

Church Architecture: Theology and Doxology Symbolized

Session One: Churches Around the World – Their Effect on Worship

Why study the theology of worship and the worship space?

Although there is no inherently Lutheran or Christian style of church architecture, all architecture makes a statement about what a church believes.....Architectural design, the floor plan, building materials, placement of furnishings, acoustics, and much more, all speak a message about the theological priorities of a Lutheran congregation. It is imperative, therefore, that church building committees study both church design and theology before they embark on a building or renovation program. (CW Manual p73,75)

_____, what you believe, dictates _____, what you do in worship, dictates _____, space you need to do it in.

The Goal of Church Design:

- 1) to picture something communicating God's glory
- 2) to show what God is worth to those who worship

Development

1. **The one room format:** Early Christians gathered in private homes where a room was set aside for worship. These gatherings were intimate; people were close to each other and the pastor. This arrangement is making a comeback today. (catacombs)

Gathering worshipers around pulpit and altar aims to express the nearness of God, and calls to mind Jesus' words: look up John 18:20

2. **The two room format:** Perhaps while meeting in private homes, but certainly after Christianity was legalized (AD 313) worship space was divided into two areas: the room of God and the room of the people (chancel/nave).

This arrangement was similar to the layout of the tabernacle and temple which had been built according to God-given design, and which drew a sharp distinction between courtyard and sanctuary. It emphasized the idea of approaching God and standing in his presence. It is the format most familiar to us today.

3. The **basilica style** developed when Christianity became a legal religion in the Roman empire. Unused Roman government buildings were adapted to church use. The style of these buildings was preserved for centuries as one of the main styles of church architecture.

This palace-like style symbolizes the kingly nature of God. Often done in Romanesque or Byzantine style, the heavy, durable construction of these buildings pictures God's eternal nature.

4. During the Middle Ages, especially in Europe, church floor plans were laid out in the shape of a cross. This **cruciform style**, is the common format for the great cathedrals of Europe. Because our Wisconsin Synod has strong European roots, this style is found among us especially in some of our older congregations.

Often done in Gothic style, the high ceilings, steeples and tall windows point the worshiper toward heaven and express its glory and magnitude. Architects who used this style often aimed to express a feeling of transcendence.

While the symbolism of this style is commendable, in practice it often hindered good worship. The cruciform style made churches longer and narrower, putting a lot of space between pastor and people.

What have believers done when they have gathered for public worship?

1. Before the giving of the Ceremonial Law

I don't have a clue what they would have done. They seem to have a place — _____ .
(Genesis 2:8-9) A time — _____. (Genesis 2:2)

2. After the fall into sin: Genesis 4:26 _____

Red Sea: Exodus 15:1-21 _____

3. From Sinai to Jesus: What would little 12 year-old Jesus have seen, smelt, heard, sang at the temple?
(Hebrews 9:11-14,22 & 10:9-10)

4. Time of the Apostles: Acts 2:42-47 & Colossians 3:16-17

The hymns: Magnificat (*Song of Mary*) Luke 1:46-55

Benedictus (*Song of Zechariah*) Luke 2:67-79

Gloria in Excelsis (*Song of the Angels*) Luke 2:13

Nunc Dimittis (*Song of Simeon*) Luke 2:29-32

A) What did believers do when they got together?

B) What is only way we can do that? The _____ in _____ & _____.

C) Objective of worship in the Old and New Testament: Proclaiming _____.

As they gather in regular assembly believers speak, sing, move, eat, sacrifice, pray, thank, praise, confess -- all with the objective of proclaiming and administering the _____.

D) As they gather in regular assembly believers speak, sing, move, eat, sacrifice, pray, thank, praise, confess -- all with the objective of proclaiming and administering the _____.

E) This is our FUNCTION, _____ determines it.

The Essence of Worship

1. We speak to God
2. God speaks to us
3. We speak to each other