



A WORD JOURNEY THROUGH THE CHAPEL AND MUSIC BUILDING

This journey began more than forty years ago when the Church campus was master planned. The Chapel and Music Building to be constructed is the last link in that early vision for Mission Valley. The impetus for implementation began in the 1990's with a Church Space Needs Committee Study that reinforced the idea. This led to incorporating the concept and redevelopment of existing campus buildings into an Amendment to the Conditional Use Permit that the City eventually granted authority to the Church to develop the property. Twenty-five Church volunteers and staff that would be directly affected by the project were interviewed in 2002. Some consensus items included the following:

- Flexibility of use in both the Chapel and Rehearsal Spaces.
- A reasonable working area for the Choir, in contrast to their unventilated and crowded Sanctuary Basement location.
- Consolidation of Music Department Offices.
- A Chapel to serve individual prayers/meditation as well as congregate services that provide quality light for inspired worship.

The basic architectural task was to fulfill the functional needs on a small parcel of land with a physical form that compliments the Sanctuary yet is complete within itself. The last remaining campus building site is directly West of the Sanctuary that is a sea of asphalt and concrete. One reason for the extensive hard surfacing is to deflect water from down-draining into the Sanctuary Basement Storage Rooms. This project will re-waterproof the Basement walls. Existing parking will be more efficiently configured and a limited number of vehicle spaces eliminated to accommodate the new facilities. The same number of accessible parking spaces remain. Night area lighting is to be enhanced by more efficient fixtures and additional planting and walk lights. The close in parking spaces North and South of the new building are for seniors or the disabled.

Architecture is a movement from one space to another, not unlike music moving through one melodic line to the next. There are starts, stops, new ideas, changes of atmosphere, repetitions, different degrees of light and shading. Moving from the Sanctuary or the parking and drop-off areas toward the new building is through a transitional zone of landscaped entry courtyards. A segmented path offers intimate views and orientation between the Sanctuary and new facility recalling a procession to a sacred place. Shady benches suggest lingering in this serene green space in contrast to hurrying across the hot pavement among automobiles. Entrances to the Sanctuary, Chapel and Music are connected by the walkway. A new elevator and nearby exterior stairs opening to the court connect both levels of the Sanctuary. Tucked in a quiet corner of the site is the meditative Labyrinth Walk.

The Chapel and Rehearsal Rooms sit comfortably side by side under their individual barrel vault roofs that issue from the existing curved West Transept roof. Lower functional spaces separate the new vaults and reduce the mass of the building. The forms echo both curves and straight lines of the present campus buildings. Off-white stucco wall finish reinforces the new and existing relationship. However, the close proximity requires the new structure to be of concrete block and fire-proofed steel beam construction by the Building Code. The overall size is equal to about three average houses. Conduit below the floor allow the Chapel and Rehearsal Room to be armed with computer equipment in the future.

Dominant features of the Rehearsal Space include the curved, four level platform that places the Choir in close contact with the Director. This optimal closeness would also work for Church seminar classes. Seating is available for about 140 persons. Closed cabinets line the room largely for robes and some food and drink service. Open shelves contain sheet music and hymnals for individual Choir Members. The curved ceiling is lined with clouds and sound diffusing blocks extend from the rear curved wall for acoustical control. Horizontal windows at the top of walls bring in reflected light. Off to the side is the Music Library equipped with movable shelving for sheet music storage. The door on the opposite side leads to three Music Offices. In the middle toward the Sanctuary is a Warming Kitchen and Toilet Rooms that serve the Rehearsal Room as well as the entire congregation.

Activities too small to feel comfortable in the 1,200 seat Sanctuary such as weddings, funerals and prayer services for about 100 or less are appropriate in the intimate Chapel. Individual chairs can be set up to suit the scale of the occasion. Acoustics are controlled with a plastered curved ceiling, sound absorptive panels and diffusing block. A platform is suspended above the rear seats to support and exhibit future organ pipes for the console near the altar. A Foyer introduces worshipers to the quietness of the Chapel with a Multi-purpose Room to the side for pre-wedding dressing or grieving families about to attend a funeral. The Chapel is an evocative space filled with ever changing light throughout the day and night and each season. Dawn light enters skylights over the altar and entry then bounces across walls to create halos and shadows that vary as the sun moves until the sunset. North daylight from vertical windows is the constant element. Light fixtures within the skylights cause an interior glow that produce a lantern effect at night to the outside, much like the Sanctuary tracery windows. This emphasis on light produces a serene, spiritual space as a catalyst for prayer, inspiration and healing.

There is a unity about the form and significance of this new building as it offers a direct and meaningful sense of place that may also move us to have a better understanding of who we are.