

THE BUILDING OF A SACRED SPACE

The Symbols of a Community



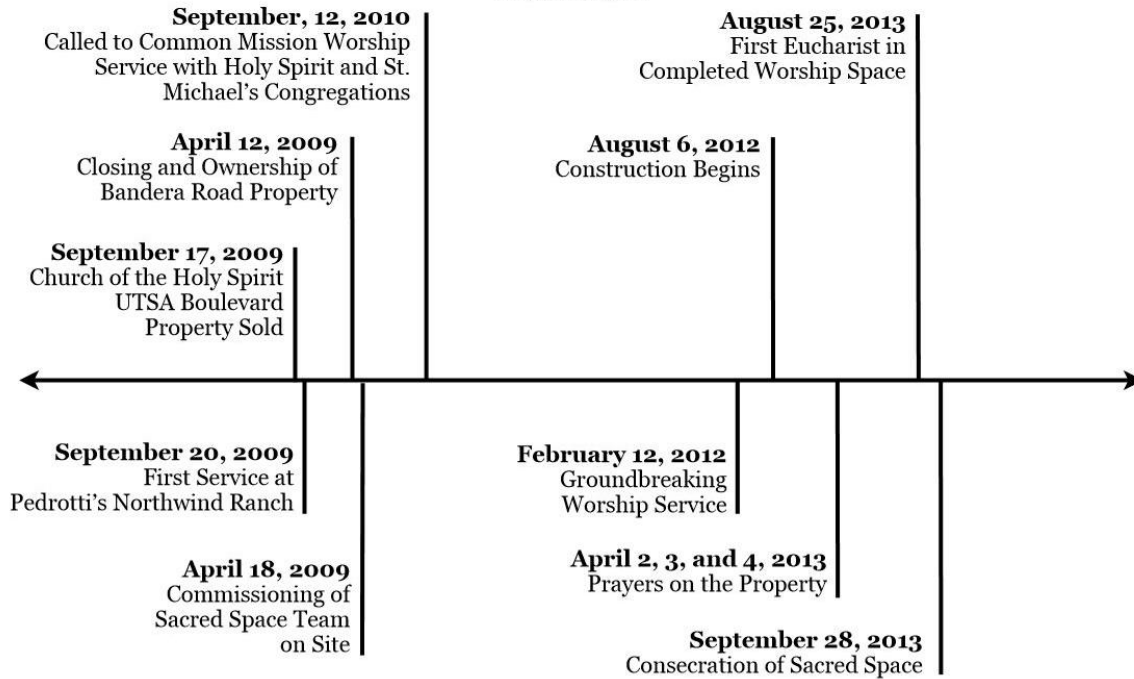
EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

RESTORING ALL PEOPLE TO UNITY WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER IN CHRIST

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Timeline



Introduction



Welcome to Church of the Holy Spirit and this Sacred Space. Our congregation takes great pleasure in serving one another and the world. Whether you are a member, a frequent guest, or guest for the first time, we hope your experience in this Sacred Space enriches your life and your relationship with God.

Every worshipping community has its own history and stories that help shape its formation. Holy Spirit is no different. To help you understand the symbols and stories

that surround you as you enter this Sacred Space, this booklet describes a few of the significant features.

Sacred Space refers to the spiritual encounter with God through a particular space set aside for this purpose.

In the following sections you will encounter several terms. First is the term, Sacred Space. When this term is capitalized, it refers to the spiritual encounter with God through a particular space set aside for this purpose. When not capitalized, the term, sacred space, is about a more specific place or area within the Sacred Space. For example, you will drive past

the Sacred Space on Bandera Road while you worship in a sacred space inside the church.

This guide is intended to assist you on a walking tour, or pilgrimage, around the Sacred Space. So allow time to soak in the different symbols found everywhere, but also feel free to create your own symbols as you seek to encounter God.

What is Sacred Space?



Sacred Spaces are those places that have been set apart in our lives because they are significant to our human story and our relationship with God. Sacred Spaces are filled with symbols that we pray will unite us to God and each other through Christ. In his book, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, Bernard Cooke writes,

“I myself cannot have any recognizable state of awareness unless I use previously learned symbols from my memory and imagination to shape my awareness.”¹

¹ Cooke, Bernard. *Sacrament and Sacramentality*. p. 49

If a symbol is about something recognizable and previously learned, the Church has the large task of educating Christ followers about Christian symbols. In the book, *The Unnecessary Pastor*, by Eugene Peterson and Marva Dawn, Dawn writes,

“Here I make an unabashed plea: reinvest in the Church’s symbols. All of us – preachers, musicians, Sunday school teachers, congregational officers or leaders, or supporters of all the previous servants – are required for the serious effort it will take to reclaim our deep symbols so that they can be taught and passed on to the next generation of believers and to those presently outside the Church’s communities. The symbols need to be reinvested with all the fullness of their original and multiple meanings.”²

Symbols are the tangible objects that form the foundation for most of the things that are sacred to us. Symbols within Sacred Space allow us to have moments of encounter with God without speaking, but through listening, observing, and experiencing the symbols that surround us. However, experiencing symbols is only effective when their meaning, purpose, and ability to transform us are understood.

“...symbols need to be reinvested with all the fullness of their original and multiple meanings.”

The experience of Sacred Space and symbols is both personal and corporate. You might find Sacred Space in the midst of a busy, loud courtyard while others escape to the quiet wilderness. Sacred Space and symbols might also be found in places of community worship and in places of retreat. Sacred Space might even be the 30 seconds you take to sit in your car when you arrive home to transition your mind and heart from work to family.

² Eugene Peterson and Marva J. Dawn. *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call* (Kindle Locations 443-446). Kindle Edition.

Sacred Space at Holy Spirit



Knowing that symbols are most effective when they are understood, I invite you to digest the symbols within this Sacred Space. Some are traditional to our faith and some are unique to Church of the Holy Spirit. In this Sacred Space, you can be reminded of creation and transformed by moments of unity with God’s people. Symbols of Sacred Space are everywhere at Church of the Holy Spirit.

Outside the Walls



The paramount goal of the Sacred Space Team, while working with Overland Partners, Architect, in developing this property was to create an opportunity to encounter the Lord in a Sacred Space from the time you enter the property to the time you depart – and even as you drive past on Bandera Road.

As you enter the Sacred Space you will first notice the trees that cover the land. These trees are a significant part of the story of Holy Spirit and remind us of the Lord’s command to all humanity to “fill the earth and subdue it.”³ In other words, the Lord gave humanity all of creation to maintain, both by building up and tearing down.

As you drive to the end of the driveway, you will notice a bench in the middle of Mary’s Garden as well as several benches on the front porch. These benches are the symbols of refreshment that the Lord offers us as we hand our lives over to him. In Matthew’s Gospel, as Jesus turns to thank the Father in heaven, he says,



³ Genesis 1:1-31

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”⁴

The invitation to turn our lives over to Christ is always present and the benches remind us to be thankful for moments of refreshment.

When you look at the building, you will notice a contemporary look. This design came from many conversations with the architect about achieving a modern expression of a traditional faith.



- The roof line of the porch turns upward, reflecting the openness of the Holy Spirit and offering an invitation to gather.
- The siding resembles the traditional old clapboard church of previous centuries.
- The stone walls pull from the architecture of the Texas Hill Country.
- The concrete interacts with the traditional building materials to create a harmonious and modern effect.
- Even the blue paint color, found under the soffits, front porch, and in the worship space, reflects the Painted Churches of the Texas Hill Country and the “haint blue” found under the porch roofs of many southern homes.⁵ This color blue carries throughout the Sacred Space, as you stand under the porch, in the worship space, or look up from Mary’s Garden.



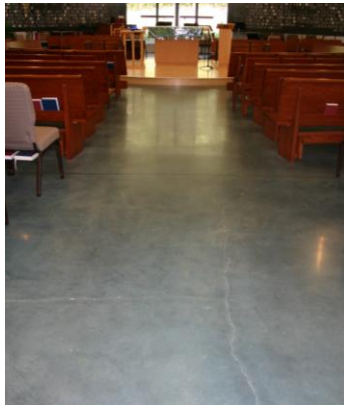
If you keep walking past the front porch and around to the far side of the church, you will encounter the All Saints’ Columbarium, where the ashes of those who have gone before us go to rest after cremation. This place is a wonderful area to gather for quiet prayer. You might almost envision the opening words to a great hymn written on the concrete beam above the columbarium, “For all the saints, who from their labors rest...”

⁴ Matthew 11:28-29

⁵ <http://www.klru.org/paintedchurches/highhill.html>

Inside the Walls

The worship space is filled with symbols and substantive architecture and engineering. From the poured concrete columns to the floating ceiling structure, this space was a significant collaboration among members of the Sacred Space Team; Overland Partners, Architects; Keller-Martin, Contractors; and all the engineers who ensured that the steel and concrete worked together in unity.



The symbols of the worship space represent the foundations of our faith. You will be reminded of your Baptism as you walk onto the blue floor and wade symbolically through the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized. As you look up, you will notice the open spaces in the ceiling as well as the heavenly blue of the painted rectangular cupola. The blue on the floor and the cupola keeps us rooted into the promises of our baptism while symbolizing our journey toward a closer relationship with God and an encounter with the heavenly realm.

The openings in the ceiling panels serve as an acoustical balance but also allow the sound and air to move freely, like the Holy Spirit. The worship space was intentionally designed for music – sung and instrumental. So as you pray or sing, you never know where your prayer will be lifted nor on whom your prayer will fall. The rectangular cupola contains metal baffles that open and close based on levels of heat and moisture, so the louder you sing and the harder you pray, the



So pray boldly and let the Holy Spirit carry your prayers where they need to go!

baffles will open and your prayers and singing will be sent out into the world! When this detail was shared with one church member, she said, “It is almost as if the church is breathing!” The answer is, “yes,” the church is breathing, but it only breathes when God’s people fill it with their prayers, singing, and worship.

So pray boldly and let the Holy Spirit carry your prayers where they need to go!

Symbols are particularly powerful when a community assigns meaning. At the front of the worship space stands the Jerusalem Cross. Historically, this cross was carried during the Crusades, which was not a proud moment in the history of Christianity. However, a red Jerusalem cross stood at the entrance of Church of the Holy Spirit for many years and was the first and last object seen by church members and anyone else who passed by. What was once a sign of destruction has been redefined for our community as a symbol of hope, restoration, and God's grace.



At the center of the Jerusalem Cross is a circular glass piece (not yet installed). The circular glass reflects a design tradition that developed possibly during the Dark Ages. At the time of the Elevation of the Host wafer during Communion, the priest became a visual part of the building architecture. For us, the circular glass is symbolic of that Elevated Host wafer, and yet its clarity also allows connection with the outside world and reminds us that what was once broken has been restored to wholeness.

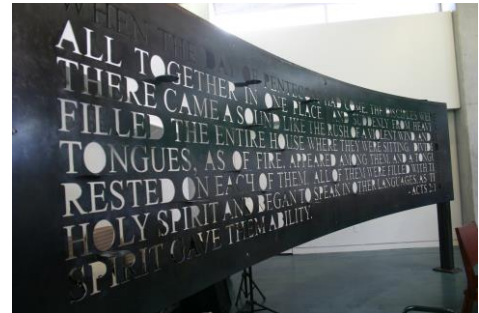
On either side of the Jerusalem Cross is the Rood Screen, which emerged as an idea during conversations between the Sacred Space Team and Overland Partners, Architects. The Rood Screen redefines a medieval tradition that separated the congregation in the nave from the liturgical party in the chancel and sanctuary (area behind the altar rail). The great Rood is a crucifix or a representation of Christ on the Cross and the screen bore the great Rood.⁶ We removed the Crucifix, a symbol of Good Friday, and replaced it with the empty cross, a symbol of the empty tomb of Easter. We are resurrection people! With the moving of the Rood Screen, we are all be in the nave (where the congregation sits); or we are all the liturgical party with the world outside of the Spirit Window (the large window at the front of the church) being the congregation. Choose your place.



On the Gospel side of the worship space (left side of the church) is a portion of the Pentecost reading from John's Gospel (John 14:16-17, 25-26).

⁶ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/509174/rood-screen>

On the Epistle side (right side) of the church is a portion of the Pentecost reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1-4). These passages were chosen because the feast of Pentecost is when the Holy Spirit descends among God’s people and they are transformed and sent out into the world, filled with the Holy Spirit.



In 2014, two chairs were commissioned for artist Roberto Celis to produce. Celis also created the altar, ambo, and baptismal font. These two chairs, the Bishop’s Chair (which may only be sat in by the Bishop) and Priest’s chair, are designed to be open to allow light to easily move around and through them and to match the pieces on the altar platform because of their liturgical significance. Added to these chairs in 2015, thanks to the great work of the St. Clare’s Needlepoint Guild, you will see the traditional Bishop’s miter and the Breastplate of the Order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek is the priest who blessed Abraham in the book of Genesis (14:18-20). Melchizedek is also mentioned in Hebrews Chapter 7 and Psalm 110. These traditional symbols are nested in nontraditional chairs, once again offering a modern expression of a church tradition.



As you look around the worship space, you can also know that you are surrounded by the prayers of our congregation. In the midst of construction, and before the drywall was in place, we had a series of prayer meetings when the entire congregation and friends were invited to write names of loved ones, favorite prayers, Bible verses, and the list goes on. These “prayers on the property” are rooted in the Anglican tradition of the “Beating of the Bounds” when members of a parish would walk and pray the geographical boundary of the parish, surrounding the whole region with prayers. Because the Episcopal Church does not function quite so literally with the concept of parish, we surrounded the whole building with prayers – the worship space, the offices, the nursery, the sacristy, and even the bathrooms! When you enter the building built in this Sacred Space, you are always surrounded by prayers!



Chapel of St. Michael

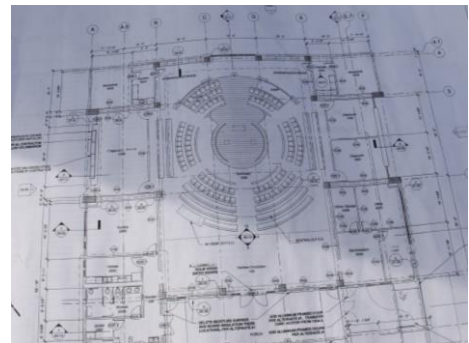
The Chapel of St. Michael is a great symbol of unity within our community, representing the joining together of the congregations of Church of the Holy Spirit and St. Michael's Episcopal Church.



In early September 2010, Holy Spirit and St. Michael's voted to join together in common mission. On Sunday, September 12, 2010, members of Holy Spirit gathered at Pedrotti's Northwind Ranch and members from Holy Spirit and St. Michael's joined at the former St. Michael's property. Both groups began worship at the same time. Then the group from the St. Michael's property joined

those gathered at Pedrotti's and members of both congregations processed in together to signify the beginning of our common mission. The Chapel of St. Michael stands as a sign of the unity that can be found through Christ. The altar and the cross in the chapel both stood in the worship space at St. Michael's.

As our congregation continues to develop into what the Lord is calling us to be, we will grow the worship space by removing the walls that separate the worship space from the chapel and the classrooms. When these walls are removed, the worship space will form the shape of a cross.



Unified Through Worship

In the moment of the Great Thanksgiving – from the Elevation of the Host to the Breaking of the Bread – we are all at once unified with each other, the worship space, and all of God's creation beyond the walls.

God's hope for our congregation is *Restoring All People to Unity with God and Each Other in Christ.*

There is no better symbol of unity in the liturgy of the Episcopal Church than the moment that the Host wafer is Elevated and just before it is broken. As the Host is Elevated, in absolute silence, there is a moment of expectation and anticipation. At that moment, the congregation is focused on that one object – the Body of Christ that is about to

broken for each of us – just as the curtain in the Temple was torn in two at the moment of Jesus’ death.⁷

We are also reminded of the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the scripture readings on the Rood Screen and of our Baptism, as we stand on the blue floor (Jordan River). As we gaze upward to the blue in the rectangular cupola, we are reminded of Jesus’ words in the Lord’s Prayer – “...thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We look at the openings in the ceiling knowing that our prayers ascend and move freely upward. Suddenly, as we hear the crack of the Host, we are unified by the circular glass, which now stands as a reminder that through Christ, what once was broken is returned to wholeness. Finally, we realize that we are staring out into God’s world through this symbol of the restored Body of Christ, the circular glass of the Jerusalem Cross, and through the Spirit Window, which stands behind the cross and allows us to peer out into God’s world.

In this moment of the Great Thanksgiving – from the Elevation of the Host to the Breaking of the Bread - we are all at once unified with each other, the worship space, and all of God’s creation beyond the walls.

In this one moment, we each gain a glimpse of what it looks like to be completely restored with God and each other through Christ. This restoration is what the power of symbols allows us to experience - a modern expression of a traditional faith.

Conclusion



Thank you for taking the time to know more about the unique symbols of the Christian faith found here at Church of the Holy Spirit. The Sacred Space Team and Overland

⁷ Mark 15:3

Partners, Architects prayed and worked to the greatest measure to make sure that the symbols of the Christian Faith, with which we are entrusted, continue to transform, renew and empower us today.

In the Family,

The Rev. Jason T. Roberts
Rector, Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit
Sentbyspirit.org

