

The Art and Architecture of Christ the King

Part Two

The cornerstone of our church building was laid in 1956, but within ten years it became apparent that the space for fellowship and Sunday School in the lower level was seriously inadequate to serve the growing congregation. Long-time members tell of VBS being held in tents in the parking lot to meet the demand of the Eastgate and Lake Hills communities of families with four and five children. By 1968, a two-story addition on the east side of the fellowship hall was completed. The row of posts that now march down the middle of the large room had been the outside wall of the lowest level. The new addition created a ground level of classrooms and a large storage room beneath an extension of the mid-level fellowship hall, two new rest rooms, a nursery, education office and fine arts room, as well as a new sky lit stairwell and four new entry/exits. The expanded fellowship hall featured a wall of double-glazed windows, an extension ell on the south end, and heavy wooden folding screening partitions to divide the space into classrooms as needed.

The exterior of the new addition featured poured concrete steps on the south end of the building, with a landing that accessed the fellowship hall, as well as a “bridge” exit on the northeast corner. This was intended as a link to the hoped-for larger sanctuary to be sited on the north end of the property, with a traditional east-west orientation. The existing building would then serve education, fellowship and administration purposes. [The I-90 interchange at 148th/150th Avenues had not yet claimed part of the property for the frontage road, and access to the church was still possible via SE 37th St running uphill where only a walking trail exists today.] A “temporary” lower level parking lot filled part of the site of the future sanctuary. The buttress-like beams on the east side of the building were eliminated by the addition, and the canopy over the main entrance disappeared with the addition of a small narthex and entry. The exterior beams on the western front side of the church remained, but all three large crosses had deteriorated and were removed.

The original worship space had changed only slightly with the addition of light-colored pews and kneelers. Cushions had been added at the communion rail, and an automated carillon system filled the air with sound of chimes and hymns regularly. The only restroom on the main level was the private bathroom adjoining the pastor’s office, and a narrow stairway at the south end was still the primary access to the fellowship level.

In 1985, Christ the King had its fourth pastor, a relatively static membership, a parsonage to maintain next door, and no space left to build a new sanctuary. The thirty year old building needed a new roof, a larger narthex with a more welcoming entry, accessible restrooms, revised office and sacristy space and a renovated chancel. The Bellevue firm of Beckwith/Spangler/Architects was engaged to design a Renewal project to meet these needs, under the direction of Byron Perdue, a partner in the firm and member of the congregation. The creative solution was to reverse the direction of the sanctuary in order to reorganize the existing sacristy and offices into a new narthex, office and work space. This also allowed primary access to all three levels to flow from the narthex via the existing wider north stairwell. The former chancel became the choir loft and space for the organ console and pipe chamber. Twelve feet were added to the south end, allowing for a new stairwell and an enlarged asymmetrical chancel area with a new skylight. A sacristy was created in the former narthex. Ten feet added at the northwest corner accommodated two new restrooms off the narthex and additional storage off the fine arts room. The

entire exterior was repaired and repainted, the roof replaced, rotting exterior beams eliminated, and new double doors and large windows opened the narthex to a covered entry and garden area.

The interior of the new sanctuary was softened by the addition of birch facings for the pulpit, communion rail and baptismal font, designed by Mr. Perdue and executed by Richard Strissel and Ken Ruud, as well as the light wood screen for the choir loft and paneling over the nave entry. The addition of carpeting throughout the sanctuary, new light fixtures, and warmer paint colors completed the updated look, while retaining the contemporary style, colored west windows, chancel sculpture and black trim features of the original design.

Parts Three of and Four of this series will discuss the chancel art pieces and more recent additions to the building.

Bev Wick