



### ***The Sanctuary in the Garden***

Number 3 in a continuing series

I have always loved our building. If you look around the sanctuary, at the ceiling with its sloped wooden planks, the high clerestory windows, the curved bow of the bima and the courtyard beyond, you may sense the architect's metaphor: Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat. A beautiful space for a congregation whose symbol is the dove of peace.

But not everyone shares my feeling. They feel something different. They feel the building's cramped and dark lobby, its inseparable sanctuary and social hall, its lack of adequate classrooms and offices, and its courtyard that is beautiful but not very useful.

Everyone who has ever thought about renovating this building has struggled with these issues. First in 1995 (and again in 2007) we talked about an education wing to the east and an outdoor chapel on the back acre. In 1999, we approved an 11,000 square foot addition to the west, with pre-school classrooms in a walkout basement, a social hall on the first floor, and offices above. This was the design that was objected to by the neighbors and ultimately rejected by the Worthington City Council in June of 2000. It led to an overwhelming vote to move and seven years of attempts to get us to a new site 2.8 miles away at Snouffer and Smokey Row. We thought we had to move because we thought that there weren't any other choices at Olentangy River Road.

But we were wrong. Because of our strong feelings about the courtyard, we'd always left it untouched. Instead we designed a wing to the east, a large addition to the west. We knew we needed classrooms, offices, a social hall. We didn't think we needed a new sanctuary. So we avoided the obvious answer, which was sitting out there all the time: a new sanctuary in the courtyard.

Once you give yourself permission to consider that idea and really look at it, the other pieces fall into place. If you build a new sanctuary in the courtyard space, the old sanctuary becomes the social hall. All you have to do is move the Ark, move the chairs, remove the brick wall, and build up the floor. All of a sudden you have 4500 square feet available for banquets and fundraisers and bar and bat mitzvah parties and wedding receptions and golden anniversary dinners. If you put sliding glass doors in the south wall of the social hall, you create a useful patio. Incidentally, 4500 square feet is twice what we have now, and 1300 square feet *more* than we would have had at Snouffer and Smokey Row. It is the size of three of the ballrooms at the Polaris Hilton put together, large enough for a band, a dance floor, and 300 seated at banquet tables.

You also get space for additional classrooms in the courtyard area, and if you build a new library at the front of the building on the west, you can move the teacher resource room and a youth lounge into the old library. Almost magically you go from 11 classrooms to 16, enough so that you can do religious school for the younger students in one session on Sunday morning. If you move the Ark to the new library, it can also function as a chapel for alternative and children's services.

You don't have to go out very far to be able to add office space on the front as well. That gets employees out of converted closets and into real functional spaces. And as long as you remove the "island" in the parking lot and don't go past that area with your extension, you don't lose any parking.

But what about the atmosphere in the building? How do we preserve the "sanctuary in the garden"? The answer turns out to be simple: build the new sanctuary with wood and glass, so that light comes in from every direction and so that everyone in the sanctuary can see flowers and plants and trees and sky from anywhere they sit.

To see an idea of what the sanctuary might look like, go here: <http://www.crs-ra.com/prel-ggs.html>. You can click on the thumbnail pictures to get larger versions. It was Norman Jaffe's greatest creation.

Then if you put moveable walls in the new sanctuary, all of a sudden you get seating with line-of-sight to the bima and the ark for 750 people, enough to ensure that no one has to sit around the corner and watch the service on a little television set.

Sometimes the simplest little adjustment changes everything.

### ***NEXT: The Drawings***

John Stefano  
January 22, 2010

#### Meeting Dates reminder

Congregational Response Sessions, Sundays, 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.  
February 14  
March 7  
April 25  
Annual Meeting, Sunday, May 23, 5:00 p.m.

#### The Working Group

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