

These are the ideas that the St. John's congregation articulated about what the new church may convey and what sacred space means. These suggestions are part of the information required to proceed with the design process.

Congregational Workshop Report

28 November 2009

The following is a synopsis of the answers the congregation provided in response to the questions posed by the design team at the workshop held on the 28th of November 2009. These answers are indicative of the overarching themes that were presented.

1. What do we want the new St. John's to convey about our congregation?

WELCOMING:

- Should welcome everyone (sacred and secular activities).
- Building should be open, warm and have a sense of arrival (outside courtyard, inside foyer).
- Thoughts of seeing into space from outside allowing people to see what is going on or light emanating from within.

ACCESSIBILITY:

- Should be accessible – visibly so as to be inviting.
- Possible access from the seniors' residence apartments into the worship space.

COMMUNITY:

- Should be part of / integrated into the community.
- Should be respectful of surrounding neighbourhood.
- Should convey to the community that we are socially active, diverse & dynamic Christian congregation.
- Should appeal to / include all age groups (inter-generational).
- Should intrigue the community to find out more about the church... that it is an interesting place of action... should be visible (glass facade?)
- Should be a church space, but also part of the community.
- Include hospitality programs (eg. Breakfast, dinners), recreational space (gym space).
- Would like an area where crying / coughing can occur and still listen to service (speakers?). May double as a coffee gathering area.

ENVIRONMENT:

- Should show that we care about the environment
 - o Material choices, glazing configuration, appropriate landscaping, "maritime feel" – building should be reflective of its geographical location.
- Incorporate a green space (welcoming and restful).
- Make use of natural lighting and new/reused stained glass.

MUSIC:

- Should hear or see evidence of music (bells, organ pipes) from outside.
- Want to maintain good acoustics – highly important.
- Requests to save all or part of organ.

SPRITUALITY:

- Needs a sense of awe, peace, serenity, spirituality, tranquility.
- Must be a permanent sacred space (chapel).
- Dedicated church entrance is desirable.

FLEXIBILITY:

- Needs to be flexible in seating, lighting & amenities (wired for sound, controllable lighting)
- "Open and free" for multiple uses and able to change over time - not confined.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Would like to mix traditional and non-traditional, modern and historic
 - o Perhaps tradition shape outside but modern materials to convey modernity inside
- Want it modern but linked to history – respectful of the past but forward looking to a bright future.
- Warm clean lines – not cold or sterile.

2. What is it about the existing St.John's that is important to carry forward?

PHYSICAL ARTIFACTS:

- Stained glass windows
- Organ &/or pipes
- Pews
- Hand bells
- Wrought iron chandeliers
- Wood and brass railings
- Plaques
- Tapestries
- Pulpit and lecterns, front wood, reuse for internal surfaces, window sills
- Historical memorabilia
- Corner stone from old building (perhaps in a garden)

SPACES/PROGRAMS:

- Meditation space (chapel)
- Kitchen
- Family space
- Offices
- Dedicated choir space
- Storage
- Garden center
- Conservatory (great acoustics) but make it a smaller space to seem more intimate
- Improve kitchen (appliances, accessibility)
- Secure meeting / classroom space (ie. Nursery, computer center, storage)
- Breakfast program, music program
- Welcome centre & family center at front, green space (baptismal front)

FEELING:

- Sense of "large" space (high ceilings)
- Transparency between indoors and out

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Lots of convenient electrical plugs.
- Childcare / nursery (set up so caregivers can see and hear service)
- Family welcoming center at back of Sanctuary, Christian education, Sunday school (4 rooms), youth group. Lighting and warmth important for these spaces.
- Washrooms on same level as Sanctuary (improve accessibility)
- Additional artifact display surfaces, large enough for the multiple celebrations and events (flower displays, hobbies, thanksgiving vegetables, banners, food story boards, collective donations, mirth trees).
- Reference to Christian symbols (cross, bells, bible, the word, etc) within the design.

3. For you, what characteristics define a sacred space?

- Sense of awe
- Serenity
- Protection
- Continuity, upward flow ("rooflessness")
- Opportunity for quiet reflection, contemplation and meditation.

- Peace and tranquility (requires quiet – sounds absorbing materials).
- Collective experience and knowledge (knowledge that space is sacred).
- Sense of spirituality and mysticism.
- Ability to be alone yet connected to others, connection with nature (earth & sky), connection with past and present.
- Surrounded by Christian symbols (cross, bible, art (statues, stained glass, and tapestries), candles, altar, and baptismal font).
- Immersed / aware of continuing some sense of the traditions (sacraments, communion, etc) but not restrictive to this.
- Warm and inviting entrance.
- Open to nature and respectful of nature.
- Simplicity (not too ornate or decorative).

ADDITIONAL IDEAS:

- Sanctuary on top floor rather than ground floor