

DRAFT THOUGHTS FOR **SUPPLEMENTAL CHAPTER**

Missional arts

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*This is the beginning of a supplemental “missing” chapter to the book *A Place of Encounter*, (2004) to accompany *Formative and Evangelical arts chapters*.*

We have seen that the arts are always formational of Christians and Christian communities.

We have argued that Lutherans should demand that their buildings be evangelical, that is they seek to make Christ known, to reveal Christ, to facilitate an encounter with Christ.

Now we argue that Christian art is missional.

Imagine that a church, prior to doing a building project identifies its mission... Will that make a difference what kind of church it will build?

Does a church that has a strong outreach and social justice ministry need the same kind of skin as a church that understands itself as a herald, an evangelist? What about one whose mission is liturgy and justice? How will that be different than a congregation whose primary goal is to build the fabric of a community?

House, temple, theatre, warehouse, courtroom, auditorium, TV studio, or lecture hall? River, baptistery or pool? Dining room or catacomb? In its 2000-year history the church has tried on many buildings, and is ever seeking a more comfortable skin. Exactly what that skin will look like is guided by how the church understands itself, by how it worships, and by what it understands its mission to be.

Identity and mission shape the place of encounter... either with intention, or by accident. Perhaps a congregation builds intentionally based on its mission goals. Or perhaps a building shapes an assembly into a specific identity or toward a specific missional understanding based on how the building effectively supports or hinders particular programs and ministries.

Elsewhere in *A Place of Encounter*, a spectrum was described along which every worship space can be plotted – between *domus dei* and *domus ecclesiae*, between house of God and being the house of God’s people.

DIGGING DEEPER: Domus dei vs Domus ecclesiae

(See A Place of Encounter, pp. 64-65 for an illustration of this concept.)

Every church building lives on a continuum somewhere between being a “house of God” and a “house of the Church” (God’s people). Does your church keep the world out with many steps, stained glass, and generate a sense of awe? Does it have a strong sense of transcendence? If so, it tends toward “house of God.” Does your church tend to invite the world in with easy access, open clear windows, comfortable places to gather and be “church”? Does it have a sense of familiarity? If so, it tends toward “house of the Church.” Every assembly decides where it is most comfortable along that continuum.

Self-identity and the missional understanding of the community are the factors that determine this placement of a building between transcendent and communal. But more can be said here. Many theologians have described several schemes for models of the Church, of denominations, and of individual congregations. (Avery Dulles, for example, *Models of the Church, 1988 Gill & McMillan*) These schemes can nuance the placement of a worship space along this continuum.

If assemblies fall into the clusters or models of a scheme, it follows that their buildings, as ministry tools, will as well. Mission or identity will determine the kind of skin a church may need or build. Or, perhaps conversely, the kind of building an assembly creates may give clues to its self-identity and primary sense of mission.

As bubble diagrams are plotted, or space and funding is allocated, the percentage of square foot and dollars dedicated to various ministries in a building scheme... might characterize... a particular self-understanding or primary mission.

Family model – perhaps small, rural multi generational congregation: chapel, unpretentious, common goods, domestic scale, cemetery, Christian fellowship through the stages of life being a primary mission.

Herald (A Dulles) – coffee shop front end, or amphitheatre. Here the gospel is bigger than the church, less institutionally limited, a preaching or outreach center; emerging church? Seeker churches; the building for evangelical preaching ministries; TV studio; one way communication; Reformation impulse. (Service Book and Hymnal perspective)

Servant/Healer – this assembly may lead with a food pantry, multi use space for overnight shelter; showers in the restrooms; relief distribution facilities. The sanctuary might double as a meal distribution location, complete health-code kitchens; Or more accurately a meal distribution center six or seven days of the week might become “sanctuary” on Sunday morning. These assemblies seek to make a positive contribution to society, want to make a difference, having “scrutinized the signs of the times and discerned the action of the Spirit – then works along side” for peace, liberation, justice, reconciliation... Advocacy, shelter...

Political/Society (A Dulles) or **Institutional/Program**: based on the structures of the state (Roman Catholic; Lutheran state churches; denominational structures, head offices) with bureaucracy that needs space for operating; hierarchical construction of roles and positions offices, departments, might be basically an office building; Think ELCA church wide expression or a synodical expression of the church; Think about the location and relocation of the chapel at ELCA church wide offices. Program-based mission; cubicles and corner offices, reception spaces, much like a corporate environment

Body of Christ (A Dulles) or **Communal/Community**: This assembly sees themselves to be democratic, a community, stressing the activity of the Spirit, inspired; might focus a building on gathering, fellowship, community-building spaces; flexible, flat, accessible, not hieratical, communal, perhaps representing the implied baptismal community stress of LBW.

Sacramental (A Dulles) communities see the Church as a sign or instrument of union with God, and of the unity of all of humanity. They are the continuation of Christ’s ministry of salvation for the whole world. They are a light to the world. Their building might therefore have a heroic external witness like bellow, a beacon of hope, a gold dome in the Orthodox tradition. They are a community building force rather than a weird sect on the fringe of human society. Cathedrals and cathedral-like structures might have been built for this mission or identity.

Pilgrim People (A Dulles) These assemblies are historical communities on a pilgrimage. Movement characterizes their life and their architecture. Danish ship sanctuary models might be one tangible example. Perhaps their buildings suggest movement in and out; They gather and send; they are processional in character; democratic; not feeling arrived but along the way; Natural lighting, transparent glass, flexibility, portable “camping” furniture. God travels with them; few possessions or accessories; Fold up and put away; on the move; mission-starts

loaded from the school cafeteria to the back of a pick-up each week; alternate venues – theatres, school rentals; all adopted as Children of God – invite along the journey; emerging church?

(B) Imagine a congregational space created by a certain mission understanding or self-identity.

If models of the church by theologians (like Avery Dulles for example) can reveal ecclesiologies, what can be learned from extrapolating building plans from models of the church?

Attempt to describe worship spaces for each of the various models in the scheme. In other words, how would a herald model church ration out its square footage? How would it be different in congregation operating with another model? What would be present or absent? What would principles for worship space look like for each of the models? How would they be different?

Dulles, Avery: Models of the Church, 1988 Gill & McMillan

Church as Political Society: institutional/denomination structure

Church as Body of Christ: communal (LBW stress)

Church as Sacrament

Church as Pilgrim

Church as Servant: healer

Church as Herald: gospel is bigger than the church

DIGGING DEEPER: ACTIVITY FOR BREAK TIME OR FOR A MEAL BREAK

“Walk/act Like a Benedictin”e (Honoring the Assembly)

Example of reverencing the altar and one another in the spirit of a Benedictine monastic.