

Church Architecture: Opportunity for Change

By Aaron Christie and Bryan Gerlach

This content supplements an article from *Worship the Lord*, #25, July 2007.

Worship the Lord #25 focuses on opportunity for change. But, actually, each article in the series has featured significant opportunities for change. The online supplemental content has also highlighted valuable changes achieved in each of the featured churches.

Below are some excerpts from the printed article along with photos (not included in the original) to illustrate the points under discussion.

Opportunity for a new sanctuary

Before



View from the "penalty box."

After



The peak of our roof is 44' high. The side walls are also high.

Continued on next page

Opportunity for excellent choir space

Behind the choir risers, we installed three layers of drywall slightly angled to provide maximum projection of the choir's sound. Why three layers? Because a single layer absorbs too much low frequency sound.

Before



After



Opportunity for fellowship

We have always strived to be a friendly congregation. Our old building, sadly, gave us no space in which to be friendly. The old narthex was a 10' by 10' space that tumbled people down five stairs to the exit. Our architect dubbed our old church a "tube of toothpaste." . . . Our new narthex is actually a commons. It is 60' by 50' with a 35' ceiling. A brick fireplace with chimney soars up to the peak. Amish oak tables and chairs, comfortable couches, and a warm color palate invite people to sit and stay awhile.

Before



After



Continued on next page

Opportunity for two sanctuaries



We are now a church with two sanctuaries. A fifty-seat octagonal chapel has a blue tile floor and a gold ceiling. It has quickly become the busiest room at the new church. Small weddings and funerals, Bible information class, council meetings, private counseling, and a new Wednesday night contemplative service have all found a home in the chapel. Guests delight in this beautiful room.

Additional Information and Links

Antioch PowerPoint presentation

You can link to a [PowerPoint](#) presentation file (also saved as an [Adobe pdf](#)) with many images of the old and new Antioch churches.

Acoustics

Churches considering a new building program or remodeling an existing church can benefit from two videos that discuss solutions to goals for good acoustics. Reviews of two videos are available:

[Review of video Acoustics in Existing Buildings](#)

[Review of video Improving Acoustics](#)

[A Lament for Resounding Praise](#), by Carl Schalk

Other

Additional articles on church architecture are under [Art and Architecture](#) at the WELS Worship Web site.

The July 2007 issue mentions the value of worship education: "A building project is an excellent time for worship education. The benefits of such education can result in worship enrichment and not merely consensus about a new building. ... Education can only help...and strengthen people's understanding of how God works in worship."

["Emphasize Baptism"](#) urges a prominent place for a substantial baptismal font.

See also ["Worship Renewal and God's Miraculous Gifts"](#) for encouragement to maintain – and increase – a means of grace focus. Excerpt:

The ambiance created by the sacred space of church architecture is not a means of grace, nor is the friendliness of the assembled worshipers.

Of course, these matters are important. We want to do our best with them for the glory of God and the edification of his people. But they are not the holy basics. We cannot let attention to them detract from reliance on God's glorious means of grace, the gospel in Word and Sacrament.

Aaron Christie wrote in the July 2007 issue:

We built it. And they are coming. They come wanting to see the new church "that actually looks like a church." They leave with the message of forgiveness and life ringing in their ears. It is our prayer that this – and *only* this – will make for eternal changes, one soul at a time.