical space of Covenant Hall that the members of these congregations have most been changed. In May of this year, Bradley Hills and Bethesda Jewish will celebrate the one-year anniversary of Covenant Hall. By then, most of their members will have learned to take for granted all that the new space allows: a place for worship and community, a predictable measure of the week, a place to form the habits of faith. And as in a marriage—where the many differences that can exist between people gather and exhaust themselves against love and they learn to share their pastries without

being asked—it may be in the common places that we best learn God’s most basic lessons: partnership, surrender, acceptance, peace, joy. ♦

NOTES

1. Cokie Roberts and Steve Roberts, *From This Day Forward* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 22.

2. One third of the \$3 million went to pay for Covenant Hall, the ownership of which remains entirely with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (Bethesda Jewish Congregation, an independent synagogue, has no official representation with Bradley Hills or the PC (U.S.A.)) The rest of the money has funded renovations, an endowment to support future missions, and community outreach programs.

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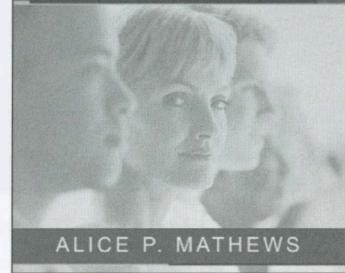
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Sustaining Sacred Places by Telling Their Stories

SARAH F. PEVELER

U.S. Highway 1, known locally as Roosevelt Boulevard, cuts a nine-mile swath through the heart of northeast Philadelphia. Since its initial construction in 1902, the boulevard has beckoned Philadelphians away from the core city—step by step and new neighborhood by new neighborhood—until they reached the suburbs. As people migrated, they usually left their houses of worship behind to build anew in their “promised land.”

The first church one sees as the boulevard begins its journey out of town might be considered a leftover. Its signboard announcing a German-language service is as out of place in Spanish-

speaking Feltonville as sauerkraut would be at a Three Kings Day celebration (a traditional Hispanic Epiphany event). But Tabor Lutheran Church is thriving. Its building is bustling with kids, its confirmation class is healthy, renovated space accommodates multiple community programs, and the steeple-top cross shines brightly every night onto the streets where its members no longer live.

Passersby must wonder how Tabor survives today. Clearly, the church has a complex and compelling story to tell. Is Tabor, however, able to tell that story to people who would care? Can it reach people who could help the church sustain its sacred place amid so much ongoing change?

To help the church find a way to tell its story and find new partners in the community to sustain and build its outreach, Partners for Sacred Places invited the

Greater Olney Circle of Friends—a fledgling collaboration of five congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, including Tabor, established by Lutheran Children and Family Service (LCFS) of Southeastern Pennsylvania—to participate in field-testing a unique new tool kit called *Your Sacred Place Is a Community Asset*. This initiative became a model for how congregations can broaden the circle of individuals and institutions that care about—and act to support—their place in community life. Furthermore, the work of each congregation in learning how to understand and tell its own story has helped to strengthen the collaboration itself.

The “Public Value” of Sacred Places

People of faith can be effective communicators, but they tend to be less effective in telling the stories of their own congregations to the larger public. Partners for Sacred Places—the only national nonprofit and nonsectarian organization in America that focuses on providing resources for property stewardship and preservation to congregations of all faiths—decided to respond to this challenge.

Partners has always known a couple of things anecdotally—that congregations open their doors unselfishly to their communities and that, for many congregations, capital needs outstrip financial means. Further, it has been clear that many urban and rural congregations do not have enough members and financial resources to maintain their aging buildings. Thus, they cannot *sustain* their roles as de facto community centers without new sources of funding and assistance. Despite the urgency of these needs, congregations usually don’t know how to ask the community for help—or are unsure if they should.

To add scholarly rigor to this understanding, we at Partners for Sacred Places decided to document the value of community programs that congregations host in their buildings. We undertook a national study of more than 110 community-serving congregations in six cities, published in 1998 as *Sacred Places at Risk*. This landmark study showed that

over 80 percent of the people served by programs hosted by congregations are nonmembers, that four community-serving programs are hosted by the average congregation, and that each congregation provides resources that support these programs, valued at almost \$150,000 each year.

These numbers grabbed the attention of policy makers, philanthropists, government officials, and religious leaders who recognized the impact that congregations have in their neighborhoods, and knew what would be lost if they closed their doors. But even more important, the findings caught the eye of individual congregations, which began asking Partners how they could obtain similar numbers for their buildings and programs.

Partners moved immediately to convene a national advisory team to help create a resource to help congregations gather this data. As Partners developed it, the tool kit evolved into a multidimensional resource for gathering and weaving the threads of a congregation’s story: *Who*

powerfully telling their story to the right audiences?

As part of a field-testing process in Philadelphia and rural North Dakota, Partners invited the Greater Olney Circle of Friends to participate. The Olney neighborhood in North Philadelphia represents the kind of multicultural, urban neighborhood undergoing continuing demographic and economic change that poses challenges to congregations across the nation. Susan Pursch, LCFS’s vice president of church and community partnerships, worked closely with Partners’ staff to integrate the field-testing process into the overall organizational development of the Greater Olney Circle of Friends.

Congregations were given a deceptively simple challenge: “Make a new case for community support of your historic sacred place.” Tabor’s energetic German-born pastor, the Rev. Andreas Wagner, and a team of members got to work on the task at hand.

Tabor first identified its current

Congregations open their doors unselfishly to their communities . . . over 80 percent of the people served by programs hosted by congregations are nonmembers.

we are (our heritage in a community context), *What we have* (the building fabric and the space it offers for community programming), and *What we do* (the community value of our programs).

One Congregation’s Story

Once the tool kit was designed, Partners was ready to work with churches and synagogues to test it “in the field.” We wanted to learn how congregations would proceed to research and make sense of their own story. Did the size, location, or health of a congregation dictate how congregants organized themselves and approached the tasks of information-gathering? What kind of expert help and encouragement would they need? Would they be able to find new resources by

ministries to the community, choosing from approximately 250 possible community programs that a congregation might offer or support. In addition to summer camp, a basketball program, and a children’s choir, Tabor’s after-school program, staffed by professional teachers and supervised by a community-based advisory board, has had a measurable impact on the reading scores and school performance of the participants. Tabor also identified the mix of building space, volunteer time, cash support, and other resources it provided to each of these programs.

What did Tabor learn? First, following national trends, fully 77 percent of those benefiting from Tabor’s programs are nonmembers. Tabor calculated that the



Tabor Lutheran Church summer camp participants in front of a mosaic mural they created in 1999.

total dollar value of the resources it provides (space, staff and volunteer time, in-kind services) is at least \$95,000 annually (the national average is \$144,000). In other words, if Tabor shut its doors tomorrow or stopped its community programming, the Feltonville neighborhood would need to find at least \$95,000 in resources to replace those offered so generously by Tabor.

Tabor had a comprehensive building plan in place and had recently completed a major renovation of its 12,000-square-foot facility to update its great hall and kitchen, to install a computer lab, and to provide classroom space for its after-school programs. Renovation of the gymnasium is Tabor's next building challenge, but the congregation has already assessed the renovation costs and planned the use of space for new and expanded programs serving neighborhood children.

Describing Tabor's Heritage

For the purpose of developing a new case for community support, the story of a congregation's heritage is not a church history. Instead, the process focuses on helping nonmembers and civic leaders come to a new appreciation of a particular sacred place—its building, its congregation, and its role in the community over time. The end product is not a book or pamphlet but rather a simple statement that fairly shouts, "This is how our past got us to where we now are," with compelling examples to support it.

Under the gaze of the past pastors (all German-born, they are seen in the photos lining the great hall), Partners staff and Tabor members began to work on a congregation and community timeline. Late 19th century and early 20th century maps brought the story of Tabor and Feltonville's early days to life. Founded in 1898, Tabor served a German immigrant community that was making its first move within Philadelphia to a newly developed neighborhood with jobs for all in small factories—the men worked as machinists and the women in neighborhood hosiery mills. Other immigrant groups came to Feltonville, but the Germans were the

The process focuses on helping nonmembers and civic leaders come to a new appreciation of a particular sacred place—its building, its congregation, and its role in the community over time.

most significant in numbers and cultural impact. Tabor not only served Feltonville's German community; with its German and English language schools, choral groups, and festivals; it evolved during the early 20th century into a major cultural resource for the entire Philadelphia German community.

The Great Depression brought major economic change to Feltonville, and

Roosevelt Boulevard beckoned residents to new neighborhoods being built along its expanded length through most of the 1960s. Tabor continued to go about its business, but in the 1980s it stopped to look outside its doors and discovered a totally new Feltonville—one that no longer looked or sounded like its membership. In constructing the congregation and community timelines, Tabor had to confront some tough issues about social change and the congregation's responses to it. Members also returned to the hard questions that had been asked in the 1970s and 1980s: do we stay, or do we move? Do we close, or do we change and adapt?

Describing the Congregation's Heritage

Tabor's identity—"Who We Are"—became clearer to congregational leaders when they discussed the church's work with other recent immigrant groups: sponsoring Cambodian families, sharing worship space with a Hmong Lutheran congregation, and continuing to welcome new German immigrants. The seeming dichotomy of Tabor's reaching out to its Spanish-speaking neighbors while maintaining its German tradition was reconciled. In the end, the members drafted this description of their congregation and its community ministry: TAVOR

LUTHERAN CHURCH—AN IMMIGRANT CHURCH WELCOMING AND SERVING NEW IMMIGRANT FAMILIES.

Thus, Tabor emerged from this process with a compelling story to tell. Now it can concentrate on how to use that story to secure new resources for its buildings and programs. Tabor has developed a two-page case statement that incorporates what members learned from

the process, and has obtained grants from four Philadelphia-area foundations to fund program and some building improvements. The pastor has recruited a grant-writing team from within the congregation and has arranged for Liberty Lutheran Services to conduct an eight-week workshop to teach additional fundraising skills to the team members, as well as to prospective grant writers from other Lutheran churches.

Tabor has also played a leadership role in the development of the Greater Olney Circle of Friends. At a daylong retreat,

each of the five congregations presented its initial draft of a case statement to one another and a panel of experts, including a marketing professional, a community foundation executive, and the outreach director of a grant-making church. For most congregational representatives in the room, this was their first time hearing the stories of the other congregations, especially from this perspective. Recognizing the assets each congregation brought to the table—their programs and public value, building resources, and even heritage—encouraged the Greater

Olney Circle of Friends to take several steps forward. The circle incorporated as a community development corporation and began weaving together the individual congregational stories and community value into one larger story. The circle will now be reaching out to the community to engage new partners by telling their new story in a way that offers opportunities for others to contribute to the future of Feltonville and the other neighborhoods that make up Greater Olney. ♦

USING THE TOOL KIT APPROACH IN YOUR CONGREGATION AND COMMUNITY

The *Your Sacred Place Is A Community Asset* tool kit contains five tools:

- “Exploring Your Heritage” is designed to help a congregation document and articulate the significance and history of its building in a community context. This resource includes a set of timelines that describe key events in American national history, architectural history, and religious history—to encourage congregations to lay out parallel events from their own history and that of their community.
- “Assessing Your Buildings” helps a congregation develop an overview of the repair and maintenance needs of its buildings and an understanding of how it uses its space.
- The unique Web-based “Calculating Your Public Value” tool draws heavily from the *Sacred Places at Risk* approach to research and guides a congregation through a simple worksheet that presents the community value of its programs in dollars and cents.
- “Discovering Your Partners,” developed in collaboration with Northwestern University’s Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Evanston, Illinois, helps a congregation identify new sources of support and collaboration in the community.
- “To Whom We Turn” gives a congregation guidance on how to make a case for collaboration to distinctive audiences in different ways, including case statements and other documents from a successful capital campaign.

Supporting materials include a PDF (Adobe Portable Document Format) version of *Sacred Places at Risk*; a 28-minute video, *After Sunday*, which tells the story of three congregations and puts a human face on *Sacred Places at Risk*; and an audio compact disc

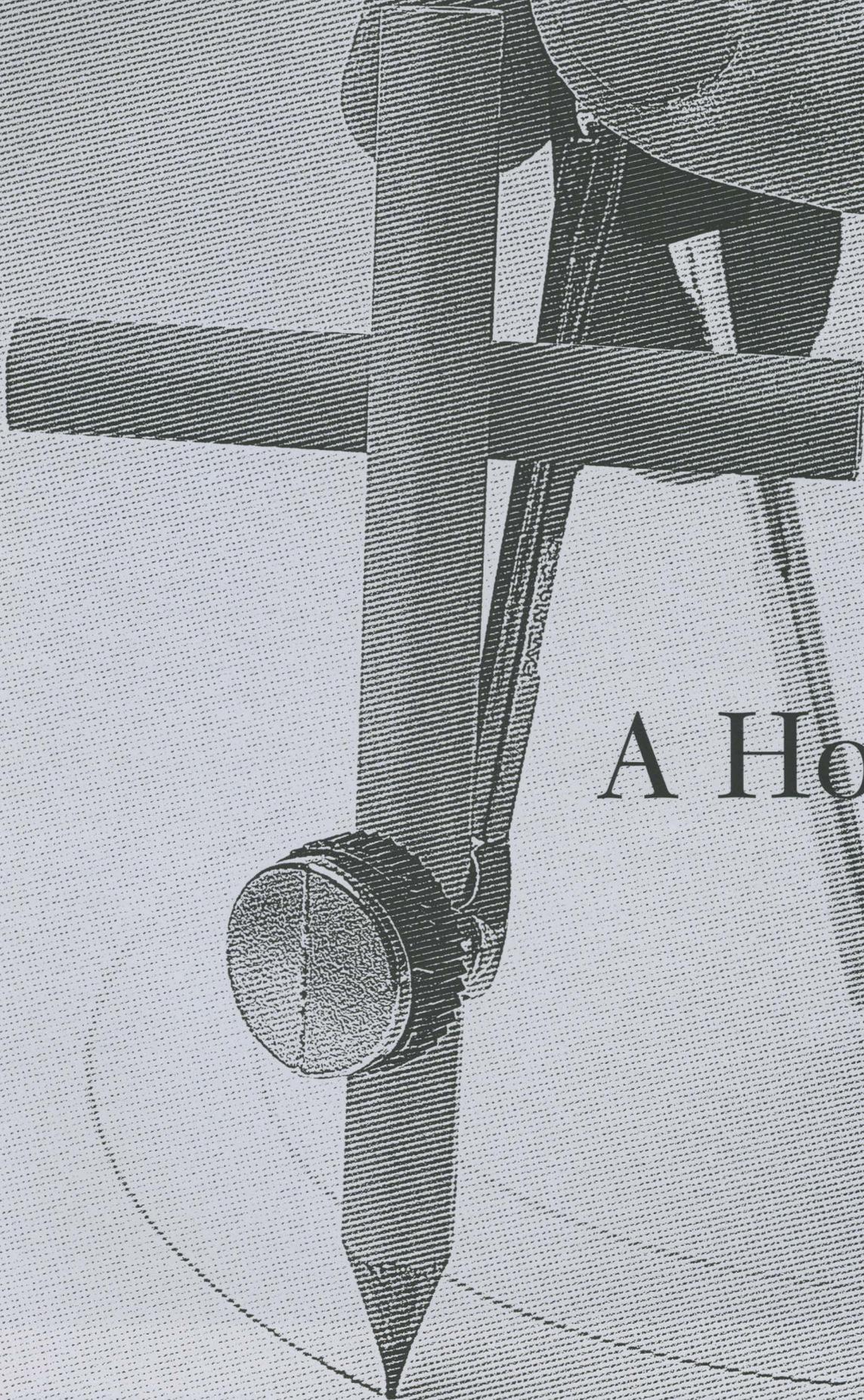
on which five clergy (mainline and evangelical Protestant, Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Episcopal) provide brief meditations on the question “Why should we spend money on our buildings when there is so much need in the world?”

Individual congregations ready to embark on a journey of self-discovery and storytelling can follow Tabor’s example. The field-testing experience demonstrates that a healthy and motivated congregation with capital needs and a desire to reach out beyond its own membership to fund them can successfully use the tool kit on its own.

The *Your Sacred Place Is a Community Asset* tool kit is also available at an affordable cost to intermediary organizations that would like to reach several congregations from the same denomination or neighborhood. Partners provides a discounted group program that offers 10 tool kits plus a half-day of training for the staff of a judicatory or other intermediary organization.

Partners is also using the tool kit as the primary text for a new training program called *New Dollars/New Partners*, which will help congregations with older buildings develop community partnerships and prepare for capital fundraising efforts. This program will be available to groups of 8 to 12 congregations gathered and sponsored by a local or regional intermediary group, such as a judicatory, historic preservation organization, or council of churches. Partners will lead four training modules, provide coaching to congregations, and supply copies of the tool kit to each participating congregation.

For more information on the tool kit or *New Dollars/New Partners* training, call Partners for Sacred Places at 215-567-3234, or visit its Web site at www.sacredplaces.org.



A House T

Author Charles P. Henderson
writes about the promise—
and the peril—of sacred space

That Will Last Forever

First, a few questions. Why is it important to think about sacred space? Given the dire problems facing humanity, including war, terrorism, hunger, poverty, and AIDS, isn't it beside the point to be spending much time, energy, imagination and, yes, money, constructing and maintaining buildings that some call sacred? Further, if we believe that God is omnipresent, available to us in every time and place, doesn't the notion that some places are especially sacred become a problem? Do our sanctuaries and other places of worship stand in the way of a genuine encounter with God, blocking the light, casting deep shadows over our imaginations? Many seem to think so, from Hebrew Bible patriarchs and prophets to contemporary church architects and builders who go about their work in conscious rebellion against the entire tradition of worship-space design and construction. Moreover, the boom in popular spiritualities has given people a host of options for attending to the life of the soul outside the walls of any church. Think of yoga classes in health clubs or concerts in public parks; think of workshops on meditation at your local community center, or a sacred garden in your neighbor's backyard. Are we not, right now, in the midst of a seismic shift in our conception of what constitutes the sacred and how the life of the spirit meets the constructed environments in which we live and move and have our being?

Unscheduled Topics

I was recently involved as a sponsor of a national conference on architecture held at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Planned in the early months of 2001, the meeting was to focus on “sustainable architecture.” Between the planning and the execution of the event, however, two jumbo jets plowed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center a few miles away, changing everything. Suddenly our conference was not just about how buildings, including church buildings, can be energy-efficient, but how our constructed environments define, for ourselves and for others, who we are as a people. We learned, for example, why the twin towers became such a tempting target for Osama bin Laden, and why Saddam Hussein has invested so much of his resources in building palaces and mosques. Clearly, an in-depth discussion of the topic of sacred space leads to painful discoveries. How did it happen, for example, that the Temple Mount in Jerusalem has become the focal point of

one of the world’s great examples of architecture that is not sustainable. Indeed, the unfinished south tower of the cathedral is still sheathed in rusted scaffolding which has been condemned by city building inspectors, a stark reminder of the abandoned building project of the 1970s, undertaken with such visionary reach and optimism by then Dean James Parks Morton. Today the leaders of the cathedral struggle to find resources to remove the scaffolding, and to devise a plan that uses the land and buildings of the cathedral close (precincts) to generate enough revenue to keep their wonderful house of worship standing. One great challenge facing our churches today is how to maintain buildings that have outlived the economic, social, and political realities that made them possible in the first place.

A Rich Liturgical Atmosphere

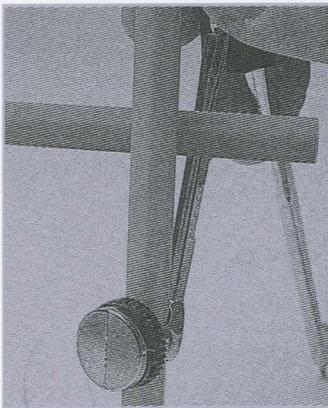
Of course, Gothic architecture is, for many, the very epitome of the sacred, with its towering columns, vaulted ceilings, statuary, and the stained-glass windows that

choir, the way in which Scripture is presented and read, the reverberation of the pipe organ—all bring to this space a sense of mystery, recalling Rudolf Otto’s phrase, the “mysterium tremendum.”

And what a wonderfully diverse group gathers at the cathedral for the Eucharist each Sunday. The congregation is as diverse as the neighborhood surrounding it, located at an intersection of populations that include large numbers of Hispanics and African Americans, Catholics and Protestants, Christians and Jews, rich and poor. The gathering of people around the table of the Lord has the look and feel of a microcosm of the entire human family. This human mosaic is all very much to the point, for one of the elements that make a place sacred is that people experience it as a unifying focal point, the *axis mundi*, around which the world itself seems to turn.

The Tradition of the Meeting House

Of course, it doesn’t take a Gothic cathedral to function in this way. As a Presbyterian, I appreciate equally an architecture that springs from a different root altogether. In 18th-century America, especially in New England, worship often took place in a “meeting house,” usually a rectangular, barnlike structure with gabled roof, plain wood floor, clear-glass windows, and pulpit and pews painted white. A single steeple signified that this building was indeed a place of prayer. These meeting houses were often located at the



Far more often than we realize, our places of worship become settings for conflict and war, both culture wars and armed conflicts.

one of the world’s gravest and most intractable conflicts? Far more often than we realize, our places of worship become settings for conflict and war, both culture wars and armed conflicts.

The cathedral in which we met is, of course, one of the outstanding examples of Gothic Revival architecture anywhere. It is also, with its massive volume and height,

give visible expression to the narratives of the Christian faith. Moreover, those responsible for leading worship at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine make maximum use of this magnificent space. The rich liturgical service with song and chant, the incense rising through shafts of light that seem to descend from heavenly heights, the ornate vestments of priests and

nexus of the sacred and the secular, serving as both a gathering place for the community during the week and a worship center on the Sabbath. But their architectural idiom was one of stark simplicity, devoid of statuary, visual images, tapestry, or other signs of opulence. The visual focal point in these sanctuaries was the pulpit, up front and center, high enough to be seen by everyone.

From such places, God's Word would be preached, and the good news would radiate around the world, as once again the sanctuary became, for those gathered within, the *axis mundi* around which everything turned.

Those New England meeting houses are an essential part of the American land-

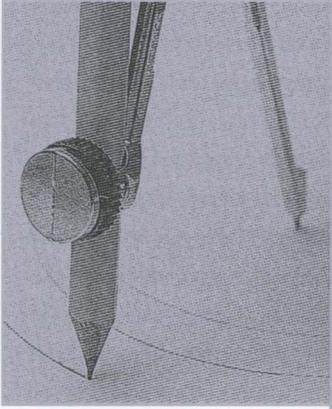
needed as a setting for one's experience of the holy. In certain special, private places in our own lives we have a heightened sense of the presence of God. It can be a favorite bench in the park, a soft place in the grass under the shadow of a tree, or a knoll on the hillside overlooking a valley. In such places one feels close to

interfaith worship service in St. Paul's Chapel in lower Manhattan. St. Paul's is Manhattan's oldest public building (completed in 1766), as well as its remaining colonial-era church. It is a prime example of Georgian Revival architecture, a brownstone beauty surrounded by a wrought-iron fence, with Broadway and Fulton Street on the east and a historic graveyard on the west. Beyond the graveyard lies—the void.

It seemed a miracle to many that on the morning of September 11, 2001, this wonderful house of worship escaped serious damage, even as the entire neighborhood descended into chaos. The miracle was not simply its survival, but also the resilience

with which the staff and volunteers of Trinity Church Wall Street (Episcopal), which owns and runs St. Paul's Chapel, responded. Almost immediately the church was transformed into a relief center. A kitchen was set up. Meals were served. Supplies for relief workers were collected and distributed. The nave became a place of supply and shelter—food, medical care, massage, music, therapy, pastoral counseling. St. Paul's was at the center of it all, the axis of a mortally wounded world. People began to put up signs on the fence outside the church and on the walls inside—pleas seeking their lost loved ones. Also placed lovingly were flowers, paintings made by little children mourning a loss, hand-lettered posters, and articles of clothing. Every foot of the fence and every available surface of the church interior was transformed into a living memorial. A sacred space indeed!

It was a cold Wednesday evening in January. Our service was designed as a sacred trek, beginning in the nave with music and singing, and in the chancel with the reading of sacred scriptures of Jewish,



Any real discussion of sacred space involves the interplay between our most private spiritual practice and our public acts of devotion and prayer.

scape—both the physical terrain that can be photographed by a camera aboard a satellite and the scenes of memory and imagination that are central to the self-identity of millions of Americans. Indeed, these objects of the constructed environment play an important part even in the spiritual lives of people who do not belong to any church, as more than a few church leaders have learned from the public outcry that erupts when plans for altering the outward appearance of such buildings are proposed. Likewise, church leaders often encounter passionate resistance to proposed alterations of a beloved sanctuary, even when practical considerations make a compelling case for change. The strong feelings that people associate with their physical surroundings tell us something crucial about sacred space. Those who work with the design, renovation, or restoration of sacred space are very much involved in the shaping of the spiritual life of a people.

Experiencing the Holy Elsewhere

Neither a cathedral nor even a visually powerful New England meeting house is

one's deepest self, to the outside world, and to the God who holds it all together. These are the places we simply discover; other sacred spaces we construct so that the numinous may be a more regular part of daily life.

An icon hangs on the wall above a dresser in the bedroom where I begin each day in prayer, and a yoga mat is lovingly unrolled on an Afghani prayer rug before a time of centering and contemplation. Any real discussion of sacred space involves the interplay between our most private spiritual practice and our public acts of devotion and prayer. Those who design, renovate, or make use of places of corporate worship need to be in tune with the sense of the sacred that worshipers bring to the sanctuary with them, as well as events in the wider culture that shape people's perception of what constitutes the sacred.

A Place of Shelter and Supply

Several of these questions, themes, and observations were crystallized for me one night more than a year ago when I led an

Christian, and Muslim origins. With each reading, the congregation moved to a new location, walking in procession first down the center aisle of the church to the altar and then to the front porch overlooking the intersection of Broadway and Fulton Streets, where police were still out in force, and where floodlights, a crush of relief equipment, and the vapor from steaming underground pipes filled the air,

laid out by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation for the redesign of the World Trade Center site are the rebuilding of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, which was destroyed on September 11, and the “recognition of the historic role of St. Paul’s Chapel.” The set of principles the development firm has stipulated for the memorial itself includes respecting the “sacred

tions is how what happens within relates to the world without.

Doors and Windows

Speaking figuratively, the most important parts of any worship space are the doors and the windows. Remembering how the doors of St. Paul’s Chapel were swung open to allow entry and exit to all those emergency rescue and recovery workers,

we are reminded that those responsible for the construction, renovation, and use of sacred space need to attend to the traffic flow. How does the activity taking place inside the sanctuary relate to the activity taking place outside on the streets of the city or in the wider secular culture? Equally important are the windows, which not only allow the light of God to

shine through, but also provide a view of the world and a sense of perspective on it.

Given the importance of the doors and windows, it is ironic to note that more and more churches are being built or renovated to include a new kind of window—the “electronic window” of the digital age. Rather than a cross hanging on a wall behind the altar, it is now common to see a projection screen, and in the place of stained-glass windows, a row of computer monitors. Indeed, many of the megachurch auditoriums that have been built in recent years in North America have replaced the traditional elements of church architecture with equipment designed for use in secular auditoriums or performance space. As Douglas Hoffman noted in an article on megachurch design in *Architecture Week*, the Willow Creek Community Church (in South Barrington, Illinois, near Chicago), is “characterized by a distinct absence of Christian symbolism and, coupled with the adjacent food court, takes on the appearance of a suburban



At a time when “spirituality” is seen as a replacement for denominational religion, the realm of the sacred clearly extends beyond the walls of any church, synagogue, or mosque.

lending a sense of mystery to the entire neighborhood. For the final segment of our service we moved in procession up the long ramp toward the viewing platform overlooking the void. The pile of rubble was growing smaller each day; but as the wreckage was removed, the magnitude of what was lost seemed more real than ever. We stood shivering in the cold and the silence, contemplating it all. And then the Buddhist monks began a chant, punctuated with the ringing of a bell. We found ourselves caught up in a prayer for peace written by Martin Luther King in another time of war. And the words of our prayers flowed with a sense of urgency and passion that seemed to rise, like the psalm of Jonah, from the belly of the beast itself.

Ruins as a Place of Prayer for All

Today a contentious public debate and an intense planning process are underway with the aim of transforming that void into a memorial. Among the requirements

quality of the space” and encouraging “reflection and contemplation.” Seldom has a state had such an opportunity to engage in the construction of a space that could function as a place of “prayer for all people.” Even before construction has begun, the ruins of the twin towers have become a world prayer center.

Note, however, that religious leaders are not prominent in the planning, design, or construction of the memorial or its surrounding neighborhood. At a time when “spirituality” is seen as a replacement for denominational religion, the realm of the sacred clearly extends beyond the walls of any church, synagogue, or mosque. The entire question of what makes space sacred is being addressed increasingly in the wider circles of secular culture, as well as in the private lives of individuals. Therefore, as this example clearly illustrates, the most important thing to understand about how any sanctuary or other building that people identify as sacred actually func-

mall. The building is intentionally non-church-like because the ministry is to reach those who have rejected or never accepted traditional denominational church ministry.” Likewise, Paul Goldberger mused in his *New York Times* review of the Willow Creek sanctuary: the building is “friendly and accessible, determined to banish the sense of mystery and other-worldliness that has long been at the very heart of the architecture of Christianity.”

Similarly, in a recent press release on the opening of another such sanctuary, a bulleted list highlighted the new church’s outstanding features, such as its impressive seating capacity. This sentence nearly leaped off the page: “In our new building there are no Bibles and no hymnals, but there are several large projection screens and 20 computer monitors visible from all locations.” This is a church designed from the ground up quite self-consciously as a phenomenon of the digital age.

Because the changes in the nature of our communications media are happening so rapidly, and because they are transforming so profoundly the way we learn and the ways in which we relate to one another, it is clear that those responsible for pastoral leadership must be aware of both the promise and the perils of the new technologies.

More Than a ‘House of Cedar’

From the very beginning, the people of God have been well advised to approach with caution the task of setting aside in time and space a place where one might encounter the Maker of heaven and earth. Note the warning given by Nathan, the prophet, when King David proposed building a sanctuary in the center of his new capital, Jerusalem. In fact, Nathan opposed the construction of the temple in rather harsh terms, using both satire and humor to attack the

notion that it is even possible to build such a thing as “a house of God.” And his reason is worth noting. Since the Lord had been with the people in the past, “wherever they went,” it would not be necessary or advisable to build a mere “house of cedar.” Rather it would be far preferable to let go of those ambitious plans for building a temple and instead allow God to build a “house . . . that will last forever” (2 Sam. 7:5ff). What Nathan had in mind was not a building at all, but rather a living, breathing community of faith that Christians later identified as the body of Christ.

In the past, Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike have seldom been able to heed the warning of the prophet but, like King Solomon, have pressed ahead with their building plans. Given all that we have seen of the good, the bad, and the ugly in sanctuary construction since that time, it is clear that those who undertake

the task of creating, maintaining, or living with buildings that people identify as “sacred” need to undertake their work with both caution and humility. And then they must go ahead with a clear understanding that “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Ps. 127:1). ♦



It is clear that those who undertake the task of creating, maintaining, or living with buildings that people identify as “sacred” need to undertake their work with both caution and humility.

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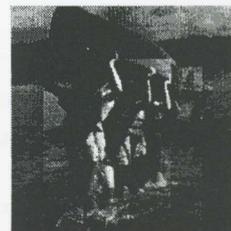
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*But this is what the Lord says...
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and your children I will save.”
Isaiah 49:25*





Right-Sizing Your Space or Right-Sizing Your Vision?

JOHN JANKA AND ROGER L. PATTERSON

“Do you provide architectural services and can you help us ‘right-size’ our church facilities?” This question was posed to the Alban Institute by an inquiring congregation. While Alban typically has not provided such services, the Institute invited Roger L. Patterson, AIA, an architect with more than 40 years’ experience in designing and evaluating church facilities, to join the staff for this and future consultations on this subject.

What follows is an overview of a congregational study that focused on two primary presenting issues: the congregation’s current ministry and the facilities that house its ministry. Many in the congregation believed that the facilities were

substantially oversized for the current needs of the congregation, hindering its mission and aggravating its financial stress. At issue are the future direction of the congregation’s ministry and the stewardship of its resources. The congregation is located on a “campus” made up of six buildings, each adjacent, but two separated from the others by a residential street. The facilities include a large sanctuary and attached education building with offices; a substantial memorial chapel; and a renovated warehouse, which contains the church’s nursery school and an expansive storage area and workshop.

Some in the congregation hoped that we could provide expertise to help them

determine what portion of the facilities could be sold off as a cost-cutting measure. They referred to this as “right-sizing” the facilities. The strategic question from the consultants’ point of view was, “Is this an issue of ‘right-sizing’ the facilities, or is it a need the congregation has for ‘right-sizing’ its vision?” Our suggestion was that the congregation make a more complete assessment of the facilities in relation to current and future needs for ministry. The session (the administrative body) of this Presbyterian congregation agreed.

Overview of Current Circumstances

Over the past 20 years this congregation has seen a steady membership decline from a peak of 1,887 members in 1982 to a current active membership of 750. This decline, coupled with ever-increasing ongoing costs for maintenance, utilities, and improvements, has created significant stress on congregational finances. In addition to these concerns, the congregation is in the midst of a search process for a senior minister.

Demographics of the area surrounding the congregation indicate a rapidly changing and changed community. An increasing number of Hispanic American, African American, Asian American, and Caribbean populations reside in the ministry area of the church. Those interviewed noted that as older, long-term white residents vacate homes in the area, ethnic and younger families are replacing them. The local school enrollment figures confirm that this demographic shift has been underway for some time.

The congregation is blessed with a wide range of gifted members and leaders. Members demonstrate a deep commitment to the church; many of them desire a new focus. A critical mass of good will is evident; if cultivated, it can be an asset for the future.

Making the adjustment to the changing demographic reality is, however, one of the most challenging any congregation can face. It calls for the reordering of the congregation’s vision, a

commitment to cultural diversity, a tolerance for change, well-planned leadership training, and a focused use of resources to reach a community in transition.

Our Process

We at Alban proposed a two-day data-gathering process of interviews, focus groups, and review of facilities on our first visit. Our second visit spanned a weekend two months after the first visit. The second visit centered on presenting our report to the session on Friday evening, meeting in focus groups on Saturday, and finally holding a congregational meeting after worship on Sunday. Before our first on-site visit, we requested that the session provide certain information:

- ◆ Most recent annual reports of the congregation’s program of ministry.
- ◆ Membership and attendance records for the last 10 years.
- ◆ A profile of giving for the same period.
- ◆ A map indicating the residential location of each member.
- ◆ School enrollment statistics for each school in the ministry area, by grade and ethnicity, for the most recent five-year period.
- ◆ Photographs of the interior and exterior of the facilities and any existing blueprints or building plans.

During our visit, we conducted prearranged interviews and focus groups,

met with staff, toured the facilities, received an overview of the current use of space, and toured much of the surrounding community. Among the questions we raised during the interviews and focus groups:

- ◆ “Reflecting on the history of the congregation, what would you say were the critical events or turning points in its story?”
- ◆ “What recent changes have you observed in the life of the congregation and larger community that have presented either challenges or opportunities for ministry?”
- ◆ “Who are the people this congregation needs to reach?”
- ◆ “What is this congregation called to be and do?”
- ◆ “What is your vision for the future of the congregation, and what are the constraints and assets in realizing this vision?”
- ◆ “Describe why someone looking for a faith community would choose to join this one.”

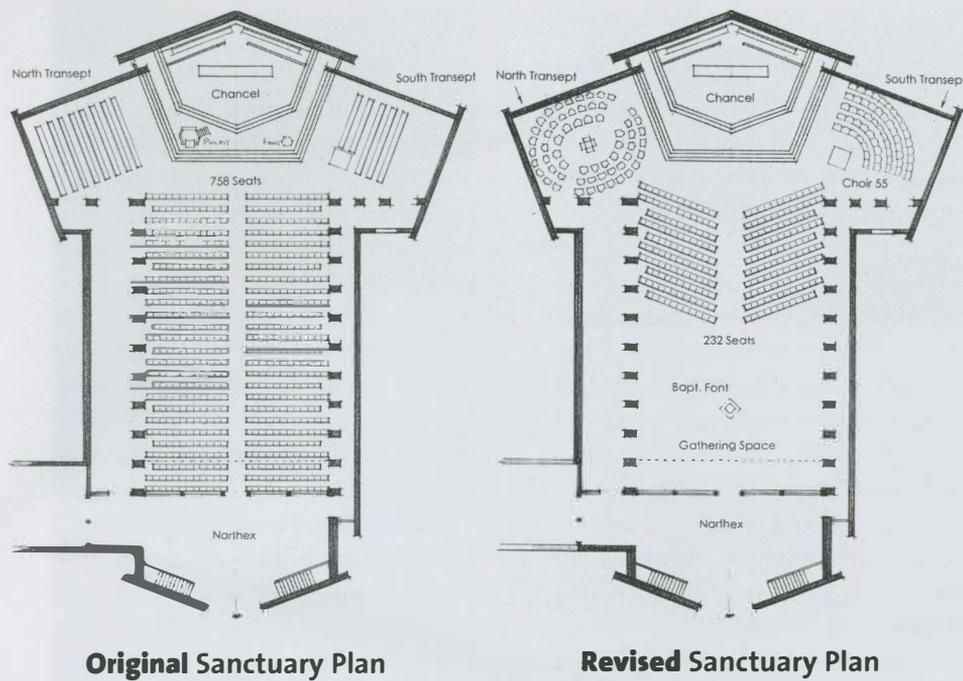
What We Heard

What emerged from these conversations were dominant themes that bear heavily on the story of the congregation. Key among these was the question, “Does this congregation want to grow?” This issue is fundamental for the congregation in light of the cultural transition

Making the adjustment to the changing demographic reality calls for the reordering of the congregation’s vision, a commitment to cultural diversity, a tolerance for change, well-planned leadership training, and a focused use of resources to reach a community in transition.

whose participants were representative of the makeup of the congregation. We asked the session to organize the focus groups in a way that invited members to sign up. Interviews were focused on members of the session and staff. We

taking place in the larger community. To grow, this congregation will need to make significant changes in the focus of its ministry, and reach the diverse population that now characterizes the neighborhood.



Original Sanctuary Plan

Revised Sanctuary Plan

Evident from these conversations was the perception that the congregation has no commonly held sense of identity and no shared vision. Without this most essential self-understanding, little basis can exist for planning a strategic direction for the future of the congregation. Some participants pointed to the need for deepening the spiritual life of the congregation, and noted that to do so would be to support efforts to develop a much-needed shared vision for the future.

We also heard concerns about an outdated administrative structure, poor communication between leaders and congregants, unresolved conflicts, a lack of enthusiastic outreach through existing programs, and the lack of programs for those in the 30-to-50 age group. We commented on this lack of outreach as an indication of ambivalence about needed change in the ministry of the congregation.

Specifically, the congregation provides a high-quality nursery school for 140 children. This program has little or no relationship to the ongoing life of the congregation. The congregation also offers a “parents’ morning out” program, which maintains a waiting list. This program also operates on a parallel track, rather than being an integral part of congregational life. Leaders are aware that this program is a significant contact point for potential new members, yet no plan is in place for extending hospitality

to the families of these children.

Noted throughout our visit were concerns about the criteria that would form the basis for decision-making on the disposition of facilities. Issues of “right-sizing” the facilities—of poor use of space and needed improvements, including the addition of an elevator—were expressed by many, but without consensus.

Architectural Considerations

When consulting with a congregation about members’ primary concern or perceived problem with the church building, it is important to have access to all facilities and have a detailed list of the

dedicated or multipurpose space. Multipurpose use and scheduling can provide the balance in programming when equal space is not available.

In reviewing broader considerations about facilities, it is helpful to note the relationship between the parking area and the entrance to the church most often used by members. Is this “real” main entrance clearly marked? Is it attractive and inviting? Is there adequate signage to direct people from the parking area to this most-used entrance? For this congregation, we recommended “dressing up” the actual main entrance through the use of an attractive awning, the positioning of colorful flags, and the use of large planters. It is often the case that the front door of the church is not the main entrance. When the most-used entrance is not clearly marked, visitors may quickly feel confused and unwelcome.

Among the issues raised with us was a concern that the sanctuary was too large for current worship attendance. In a sanctuary that seats more than 900, but with a worship attendance of about 300 scattered amid the 26 rows of pews, any sense of community or intimacy is lost. The sanctuary is a wonderful space with beautiful stained-glass windows. The building and windows were awarded national honors for design at the time they were built in the late 1960s.

Church buildings that are the most adequate for ministry will enable equal program opportunities for worship, fellowship, and education in either dedicated or multipurpose space.

programs of ministry to be carried out. The fundamental consideration: “How do the church buildings and the setting in which they are located make ministry more effective or constrain it?” In overview, church buildings that are the most adequate for ministry will enable equal program opportunities for worship, fellowship, and education in either

The challenge, from an architectural point of view, was to discover how best to create “celebration space” without compromising the integrity of the original design, and to promote a sense of community in worship with the least disruption and expense. It was also important that the space accommodate different styles of worship in light of

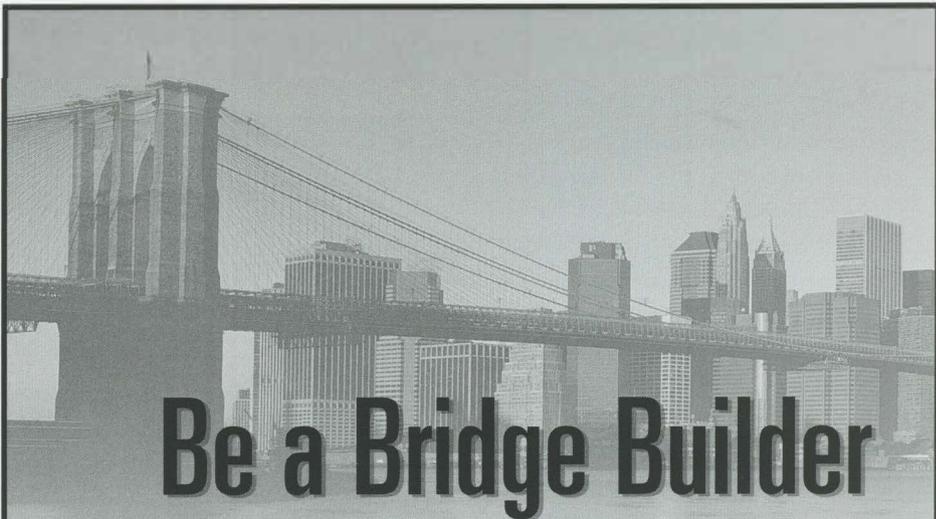
the diverse nature of the community.

The chancel is in the center of the space between the transepts (see sketches). Each of the two transepts seats about 100 in eight rows of pews. Dominating the space is a large pulpit with a high, flamboyant, jack-in-the-pulpit back. To achieve flexibility in worship, the pulpit would need to be minimized and made moveable. The chancel floor is carpeted, with a marble border and marble steps. We recommended that the carpet be removed and replaced with hard wood to improve the quality of acoustics throughout the worship space. The original design of the sanctuary placed the choir in the balcony at the back of the nave. This arrangement reflected a prevailing view at the time of construction—that the choir should be heard but not seen. A more contemporary view is that the choir is part of the worship leadership and that it should be placed in the south transept along with the organ console. Church architects and some church traditions assume that the chancel is always located at the east end of the church (even if this “liturgical east” does not reflect the actual siting of the building) We recommended removing the transept pews and seating the choir in chairs in the south transept. Having chairs rather than pews in the north transept as well would afford maximum flexibility, making the space available for small weddings, Bible study, and informal worship settings.

Studying the options for seating in the nave and transepts resulted in three potential scenarios. First was to remove all the pews and replace them with comfortable chairs. A second option was to angle the first ten rows of pews in a herringbone pattern and remove the next five rows to create a wide aisle separating the unused pews at the rear. Finally—the option we recommended—was to angle the first ten rows of pews in a herringbone pattern and to remove all other pews. This solution eliminates the problem of unused pews and creates an open space for gathering before and after worship.

During high seasons of attendance, chairs could be added to accommodate more worshippers. Further, we recommended that the impressive baptismal font, now located in the chancel, be placed at the center of the open space and be the focal point of attention for those entering the worship space. This relocation would allow the congregation to gather around the font during

baptisms and during the singing of the opening hymn before worship. Starting the worship service by gathering and singing in this new space should help create a new informality for worship. The addition of attractive displays of paintings, sculpture, and colorful children’s art, on moveable displays, would enhance the sense of this area as truly celebration space.



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Other Recommendations

Among other recommendations we proposed:

- ◆ That the congregation frame its ministry by identifying itself as a regional congregation with broad appeal and a diversity of programs.
- ◆ That the session clarify the behavioral norms needed to advance its work and develop a more cohesive leadership team.
- ◆ That the changes recommended in the worship space be made as soon as possible.
- ◆ That a "visioning" and strategic-planning process be initiated in the next six months and that the congregation explore its identity in light of its changed reality.
- ◆ That once the vision for ministry is clear and endorsed by the congregation, then decisions about facilities and the future use of space should be undertaken.
- ◆ That the relationship linking the nursery school and the "parents' morning out" to the life of the congregation be strengthened by immediately moving to celebrate and support this work.
- ◆ That current programs be reviewed. Expanding the parents' morning out program from three to five days a week should be explored in light of the waiting list for this program. Building a future youth program should begin by developing a strong elementary-age program in the short term. Programs for those in the 30-to-50 age group should be considered as well.
- ◆ That a plan of leadership training be developed to promote a deeper understanding of the dynamics of change, to provide tools for managing conflict and developing behavioral norms, and to expand capacity for growing a more culturally inclusive community.

A sense of urgency should be present in this congregation for the process of redevelopment. In our view, this congregation is at a pivotal point in its history. Either it will commit to doing the work necessary to ensure its future, or it will continue to decline. The time to map a new course for the future is now. The window of opportunity will eventually close. If this congrega-

tion can work at "right-sizing" its vision, of moving from passive tolerance of its changing world to an active embrace of it, congregants' future ministry will energize their faith journey. This congregation still has the strength and resources to create a vital future, but it must be a future based on changing realities, not on a recreated past.

Postscript

The recommendations from our report are now being studied and carried out. We are still working in an advisory role

with this congregation, encouraging and supporting the work it needs to do. ♦

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When Consensus Fails

DONNA SCHAPER

In seminary I learned always to work for consensus. Likewise, I learned never to take a vote. There is nothing wrong with voting when a discussion has brought differences to the surface. Still, consensus—the group “nod” that means we know that we agree and don’t need to vote—can be a pleasant gift to community, if and when it is possible.

Constitutionally, I tend to agree with people. I like harmony, dislike conflict, and have a personality that wants to smooth edges wherever I go. I feel that everyone has something to contribute, and thus I try to include every point of view in whatever statement I issue on any subject, even the matter of what is for dinner. My own children will confirm my tendency to say

yes to whatever anyone wants to eat for dinner and then not to know what to do when they all want something different.

Three Churches in One

I have had to learn new behaviors. My very diverse Miami congregation refuses to agree on anything. Indeed, there are three congregations in one here, with different tastes, opinions, and cultures. One is the “little church across from the country club,” where everyone knows everyone else. That church is friendly and not flashy; it does not need hired soloists and has difficulty handling diversity. Another is the “coral cathedral” of the arts: anything less than a million-dollar pipe organ is not good enough

for the musical tastes and desires of this parish. These parishioners resent the little church's thriftiness and lack of sophistication as much as the little church resents their luxurious tastes. The third church is the "outer galactic church of the edge" (we came up with these names ourselves), which cares more about outreach than either music or fellowship and thinks that arts programs should be shelved in favor of assistance to the poor.

No third of the church has enough respect for any of the others. Members often publicly insult each other. When we needed to carry out an accessibility project involving a wheelchair ramp, the "professional" types of the coral cathedral wanted to do it to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) code. They wanted

I wasted a good bit of leadership energy on developing consensus. I sometimes let issues remain in discussion for five or six meetings, hoping that consensus might arrive.

to obtain city permits. The "populist" types of the little church were insulted: they thought that all the donated time they had given over the years was being disparaged. This anger managed to delay the project for seven months. Two men—one in a wheelchair, one not—remain angry at each other.

The Sound of a Church Splitting

One very sensitive financial issue was decided by a 16-15 vote after 31 meetings in which 35 people regularly participated. The issue concerned the church's endowment and whether it should be managed internally or externally. Internal management won the day, but this has allowed the people who preferred outside, professional management to pick away at those who chose the old-fashioned way of doing church business—without paying a fee. In this and many other matters, there is no right answer. Professional management of large sums of money that are to be given away in grants is a good thing. Likewise, congregational participation and hands-on volunteerism are good things. Competing goods demonstrate our diversity, over and over again.

I wasted a good bit of leadership energy on developing consensus. I sometimes let issues remain in discussion for five or six meetings, hoping that consensus might arrive. I also internalized a lot of anxiety about my consensus "tool" not working. It really did bother me when people insulted each other in meetings. It really did bother me that they thought it had to be "their way or the highway." I could hear the church splitting in my heart. And I was just as willing to make macaroni and cheese, red spaghetti, and chicken all for one meal as I had been at home with my now-grown kids. I was convinced we could do something for everyone. But the diverse factions chose against such compromise and abundance; none wanted the other to be pleased.

Learning to Love the Vote

When it became clear to me that consensus had failed—that we could not keep people happy even with three different dishes on the table—I realized that I had to change my behavior and leadership style. I wish I had changed sooner; it took me almost two years to let go of my hope for consensus and the underlying hope for diversity.

You can teach an old dog new tricks. Thus, while I grieved for harmony in diversity, I changed my behavior. First of all, I learned to love votes and to take them with a smile on my face. Then I discovered that the majority of the people were not on the edge of these separate congregations so much as in the middle of them. Only a few in any of the three identifiable circles were extremists. It became very important to silence the extremists on behalf of the centrists.

When a vote resulted in winners and losers, I would act happy, not sad. I would then activate the centrists to create compromises and directions that appealed more to them than to the extremists. This was new behavior for me because I really did worry about the losers. They were hurt. They were excluded. They might take their marbles and go home. But the more I worried about their hurt and their marbles, the more I fed their extremism. Thus, learning to love the vote has been a positive breakthrough. I have withdrawn oxygen from the extremists; their fires burn less brightly.

More Space, Less Anxiety

Second, I have learned how important it is to create voting situations that are smart. Not "This congregation opposes the war in Iraq" so much as "the members of the Just Peace group oppose the war in Iraq and are taking signatures from the membership after the service today." When unity of the whole is impossible, creating space for actions that do not involve the whole can be very important.

The third way I changed my behavior was to learn the strange art of self-differentiation. Self-differentiation is what Ed Friedman, the now-deceased guru of congregational studies, advised for clergy when he spoke of a "non-anxious presence." I always had too deep a mother-hen streak to do that well. My art was inclusion and presence. I thought that not to show a little anxiety meant not to care.

I never experienced much anxiety at all in ministry until I ran into genuine diversity of opinion under one roof. Being anxious about this diversity was indeed my original *modus operandi*. Now I am teaching myself how not to be anxious about something that has very little to do with me. I am still drawn into triangulation over the issues, but most of the issues we face are between members, each of whom want me on their side. Staying out of the middle is now my favorite dance step.

Hospitality for Some

Fourth, I have begun to express genuine disapproval for extremists who care more about their own opinions, culture, or tastes than about their fellow members. And I am letting go of those who can't "share." This fourth behavior has been very difficult. I have always assumed that if a member leaves a church it means I did something wrong.

I know that isn't logical. I know that the boundaries in that kind of thinking are badly drawn. But I still feel that it is my job to get my arms around the whole parish and to make the sacred space safe and comfortable for them. I see that as my call. They are the members; it is their church. I am not without responsi-

Once wanting hospitality for all, I have come to be satisfied with hospitality for some.

bilities regarding hospitality, especially the creation of a hospitable place. Developing disrespect for extremists and antagonists has involved traveling a long road. Once wanting hospitality for all, I have come to be satisfied with hospitality for some.

Sticking to Our Core

Fifth, I have found that prayer—accessing God—is the best way to avoid triangulation. God is never found on one side or another of these wickedly silly debates. That is important for me and important for the parish to know. Prayer accomplishes the delivery of that message. We can act without consensus in the name of our majority's best understanding of what God wants.

Sixth, when I do get free of negative reactions and postures, I do best to spend my time focusing on issues of core values. Because the parish includes extremes of both liberal and conservative, both open and closed people, I have had to be careful to take care of the center. The two edges each contain about 10 percent of the people. That means that the other 80 percent are in the center. Focusing on them, rather than the loud, demanding edges, helps the congregation stick to its core. There remain some things on which we all agree, and we head for them every proactive minute we get.

Diversity Is Not Easy

Seventh, I have come to more deeply appreciate and accept the very diversity that has caused all this pain. Over the years, I have found it easy to be a pastor to people with whom I do not agree. Some of my best friends are Republicans. Currently, though, the culture wars are so extreme that I can't reach to my "other" side without being suspect. There is something very strained now in this parish; stretching my kind of arm all the way around it is not as easy as it was 10 years ago. The culture wars are increasing in decibel level. Ironically, the genuine diversity we have achieved makes hospitality, and therefore governance, very hard.

I have to remind myself often that this country elected our president in a nearly tied election. That election fell apart in Miami, Dade County, where I minister. The diversity of opinion

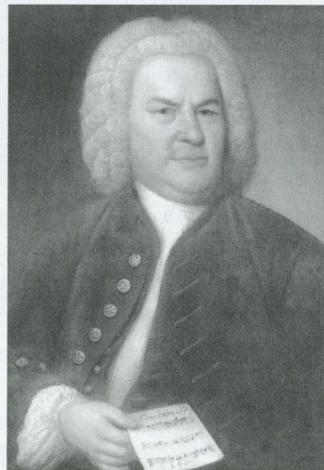
about where to lead the country is real. It is also the context in which I work. Consensus will not always be possible. Having winners and losers is not the ideal situation. So we must vote, and simply take turns winning and losing. Absent consensus, that becomes my objective—to rotate the losses and victories so that no one constituency starts to own everything.

In Search of Balance

Eighth and finally, I spend much time teaching people about themselves. Some will not realize that moving the choir (that has now grown to 59 voices) to the front of the sanctuary will be disruptive. Some want their worship just the way it has always been, whether or not the choir explodes out of the choir loft. Does that mean we shouldn't make changes? Of course not. But we need to balance these changes. When the choir loft people "win," there needs to be a "win" for the sacred

stability crowd who really do feel threatened when a new hymn or hymnal or liturgical practice shows up. This is especially true when the two sides are close to being equal in numbers. When we took a straw vote one Sunday, 151 people wanted the choir in the front and 140 wanted it in the back.

For my own mental health, I have had to learn not to care so much about these squabbles. For the sake of the gospel and my call to serve it, I have had to learn to be cunningly hospitable, on a rotating basis. For the sake of the diversity that I do believe is part of God's reign, I have had to abandon consensus. ♦



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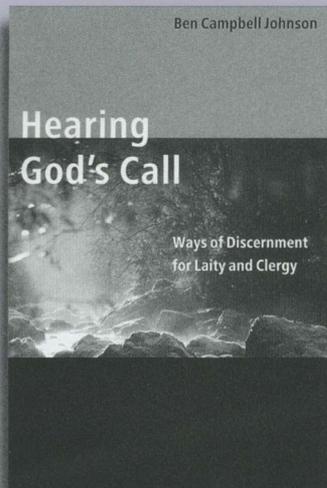
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Hearing God's Call

WAYS OF DISCERNMENT FOR
LAITY AND CLERGY

Ben Campbell Johnson
Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Eerdmans, 2002



review book

If I had to choose one word to describe *Hearing God's Call* by Ben Campbell Johnson, "beautiful" would be the word. A delight to the mind, this remarkable book is beautifully structured and written. Johnson engages the reader intellectually, emotionally, and experientially as he contemplates the elusive concept of a call from God. When he senses that the discussion may have become too abstract, the author offers a personal story of call to make his idea more concrete.

Without question, Johnson has perfected the art of the lead sentence, beginning each chapter with an irresistible idea: "Hearing God's call bestows an honor unequalled upon human beings" (chapter one); "The Call of God often creates tension in our souls" (chapter five); "The final aim of discernment is not information or knowledge but action!" (chapter seven). After having these thoughts planted in one's mind, who could not read on?

From the preface through the appendix, *Hearing God's Call* is captivating. The

writing flows so effortlessly, the book could easily be completed in one sitting. However, the reader will be inclined to engage with the "workbook" structure Johnson designed, and pause at the end of each chapter to reflect on the recommended "Exercises in Discernment." These exercises introduce journaling as a spiritual discipline, while concisely summarizing the chapter.

Johnson gets right down to business. In chapter one, he identifies his audience and defines his purpose: "I aim to assist laity in their search for an authentic call to ministry, to guide those who believe themselves called to ordained ministry, and to support ministers who are seeking to discern God's calling to them in a radically changed social context" (p. 12). There are no distractions from this purpose; no digressions, no excesses, and no off-the-point sermonettes. This book simply delivers what it promises.

Hearing God's Call is for serious seekers. In the first pages, Johnson warns that the path to discerning and following God's call "is always dark, lighted only by a tiny flicker of faith that creates enough courage for one step at a time" (p. 11); but he balances this warning with encouragement: "[The] awareness of God's purpose for us conquers our fears" (p. 24). In chapter four, Johnson identifies the "major question" for those seeking to discern God's call: "How do I know that my experience is of God?" During the subsequent discussion, the reader learns that "discernment requires a posture of receptivity . . . integration . . . and subjective passion [not] analysis . . . separation or objective data" (p. 52). In chapter six, it is made clear that the final decision about call rests in "our hands. In the deep chambers of our soul where we meet the Holy God, we must make a decision and take responsibility for it" (p. 98). Chapter seven, "Discernment to Act," moves the reader out of the comfort zone of information and knowledge, and into the demanding arena of action. "The final aim of discernment," Johnson writes, "is obedience to God, making the intention concrete in history" (p. 101).

Because the author is ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and is professor emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary, one might assume that he is

writing for a conservative Christian audience. However, liberal Christians will feel equally invited into the dialogue by the book's inclusion of contemporary poetry and prayers of mystics and common people, by the user-friendly paraphrasing of New Testament scriptures, and by Johnson's charming names for God, which include, "Creator and Sustainer of the Universe," "Presence from the Land of Silence," and "The Ultimate Reference."

Both conservative and liberal Protestants will be challenged by Johnson's openness to ecstatic and charismatic experiences of God. In chapter ten, the author expresses his concern for individuals who have had such a "spiritual resurrection," because most ministers and theological students, lacking training and experience in "the discernment of the Spirit," ignore, suppress, or oppose individuals being called by God. If mainstream denominations intend to thrive, evangelism and spiritual nurture can no longer be relegated to the conceptual realm. They are lost relatives knocking fervently on the doors of traditional churches. Johnson encourages pastors and congregations to invite them in and embrace them with enthusiasm, and he provides guiding words for "how to" integrate this ancient experience of God into modern, traditional Christianity.

Recently retired, Johnson faces the question of what God intends for him now. While he is living what he has previously studied, Johnson admits to experiencing the tension that comes from knowing "God's timing seldom matches [his] desires," and that "in due course" God's will for him will be revealed (p. 148). As Johnson waits in confidence that the "way" will open before him, he invites his readers to join him in the dark, and to keep that flicker of faith alive.

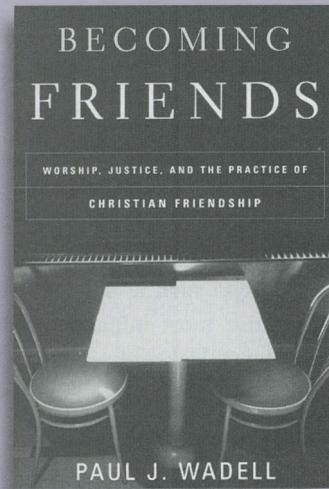
REV. JADE ANGELICA

UU—Community Minister At Large
Portland, Maine

Becoming Friends

WORSHIP, JUSTICE, AND
THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN
FRIENDSHIP

Paul J. Wadell
Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Brazos Press, 2002



review book As a small-group leader at my church, the practice of Christian friendship is of ultimate concern to me. To effectively nurture the spiritual development of all members within a small group, I depend on *agape*—the Christian love that is so beautifully articulated by Paul in 1 Corinthians.

While books on Christian relationships abound, Paul Wadell's *Becoming Friends* makes a distinctive contribution to that body of writing. The author powerfully reminds readers that our first and foremost friendship, the one that undergirds all others, is with God—a profound point that other books tend to overlook. Drawing on the writings of Thomas Aquinas, the author posits that our relationship with God tells us much about how we worship and how we live. For this lesson, the first chapter is a must-read.

The well-known writings of Augustine of Hippo and the lesser-known writings of the 10th-century monk Aelred of Rievaulx provide deep insights into the

nature of friendship in the context of the Christian life—messages that are just as appropriate for our time as they were for the authors'. With a focus on the kinds of friendships that should abound in a Christ-centered church, Wadell concludes that "the purpose . . . is not primarily our mutual edification but to make us the kind of community that can faithfully enact God's narrative of love, healing, and redemption in the world" (p. 118).

With this segue, two chapters bring us back to the theme of chapter 1, with a sound theological analysis of what friends of God can do for the world. Wadell employs the words of John Chrysostom, the fourth-century theologian, to remind readers that "though we give ten thousand precepts of philosophy in words, if we do not exhibit a better life than theirs, the gain is nothing"; which is to say, the power of Christians is the power "to astound the world" by the way we live (p. 119–120). With a thoughtful nod toward the concept of contemplative living, Wadell challenges readers to see things anew in order to find their way out of contemporary culture and into God's true longing for our world.

In the closing pages of these chapters, we find perhaps the strongest material in the entire book—making the compelling argument that true disciples of Christ, true friends of God, are committed to justice.

The church is called to embody and work for the justice of God in the world. . . . One of the most glaring ways we make Christianity safe and rob the gospel of its power is by . . . transform[ing] Jesus from a prophet of justice proclaiming the kingdom of God to an itinerant therapist who is little more than a chaplain for our souls. (p. 140–141)

Rather, doing justice is the quintessence of the Christian life, the primary task of all true friends of God.

Some readers could safely skip three of the book's chapters. Two of them consider sociological and psychological

obstacles to intimacy, concepts with which those knowledgeable in the social sciences are probably already familiar. Similarly, the chapter on forgiveness (which seems glaringly out of place as the book's final chapter) covers material abundantly available elsewhere. That said, the other chapters outlined above, with their stimulating and accessible focus on the theology of Christian friendship with God and with one another, and on the implications of such true friendship, are well worth the read for any Christian leader.

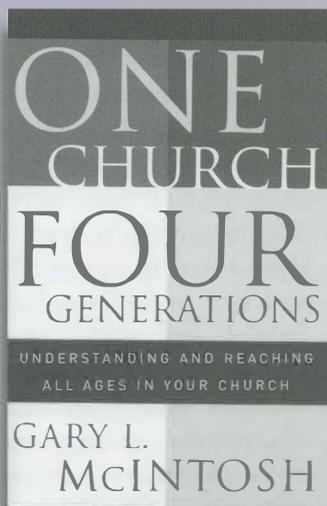
DR. CYNTHIA H. CHERTOS

Bethesda Presbyterian Church
Bethesda, Maryland

One Church, Four Generations

UNDERSTANDING AND REACHING
ALL AGES IN YOUR CHURCH

Gary McIntosh
Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Baker Book House, 2002



placement of their birth years at 1946–64, rather than basing them on the Boomers' attitudes and outlooks. His decision to use Buster—a term that suggests a lack (a “bust,” in contrast to its preceding “boom”)—is apt to offend the 1965–1983 generation, although he does acknowledge popular fatigue with “X” as a term. Similarly, he borrows Bridger from Thom Ranier without explanation, dismissing the better known “Millennial” or “Generation Y” for people born since 1983.

How McIntosh's work runs into serious trouble is by the way he looks back before the Boomers. He insists on lumping together everyone born from 1900 to 1945 under the heading of Builder. This leaves him with the unaddressed dilemma of explaining how in, say, 1943, a 40-year-old munitions plant foreman and his one-year-old daughter are members of the same generation (and how she is making a contribution to the U.S. war effort). This also means he has pressed the “Silent” generation (born 1925–1942 according to Strauss and Howe) into the same mold as the war-winning and admittedly building-prone generation of World War II veterans. The Korean War vet Silents have been overlooked like this most of their lives, and their distinctive faith perspective and generational leadership traits have often been ignored. McIntosh does not help their cause with his book, either in the original edition or in this update.

McIntosh writes for an evangelistic audience, with several references to “winning souls to Christ” as a goal for each generational type. Some readers will find this steady drumbeat grating. Curiously, for a book aimed at connecting generational concepts with religious issues, McIntosh is better at cataloging secular and cultural events that molded 20th-century generations than he is at suggesting how churches in particular can accommodate and build upon their unique attitudes. As a result, church leaders are often left on their own to discern faith differences between generations. The closing section, “Riding the Waves of Change” is more useful,

with its strategies for coping with generational change and advice on making needed congregational changes. Unfortunately, it is not enough to rescue the book from its greatest shortcoming: Because he limits his view to living generations and ignores the cycle of the past 400 years identified by Strauss and Howe in *Generations*, McIntosh is unable to draw on prior generational types for clues as to how those current types will behave and believe in the church. It is a shame a pioneer in this field has sent back such a garbled report from the frontier.

REV. CARL EEMAN

Author, *Generations of Faith:
A Congregational Atlas*
St. Louis Park, Minnesota

review book

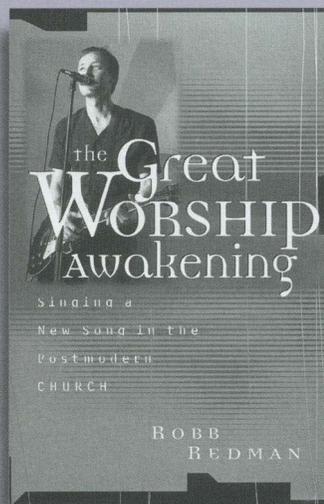
This book is an updated version of Gary McIntosh's 1995 book, *Three Generations: Riding the Waves of Change in Your Church* (Revell). McIntosh's earlier effort deserved credit both for noting the presence of different generations in a congregational setting and for taking the work of generational theorists Strauss and Howe, Smith and Clurman, and Ken Dychtwald inside the church. While several books examined the faith perspectives of a given generation (e.g., Wade Clark Roof's *A Generation of Seekers* or Tom Beaudoin's *Virtual Faith*) McIntosh's was one of the first to take a more panoramic view.

Nonetheless, it is disappointing to find that the shortcomings of the previous version have been left unimproved in *One Church, Four Generations*. One of them is its unoriginal classification of the four 20th-century generational types, which McIntosh names, “Builder,” “Boomer,” “Buster,” and “Bridger.” Catchy alliteration notwithstanding, the only term in common use is Boomer and to define it McIntosh merely follows the U.S. Census Bureau's

The Great Worship Awakening

SINGING A NEW SONG IN THE
POSTMODERN CHURCH

Robb Redman
San Francisco:
Jossey-Bass, 2002



review book If postmodern society is complicated and often perplexing to Christians, worship in our time is no less so. The “worship wars” seem to pit old against young, classical against contemporary, white mainstream against racial/ethnic minorities. There’s no longer a consensus on what the purpose or focus of worship should be: Should it evangelize? Should it nurture mature Christians? Should it fulfill the “felt needs” of the majority? Should it focus on a certain demographic segment—youth, for instance? And what about *God*? Doesn’t worship exist for God and not ourselves? Is it inevitable that diversity must divide us? What about the fact that we all confess to being part of the one body of Christ?

Robb Redman sensibly begins an analysis of the disparate present by looking at the less divergent past. He sets in historical context four trends that include worshipers across the theological and worship-style spectrum: the seeker service, the praise and worship movement, the contemporary worship music industry, and the liturgical renewal movement. He

also points out ways in which the post-modern worldview of our time has relativized the way we view the church and our faith, although he doesn’t go into this important issue in much depth.

While Redman is emphatic that all churches will have to adapt to modern technology, beyond that he rejects the possibility of a worship norm that could or should fundamentally unite the numerous *worship* styles and approaches. His solution to the worship wars is “a theology of variety”: “A strategy for worship renewal in your church should embrace variety in a way that suits you” (p. 192).

Music is *the* contentious element in many churches. Redman addresses that issue in terms of adapting personal tastes and amalgamating cultural styles, but, here too, doesn’t seriously consider whether there are (God-created) musical norms that cut across taste and style, allowing music’s innate quality to be judged. It is apparent that he rejects the notion of musical norms (as he does worship norms), saying that the “good-though-fallen perspective” of the theology of variety

allows us to see creative expression through music [and the other arts] . . . without rejecting them on the one hand, or making them absolute and normative on the other. All expression is distorted . . . by sin, but all expression can be refocused or retasked as a vehicle for praise of God. (p. 183)

Redman doesn’t discuss the scriptural imperative that requires offering to God our unblemished first fruits, or what that might mean in, or for, contemporary worship. But that imperative helps put into perspective personal tastes, music quality, and the nature and quality of everything we offer to God in worship.

This book is most useful for its general overview of how the Christian church in North America has arrived at the fragmented state it is in. It is also helpful in presenting a picture of the current worship landscape, but because it covers such broad territory the analysis doesn’t go very deep. Redman too often makes

assertions that he expects readers to take at face value, and occasionally he’s just plain wrong—as in his assertion that there’s always been a generation gap; there hasn’t, not in the way it has existed since the invention—and it is an invention—of the teenager.

For similar reasons, I often found myself writing in the margin: “Why?” “How?” “Is that true?” For instance: Quoting Pedrito Maynard-Reid, Redman says that African Americans have a holistic view of life and worship and that they see no dichotomy between sacred and secular. That may well be true, but Redman doesn’t show us how or why this is so—and that might have been extremely helpful. And again: “More than one theologian has noticed a striking similarity between theological perspectives in charismatic writing and the New Testament books of Luke and Acts as well as the letters of Paul.” A footnote refers to R.S. Anderson’s *Ministry on the Fireline*—but what are those similarities, and who else has seen them? This, too, is a potentially important point that doesn’t get explained. It is also difficult at times to distinguish Redman’s own voice from information he is presenting “objectively” or as the point of view of a particular group or one of the movements he writes about. In fact, Redman several times quotes or paraphrases church leaders he doesn’t name, presumably because the quotation is controversial.

Redman is a Presbyterian pastor who formerly taught at Fuller Seminary and worked for Maranatha! Music, the first record company to specialize in contemporary worship music. His own diversity of experience informs the book and he tries to be fair. But he’s not as knowledgeable about the liturgical renewal movement as he is about the other trends he covers; perhaps that’s why he appears the least sympathetic to churches that value a tradition of classical music, symbol-laden buildings, hymnals, and liturgies rooted in ancient practice. Though he does admit that it is not only such Christians who can be averse to change, his language is telling: such

churches have members whose “noses are buried” in their hymnals, who “cling to” older styles and carry “the baggage of inherited traditions and customs.”

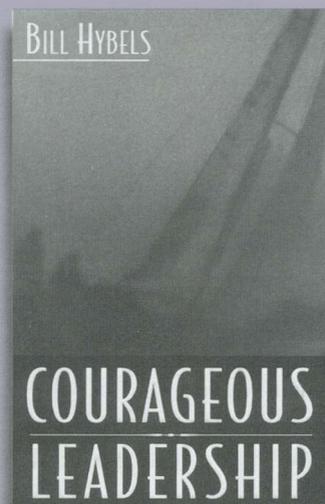
Redman’s solution of embracing variety is not new, and is only more-or-less helpful. He mentions several churches that are growing spiritually and numerically even though they don’t try to please any specific segment of their congregations and do not focus on “seekers” either. Instead, their worship is wholly God-focused, with worshippers’ “needs” coming second. Perhaps it is churches like these that the rest of us need to be looking to for guidance in worship as we move further into the 21st century.

MARIAN VAN TIL

St. John’s Episcopal Church
Youngstown, New York

Courageous Leadership

Bill Hybels
Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Zondervan, 2002



review book If pastors went to boot camps, Bill Hybels could be the drill sergeant. In *Courageous Leadership*, Hybels gets in your face. But he also comes alongside you, offering sympathy and some hard-won wisdom about leadership in the local church.

Hybels is a passionate man. His own “leadership adventure” began 30 years ago when Dr. Gilbert Bilezekian, a professor at a Christian college, challenged Hybels and his classmates to adopt the description of the church in 2 Acts as a model for their own ministries. In Hybels’ case, the result is the sprawling Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, whose explosive growth has inspired thousands of imitators numbered among the congregations of the Willow Creek Association. Willow Creek’s approximation of the church described in 2 Acts is the subject of some debate, but Hybels’ passionate devotion to leading that church is not. Convinced that the ministry of the local church is both unique and indispensable, he has dedicated his life to leading one. He is frustrated by timidity and lack of vision among pastors, whose failure to lead results in the unfulfillment of their congregations’ potential.

Sometimes I have to fight off the urge to grab the lapels of leaders and ask, “When are you going to make your mark? What lifetime are you waiting for?” (p. 206)

As I held the covers of his book in my hands, I got the feeling that Hybels was holding my lapels in his.

Material for this book was drawn from Hybels’ sermons and leadership talks. The book is structured like the sermons he has preached to seekers for many years: begin with a felt need, describe the stakes involved, offer biblical guidelines for addressing the need, and invite a commitment. Hybels wants to offer his readers a description of “the function, instincts, and scope of what leaders do” (p. 12). He encourages Christian leaders to be led by the Holy Spirit and informed by today’s best leadership practices.

The central image of the book is a compass. Good leaders devote time and attention to those who have authority over them (people in the “north”), the people under them (“south”), and their peers (“east-west”). However, Hybels follows Dee Hock in suggesting that the lion’s share of a leader’s time must be devoted to the management of self (the center of the compass). I found his chapter on the art of self-leadership the best in the book. If he had developed additional material similarly grounded in systems thinking, I would have found the book even more valuable.

A pastor for 20 years now, I have a deep respect for any pastor of long tenure who has maintained integrity and sustained a passion for ministry. At age 50, Hybels’ personal relationships are solid, his congregation is thriving, and his devotion to God and ministry is stronger than ever. He sifts through a wealth of experience, much of it painful, to share what he has learned in *Courageous Leadership*. Reading it strengthened my desire to offer my best to the high calling of pastoral leadership.

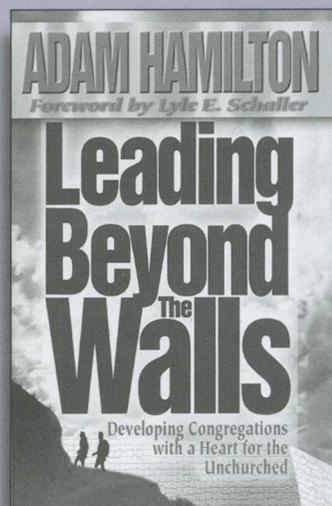
REV. FRED OAKS

Southport Baptist Church
Indianapolis, Indiana

Leading Beyond the Walls

DEVELOPING CONGREGATIONS WITH
A HEART FOR THE UNCHURCHED

Adam Hamilton
Nashville: Abingdon, 2002



review book

With the steady decline of mainline churches over the past 35 years, some have declared that the death of Protestant denominations is imminent. Adam Hamilton, however, gainsays this assessment. In *Leading Beyond the Walls: Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched*, he interprets the signs he sees pointing to a modern-day church revival—"as though God's mission for them was not yet complete" (p. 13).

To make his point, Hamilton does not give us another new program, but a vision by which the pastor and the congregation can see "tremendous growth in every way. . . a new way of thinking about and 'doing' church" (p. 13). By sharing his encouraging experiences, Hamilton gives the reader hope for the recovery of mainline churches in the 21st century. The principle for this recovery is, as the title suggests, cultivating a heart for the "unchurched" through effective leadership.

Effective leadership, and the development of an effective congregation,

answers these four questions: Why do people need Christ? Why do people need the church? Why do they need *this particular church*? To whom does this church belong? The first three questions come from Hamilton's preparatory work for starting the Church of the Resurrection and are meant as questions for the pastor. The fourth question is for anyone who wants to promote vitality in his or her church. According to Hamilton, without clear answers and convictions to each of these questions the church will continue to struggle and flounder. Hamilton does answer them and then moves to focus on the "strategies and concepts" by which the church should be marketed, structured, and operated, including designs for worship, pastoral care, preaching, weddings and funerals, and fundraising.

Through each of Hamilton's explorations of these strategies and concepts, the overarching concern is for the unchurched. While Hamilton does not offer a clear definition of "unchurched," he does begin the book with a chapter on the pastor as shepherd, from which a definition of the word can be gleaned; metaphorically, the unchurched are lost sheep. "Church leaders and pastors are to go into the community, getting to know and building relationships with unchurched people and caring for those who are hurting" (p. 17). Therefore, if the church is to become vital again, the social questions and personal problems of the unchurched need to be addressed by the pastor and the congregation.

The book functioned for me as a reminder of God's creative mission in our lives. Hamilton's anecdotal stories are warm and on point. His writing style is pastoral and engaging. Having gone to school in Kansas myself, I caught myself smiling and nodding as I read Hamilton's stories. And as a pastor, I found many of the stories connecting with my own experiences and struggles in ministry.

Hamilton states that he writes not as a theorist, offering instead insights from his pastorate in Kansas City, his seminar leadership, and his correspondences with

congregations. This claim is, however, quite surprising given his assertion just two pages earlier that the "principles and methodologies outlined in this book will work in almost *any* church setting from Pentecostal to Roman Catholic" (p. 11, emphasis mine). Such a statement signals that Hamilton is, in fact, proposing a *theory* for a modern-day church revival. This conclusion is supported by Hamilton's regular use of formulaic language, including "principles," "foundations," and "answers." What is problematic about this is that Hamilton, in my view, inflates *a witness* to God's clear and powerful mission today into *the script* that all pastors who want to be effective should use. In an unfortunate twist, what is hugely contextual for Hamilton—his Church of the Resurrection—is presented in such a way that the contextual issues of other congregations do not matter. Both the Church of the Resurrection and Hamilton's ministry offer a moving testimony to God's activity in a particular place at a particular time with a particular people. But to make these testimonies the principle and method for almost any context is to miss the point—God's mission with us is not yet complete.

If you are a pastor whose context has several points of consonance with the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection (Protestant, Midwestern, suburban, white), Hamilton may be particularly helpful, offering concrete suggestions for starting a new congregation or reviving an existing one. More questionable is the usefulness of this book for pastors and congregations whose contexts are markedly different.

REV. DR. DAVID FORNEY

Columbia Theological Seminary
Decatur, Georgia

RESOURCES ON SACRED SPACE FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCE GUIDE

Church Architecture: A Resource Network (www.churcharchitecture.net). This well-organized Web site guides users to resources for church building and renovation. It includes architects and liturgical consultants as well as suppliers of stained glass, lighting, furniture, and fonts. Church building enthusiasts will enjoy exploring the site's many links.

Church Construction Connection (www.churchconstruction.com). As an online annotated guide to resources and specialists in church construction and facilitation, this Web site serves congregations that are considering, planning, executing, or evaluating church construction. Included are a discussion forum, a glossary of key terms, and denominational resources.

Dean, Peggy Powell and Susanna A. Jones. **The Complete Guide to Capital Campaigns for Historic Churches and Synagogues**. (Philadelphia: Partners for Sacred Places, 1998). This loose-leaf guide includes an outline of the capital campaign process that would be useful to any congregation, plus advice on involving community leaders not affiliated with the congregation and seeking grants from foundations and government sources. Any congregation needing to raise funds to renovate historic buildings should obtain a copy.

Giles, Richard. **Re-Pitching the Tent: Reordering the Church Building for Worship and Mission**. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999). A historical and theological treatise, *Re-Pitching the Tent* includes dozens of images. Written in England, it can apply to many cultural contexts—in part because it argues that liturgical action should be the primary concern in designing worship spaces. It concludes with appendices on architectural consultants, landscaping, fundraising, lighting schemes, and floor surfaces.

Haynes, Wesley, Andrew Rudin, and J. Thomas Ryan. **Inspecting and Maintaining Religious Properties**. (New York: New York Landmarks Conservancy, 1991). This New York Landmarks Conservancy guide offers practical advice on the inspection, maintenance, and operation

of building structures and systems. Topics include the building envelope; mechanical and structural systems; energy cost reduction; preventive maintenance; organizing building records; and implementing maintenance plans.

Klein, Patricia S. **Worship Without Words: The Signs and Symbols of Our Faith**. (Orleans, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2000). The author guides readers to the symbols of church architecture and worship space. She also explains the liturgical calendar, worship, music, sacraments, and creeds. This book will serve as a valuable reference for all who seek to deepen their understanding of Christian tradition and symbolism.

Maintenance Manual: A Program for Inspection and Seasonal Maintenance of Religious Properties. (Albany, New York: Architecture and Building Commission of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, 1985). Property committee leaders, board members, sextons, and others responsible for maintenance and repairs will find this manual informative. Packaged in a three-ring notebook and printed on pages that may be legally photocopied and distributed, it includes interior and exterior property maintenance schedules for every season. Available from Partners for Sacred Places.

Partners for Sacred Places (www.sacredplaces.org). This nonprofit organization helps Americans care for and make good use of older and historic religious properties. Its Web site provides free information and advice about property maintenance, fundraising, and professional references. The user can purchase publications online and learn about advocacy and research efforts on behalf of older religious properties.

Reeves, Kathy N., ed. **Accessibility Audit for Churches**. (New York: General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, 1994.) Based on the commitment to full architectural access in worship communities, this publication provides audits that religious institutions can use to determine their level of inclusiveness. The audits center on accessibility levels in parking, doors, corridors, walls, ramps, handrails, restrooms, elevators, telephones, water fountains, and signs.

www.congregationalresources.org

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CONGREGATIONS is a quarterly publication of the Alban Institute, a nonprofit, interfaith membership organization founded in 1974 to provide a comprehensive range of resources to Christian and Jewish congregations. Our mission is to provide clergy and lay leaders with practical, research-based information and ideas for effective ministry as they grapple with an ever-changing environment.

The Alban Institute serves leaders – both ordained and lay – across the denominational spectrum through consulting services, education events, book and periodical publishing, and research. Our work is supported by membership revenue, grant funding, and the sale of programs, services, and publications.

The Alban Institute encourages dialogue with many faith traditions, people of diverse ethnicity, men and women, large and small congregations, and urban and rural congregations. We invite you to join in conversation with us by becoming a member or writing an article for CONGREGATIONS – or both! Please call us at 301-718-4407 or send an e-mail to membership@alban.org.

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- An assessment of diversity training programs in congregations

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- Key strategies to avoid the dangers of role confusion in congregational leadership and governance

The Alban Institute

7315 Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 1250W
Bethesda, MD 20814-3211