

Building for our Ministries

November has seen the Building Program starting on the exciting part of our task — starting to work with our architects to begin developing the design concept for our new facilities. While few of the details of that concept are yet firm — as we used to say in international negotiations “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” — I’d like to give you some idea of the direction in which the design is heading. In this endeavor, we continue to be guided by the ministries that you said should be emphasized — remember the “town hall” meetings we held in July? — and by BC3’s (Building Committee Phase III) translation of those ministries into facility design goals or requirements. It bears repeating that the design ideas described below are quite tentative at this time, but they do indicate the direction in which we are moving.



First, because the new sanctuary is the heart of the Building Program, our design considerations to date have focused on it and the overall site plan; we will address other features shortly. Consistent with St. Chad’s original Master Plan, the new sanctuary is likely to be constructed to the south of the present entrance, such that one walking up the walkway would turn right to enter the new sanctuary or turn left to enter the existing facility, for example to go to the fellowship hall (the present worship center).

Next, the primacy of worship in the life of St. Chad’s has convinced us that the sanctuary should be dedicated to worship, not be designed as an auditorium or multi-purpose space. Instead, the space should be uplifting, contemplative, and fairly simple in architectural style to avoid diluting its power. To the extent possible, we hope to use natural materials in the sanctuary — wood, stone, stucco, granite, etc, largely in color tones common in the southwest — and use natural lighting as much as possible.

Third, the focal point of the new sanctuary will be the altar — our family table — and we wish it to have visual impact that reminds us of the mystical properties of our worship and the grace of God. To facilitate access for celebrants and to take Eucharist, it probably will be one step higher than the floor, much like our current altar is on one-step-up risers. Since St. Chad’s parishioners seem comfortable taking Communion by standing or by kneeling on the riser without an altar rail, we are leaning against adding an altar rail and its tendency to segregate the congregation from worship celebrations and the altar area. The Baptismal font will be an integral part of the sanctuary, most likely in the front.

Fourth, because worship is the centerpiece of our church services, we have stressed that the new sanctuary should be wider than long, and configured with a short center aisle (akin to our present worship center configuration) in order to preserve the intimacy all worshippers feel by being close to the altar and clergy, readers, chalice bearers, etc. By a wedge-shaped or fan-like seating arrangement, we hope to limit the depth to only 9-10 rows (compared to the present 5 rows), yet still provide seating for about 300 worshippers. So that the rows are not so long as to make access awkward, the design may also include 2 other aisles. We are still reviewing seating options, but seem to be leaning toward an esthetically pleasing mix of pews and the chairs that presently grace our worship center.

BC3 hopes that this preliminary description of the design path on which we are progressing is informative and exciting to you. Refinements and more details will be described between now and the full unveiling of the design concept at the Building Pledge Drive kickoff in February, so we ask you to contact me or any other member of BC3 to let us know what you think about the above directions.

Bob Gough, Chair