

# THE RENOVATION OF THE WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY CHAPEL (2004-2005)

DESIGNED TO REFLECT GOD'S GRACE IN LITURGICAL PRACTICE



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The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary chapel of 1929 was faithfully used as the worship space for students and faculty for seventy five years. Many students preached their first sermon or devotion there. God's Word of life and salvation was proclaimed every school day to baptized children, and his Supper fed many souls. The chapel served the seminary well, and its beauty and symbolism was cherished by many.

With the exception of a few additions and one minor renovation, the chapel basically stayed the same during those years. Those who had worshipped in the chapel in 1960 would have been very familiar with the sights and sounds of the room in 2000.

With the 2004 renovation, many of those sights and sounds changed. However, the purpose of the worship space did not. The seminary chapel renovation was designed to reflect God's grace through liturgical practice. It is the prayer of all those who worship in the renovated chapel that God would continue to work through his servants and his Means of Grace to grant his people the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

## **THE OLD SEMINARY CHAPEL**

The previous chapel at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary was built in 1929 as part of the original construction of buildings at the Thiensville (now Mequon), Wisconsin campus. Along with the other buildings on the campus, the exterior of the chapel was designed to mimic the architectural style of the Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Germany, with stone walls and slate roofs.

The original chapel room was two-thirds the size of the present worship space. The chapel was constructed on a northwest to southeast axis. The worshippers would face the northwest when directed towards the chancel, as those who presided in worship would face

southeast. There was a dividing wall at the southeast side of the chapel that separated the worship space from a classroom.

Originally, the interior chapel was plain. It lacked pews, musical instruments, artistic windows, a pulpit and an altar. During the 1930s, renovations to the chapel room began which included the addition of art glass windows, a decorated chancel, a pulpit and an altar. In the early 1940s, local artist Friedrich Kreft painted a fresco of the Wartburg Castle on the southeast dividing wall of the chapel. A ten rank Wicks pipe organ was installed in 1949.<sup>1</sup>

In 1971 the chapel was enlarged to its present size with the removal of the dividing wall on the southwest side of the room, and the addition of the former classroom into the overall worship space. In order to preserve the fresco of the Wartburg, the southeast wall on which the painting was set had to be moved along with the painting to the chapel foyer.

## **THE ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT**

When Professor James Tiefel received the call to the seminary as in 1985, he discussed the possibilities of the seminary purchasing a new organ and redecorating the chapel with then school president Armin Schuetze. Since there had been interest in a new organ, Schuetze gave a favorable response. Although Schuetze was tentative about the proposal of a new chapel, the idea lived on with fellow professor David Vallesky.<sup>2</sup>

During the late 1980s, talks resurfaced regarding the topic of a chapel renovation. Seminary professors discussed the possibility of opening the ceiling of the sanctuary, expanding the chancel, widening the chapel, purchasing an ambo, having a free standing altar, redoing the wall paper and pews cushions, and moving the pipe organ.

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<sup>1</sup> Tiefel, James P. "The Seminary Chapel." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Volume 103: 1, p. 47

<sup>2</sup> Personal interview with Prof. James Tiefel: Conducted on 12/1/2007 in Mequon, WI.

Although consideration of a new chapel was tabled at this time, the decision to purchase a new organ proceeded. A thank offering designated for the organ was presented at the observance of the Seminary's 125<sup>th</sup> year of existence in 1988. At this time, the organ committee of the seminary proposed that the chapel ceiling be opened up to allow for better acoustics and give the new organ builder an opportunity to construct a two-tiered organ case. This original project was later abandoned due to financial difficulties.

In 1991 a 23 rank organ built by Martin Ott was dedicated for use in the chapel. The organ was built along the southeast wall of the chapel where the old classroom once was.

In the mid 1990s, faculty members from the four Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's ministerial schools came together to discuss several issues affecting the synod's ministerial education system. Some of these discussions included the issue of public worship on campus.

Two purposes of public worship were emphasized in these discussions: "to edify with the gospel in Word and Sacrament and to teach appropriate attitudes and skills for leading worship in a congregation."<sup>3</sup> The representatives from the synod schools were encouraged to "build the worship life of their schools on the liturgical concepts unique to confessional Lutheranism."<sup>4</sup> The faculty of the seminary took these suggestions to heart.

Prior to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wisconsin Synod, a committee appointed to plan the celebration resolved to direct a portion of a synod wide offering to help fund the building of Wisconsin Synod archives, which would be located at the seminary. This gave the seminary faculty impetus to begin seriously thinking about a renovated or brand new chapel.

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<sup>3</sup> Tiefel, James P. "The Renovation of the Seminary Chapel." *The Seminary Chapel* (chapel renovation booklet put out by the Chapel Dean (2007) p. 4

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

The seminary's Master Site Plan committee recommended a design for a free standing chapel to be constructed just east of the former chapel. According to these plans, the old chapel would then serve as a preaching classroom. However, the synod wide "*Forward in Christ*" offering did not raise enough money for the archive project, so the idea was put aside for then.

In the early 1990s, the seminary began a campus renovation project. Over the course of the decade, the dormitory and the classrooms were remodeled and updated. This left the chapel as the only room that had not been drastically remodeled.<sup>5</sup> These renovations were funded almost completely by gifts given to the school. Although a chapel renovation project did not seem possible at this time, the seminary continued to hold onto the idea. During the 2001-2003 school years, the seminary Facilities Committee was authorized to study the school's chapel needs.

## **THE PROJECT IS PROPOSED**

In the fall of 2002, the seminary's Facilities Committee submitted a report that highlighted possible chapel renovations. The committee reported that the chapel was in need of many functional, liturgical, and aesthetic changes to the worship space.

Among the recommended functional improvements were: new lighting and audiovisual systems, increased seating capacity, more appropriate storage spaces, air conditioning, an upgraded heating system, and wheelchair accessibility. Along with these renovations, the committee recommended that the staircase from the chapel to the library foyer be removed.

The committee also found that the chapel no longer reflected the liturgical worship practices of most Wisconsin Synod churches or the seminary. This led to suggested

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<sup>5</sup> Vallesky, David. Email interview: 12/4/2007

improvements in the arrangement of the furnishings in the sanctuary that would put the focus of the chapel on the <sup>m</sup>Means of <sup>g</sup>Grace.<sup>6</sup>

The style of the old chapel was described by the committee as having “a Romanesque feel in a 1960s ambiance.”<sup>7</sup> The committee wanted any aesthetic improvements to be anything but the Gothic style of architecture. They wanted to retain the architecture of the seminary buildings, which would reflect the architecture of the Wartburg Castle.

Some suggestions regarding the chapel’s artistic improvements included the removal and disposal of the art glass windows on the northeast wall, the removal of wrought iron chandeliers, a new hard surface floor, along with general painting and redecorating. The seminary desired to retain the chancel windows and have them moved to the new preaching classroom in the basement.

The committee also identified possible structural changes that could be made by the renovation. The idea of a raised ceiling to the peak of the roof again resurfaced. There were also talks of removing the staircase and second egress from the chapel, widening the room by cutting away the existing buttresses, and moving the axis of the space.

The seminary held out hope that the proposed renovation project might be the recipient of an offering gathered at the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the seminary’s existence on the Mequon campus in the fall of 2004. Funding for the chapel project soon found support in the form of several private gifts. This money was put aside to finance the design phase of the project.

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<sup>6</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: September 29, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

In the spring of 2003, President David Vallesky appointed a chapel renovation committee to oversee the project throughout its phases. The committee consisted of Prof. James Tiefel as chairman, Prof. Paul Zell as secretary, Prof. Paul Wendland, board member John Jenswold, and students Michael Berg (Middler) and Jonathon Fischer (Junior). In the spring of 2004, Prof. Mark Zarling and Brian Treichel of the WLS business office joined the committee. Students Phil Casmer (class of 2007) and Thomas Engelbrecht (class of 2008) joined the committee in the fall of 2003 and 2004 respectively.

### **THE PLANNING STAGE BEGINS**

Once it was clear that the renovation project was able to begin, the chapel renovation committee interviewed three architectural firms that specialized in liturgical design: The Groth Design Group of Cedarburg, WI; Cone, Kalb, and Wunderlich of Chicago, IL; and Hammel, Green, and Abrahamson of Milwaukee, WI.

Members of the committee met with representatives of all three groups. The committee simply presented their basic ideas of what the seminary desired for the project and inquired as to what could be possible in the renovation.<sup>8</sup> In July of 2003, the committee unanimously selected Hammel, Green, and Abrahamson (henceforth, HGA). They felt that the HGA architects were impressive in their presentation, knowledge, and insight into liturgical design.

During the summer of 2003, several large monetary gifts were sent to the seminary. These gifts were designated specifically for the chapel renovation and totaled over \$1.2 million. This gave the renovation committee the opportunity to move forward with the project sooner than expected.

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<sup>8</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: April 5, 2003.

In September 2003, Members of the committee met with HGA's chief architect Jim Shields and his associate Jim Vanderheiden. The committee noted that the architects were very patient with the concept and budget phase.

Several parameters were agreed upon, including seating capacity for 175-200 adults. The committee gave HGA permission to play with the concept of changing the axis of the worship space and also to show what might be accomplished with a moveable altar platform. The committee also made it clear that the chapel renovation would be a feature of the Seminary's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in September of 2004.<sup>9</sup>

In December 2003, the committee selected the Beyer Construction Company of New Berlin, WI, as general contractor.

## **THE PROJECT TAKES SHAPE**

During January of 2004, the renovation committee worked closely with Shields to develop schematic and design development plans. Shields presented several possible chapel schemes to the committee. The committee reached a strong consensus favoring a design that allowed for the most flexibility and identified needs and desires set forth by the committee.

The chosen scheme turned the axis of the seating to the northeast wall, where the chancel would be located. The organ would be removed from the southeast wall to the northwest. That would allow for the southeast wall to have four windows. The stained glass windows on the northeast wall were to be removed and replaced with clear window panes. The current entry would be widened, and a font would be placed between two sets of double doors.

Shields also presented options for a back exit at the southwest side of the chapel with a stairwell to the library foyer and a handicapped entry with wheelchair access. In connection to

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<sup>9</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: July 9, 2003.



the planned remodeling near the library foyer, Shields recommended that the Chapel Dean's office also be renovated.<sup>10</sup>

As the project moved along, Shields reviewed the major objectives of the chapel renovation project in May of 2004. These objectives included: the flexibility of seating arrangements by removal of fixed pews; the raising of the chapel ceiling; the relocation of the organ to make use of the four windows on the southeast wall; new systems for lighting, sound, recording, and visual projection; relocating the stairs that emerge from the southwest end; the modification of the chapel office; new flooring in the main hallways leading up to the chapel, and the chapel itself; new liturgical furnishings such as chairs, altar, font, ambo; and a widened worship space.<sup>11</sup>

In June of 2004, Don Harder from Beyer Construction walked through a Schematic Design Budget and presented a total project cost of \$1,528,250.<sup>12</sup> Also in the spring of that year, President Vallesky announced that several monetary gifts had been received that put the seminary a long way toward the amount of money needed to pay for the project.<sup>13</sup> An appeal was also planned to be made to the graduates of the seminary during the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

It was announced that a conference call among the WLS governing board for Sept 17-19, 2004 would give a formal approval for the project. Vallesky said that Peter Kruschel would be contacted for approval from the WELS Board for Ministerial Education.<sup>14</sup> In the fall, the Synodical Council gave its approval to the chapel renovation project.

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<sup>10</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000046. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: January 16, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000046. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: May 14, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000046. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: June 29, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: April 21, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

In anticipation for the demolition and construction phase of the project, chapel services were held in the seminary's auditorium for the 2004-2005 academic school year. Demolition and construction began in November of 2004 and continued until May of 2005.

The first worship service held in the renovated space took place on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and was attended by many seminary faculty members and students, as well as family and friends. During the week of Call Day and Graduation, visitors were invited to view the renovated space.

Throughout the summer of 2005, finishing touches were made and the chapel was completed in time for summer quarter and the 2005-2006 academic school year.

## **DEDICATION**

The committee originally desired that dedication take place in connection with graduation 2005.<sup>15</sup> This proved impossible because of delay in construction, so the committee decided on holding a dedication service during the opening service of 2005-2006 school year. The fall date for dedication would allow the student body to be present, something the faculty thought was very important.<sup>16</sup>

Dedication services were held on August 28, 2005. Professor Tiefel preached on Deuteronomy 32:44-47. President Wendland presided, reading the rite of dedication. 1983 Seminary graduate and administrator for the WELS Commission on Worship, Rev. Bryan Gerlach played organ. Rachael Bauer, the wife of a seminarian, was the pianist.

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<sup>15</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000048. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: February 26, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Tiefel, James P. "Church Architecture: Worship in the New Seminary Chapel." *Worship the Lord*. Number 21, September 2006

## THE FEATURES AND FURNISHINGS OF THE CHAPEL

### Windows

In the previous chapel configuration, the only visible openings to the outside were the five stained glass windows on the northeast wall of the room. This was due to three large windows being covered up by the 1969 library addition and three more by the addition of the 1991 Martin Ott organ.

Two renovations to the chapel layout increased the total number of visible windows to ten. The heightening of the ceiling uncovered two round peek windows on the northwest and southeast walls. The organ move from the southeast wall to the northwest uncovered three more.

In one of his first visits to the chapel, Shields opened up one of the stained glass windows. He noticed that the view to the outside beautifully displayed God's creation. Shields also determined that since the view was to the north, no direct solar gain would shine in.<sup>17</sup> These findings led Shields to suggest that clear glass panes replace the stain glass windows to allow natural light to pour into the room.<sup>18</sup>

The addition of visible windows increased the amount of natural light shining in the room. Light soon became a theme of the room and reminded worshippers that Jesus is the light of the world.<sup>19</sup>

Although the committee agreed with Shield's concept of natural light, they desired that the windows have some form of symbolism in them. The committee decided to stick with

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<sup>17</sup> Tiefel, James P. "The Seminary Chapel." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Volume 103: 1, p. 52

<sup>18</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000047. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: January 16, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> John 14:6 – "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (NIV)

Shield's proposal of clear pane windows, but did not rule out the possibility of symbols being etched into the glass at a later time.

The committee encouraged Shields to find a way to display the symbols of the four theological disciplines of the seminary's curriculum. Shields agreed that this possibility would work but suggested that the etching in any of the glass windows comprise no more than 15% of the total glass pane.<sup>20</sup>

There was discussion involving the inclusion of Christian symbols in the northeast windows, instead of theological and school symbols. One proposal was that the four outer windows on the northeast wall depict scenes of the life of Christ, and the center window would depict some sort of Christological symbolism.

Along with these discussions was a suggestion that the peak windows on the northwest and southwest sides of the chapel be etched with symbols of music and the seminary, respectively. Discussion continued from spring of 2005 to fall of 2005, but the committee didn't decide anything.

In the old chapel, the four theological disciplines were painted on the wallpaper of the ceiling. The class of 2005 inquired if the paper might be cut out and framed. This didn't happen, but it was finally decided that those symbols would be etched into the glass.

In October of 2006, the five windows on the northeast wall were etched by Conrad Schmitt Studios of New Berlin, **Wisconsin**. The outer four depicted the four theological disciplines of the seminary: Biblical theology, Pastoral theology, Historical theology, and Systematic theology. A large *chi rho* was etched in the middle window with a smaller *alpha* and *omega* flanking the sides of the *chi*.

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<sup>20</sup> Tiefel interview

## Altar

In the old chapel, the altar was rarely moved away from the wall. In the new configuration, the altar and chairs are all freestanding and can be moved as needed. With the freestanding altar, those who lead worship are able to preside behind the altar for prayers and the liturgy of the Holy Communion. In practice, however, the chapel layout has remained the same since its dedication.

The committee saw value in including altar and other chancel furnishings for symbolic, and not just functional reasons. “With our Lutheran understanding of how God communicates not only through speech but also through song and symbols, we place altars and fonts in our churches for both functional and symbolic purposes.”<sup>21</sup>

The symbolism of the altar recalls Christ’s sacrifice and what the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper means for believers. Worship services with the Lord’s Supper are offered during the year and enhance the worship life of the students.

There was discussion involving the possibility of carving images, such as a cross or an *alpha* and *omega*, on the front of the altar. These plans were later dropped, with the thought that these symbols would be covered by paraments throughout the year. There was also a suggestion that crosses would be carved into the four corners of the mensa and one in the middle to symbolize the five wounds of Jesus. These plans were also dropped, but the five crosses were stitched into a fair linen placed over the altar.

The altar was made by laminating many boards of maple wood into one large block. The piece is meant to display God’s beautiful creation in the simplest way possible. Shields understood that, when the altar is unclothed, it may appear like the block of a butcher. “This

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<sup>21</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000046. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: February 18, 2004

resemblance is intentional, and is meant to make the more introspective among us dwell for a moment on the bloody altars of sacrifice of the Old Testament, and of course on the violent bodily sacrifices of Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

The altar, or the Lord’s Table, symbolizes God’s forgiveness and presence in the Sacrament. It is located in the center of the chancel, and along with the ambo and font, it is the central focus of the worship space. This reflects the <sup>s</sup>Scriptural teaching and Lutheran practice of the <sup>m</sup>Means of <sup>g</sup>Grace being in the center of our worship.

### Ambo

The committee proposed that a single ambo to replace the previous arrangement of pulpit and lectern as the solitary place from which God’s Word would be read and proclaimed.<sup>23</sup> The ambo is located on the right (southwest) side of the chancel, towards the back. It is designed like the altar in a ‘floating monolith’ style. Like the altar and chancel, it is made of maple. Both furnishings give the appearance as being heavy objects that nevertheless appear to float.<sup>24</sup> The blond wood tones of the ambo match those of the altar and chancel and accommodate the color of the preexisting organ case.

### Baptismal Font

The seminary understood that the rite of baptism falls under the realm of pastoral responsibility. Therefore the seminary has discouraged married students from baptizing their

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<sup>22</sup> Tiefel, James P. “The Seminary Chapel.” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Volume 103: 1, p. 53

<sup>23</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: September 29, 2003

<sup>24</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000046. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: September 13, 2004

own children, and encourages them to ask their pastor to perform baptisms.<sup>25</sup> However, there has never been a policy prohibiting baptisms from occurring at the seminary.

For that reason, the seminary did not include the font for functional reasons, as congregations do. The seminary wanted to include a font as a reminder to the worshippers of their baptisms and the need for daily repentance. “Since Paul’s words in Romans 6 validate the importance of remembering one’s baptism, there can be no doubt value of remembering one’s baptism.”<sup>26</sup>

The font symbolizes the baptized Christian’s entrance into the universal Church or the communion of saints, which leads to participation of the Lord’s Supper. The font also reminds the worshiper of his need “to drown the sinful nature that a new man might arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”<sup>27</sup> For these symbolic reasons, the font is placed at the southwest entrance to the chapel, between two sets of double doors.

The font is made of a dark, natural stone, which contrasts the color of the chancel, altar, and ambo. The beautiful stone reflects the beauty of God’s creation. “The dark form of the font is also glimpsed from outside the chapel at the entry, where it is seen (somewhat mysteriously) through glass cast into the form of rippled water.”<sup>28</sup>

The design allows for a constant flow of water which adds a gentle sound to the chapel. The running water flows into a basin carved into solid stone, flowing then into four channels.

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<sup>25</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: February 18, 2004

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Tiefel, James P. “The Renovation of the Seminary Chapel.” *The Seminary Chapel* (chapel renovation booklet put out by the Chapel Dean): 2007

<sup>28</sup> Tiefel, James P. “The Seminary Chapel.” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Volume 103: 1, p. 52

The running, *live* water reminds the worshipper that Christ is the life,<sup>29</sup> and through baptism into his name, we receive life. The four channels of the font recall the four rivers of Eden.<sup>30</sup>

The four channels separate the four sides of the font into eight sections. The eight-sectioned font represents the regeneration given to believers through baptism. The number eight recalls God's grace to the eight believers on the ark during the flood, the water of which symbolizes baptism that also saves.<sup>31</sup> It also makes the connection to the covenant of circumcision, performed when the Israelite child was eight days old.

### Chancel

The previous chancel was narrow and shallow, and with a lowered ceiling, was designed primarily to serve for the projection of the speaker's voice. The committee suggested that the chancel be larger to better serve the liturgical action of worship and the distribution of the Lord's Supper.

The committee originally held out the idea that the renovation would not change the axis of the space. They recommend that the chancel be heightened to the height of the chapel, the northeast and southwest walls be removed to widen the chancel space, and new steps be designed for ease in communing the recipients of the Lord's Supper.<sup>32</sup>

The committee also suggested that the chancel furniture be replaced by a new free standing altar, ambo, and font. The new chancel scheme did not include a communion rail as the previous one did. This was designed so communicants would be able to come forward to a single step and receive the sacraments in groups.

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<sup>29</sup> John 14:6 – "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (NIV)

<sup>30</sup> Genesis 2:10-14

<sup>31</sup> 1 Peter 3:21 – "And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

<sup>32</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: September 29, 2003



When the idea of an axis change was accepted, there was a suggestion that there be three sides of seating surrounding the chancel. This led to a greater emphasis of making the chancel the focal point of the chapel. “In keeping with Scripture and our Lutheran confessions, the symbols of the gospel in Word and sacrament: altar, pulpit, and font hold prominent positions.”<sup>33</sup>

The chancel is comprised of large square modules that are able to be taken apart and moved. There are two levels to the chancel, with the altar and ambo on the top. The chancel chairs are placed on the lower level. The first step of the lower level is three feet wide and runs along the three sides of the chancel. This allows for plenty of room for the presiding ministers to easily distribute the Lord’s Supper.

The committee spoke of the possibility of adding reredos in the back of the chancel.<sup>34</sup> When the axis of the chapel was changed, it was decided that nothing be placed behind the chancel of the northeast wall, leaving the windows unimpeded. There was also a possibility of the chancel housing a hidden compartment which would store a media screen. The screen would have manually or mechanically rose from the chancel floor and be used for preaching and homiletics class. This plan was also scrapped in favor of placing hooks on the wall and manually lifting the screen in place.

### Floors

Shields presented two options for flooring: wood or slate.<sup>35</sup> The committee chose slate floors because they were cheaper and wood would have raised the height of the floor too much to be level with the stairs leading up to the chapel.

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<sup>33</sup> Zell, Paul. “Chapel Update.” Κηρυξατε. Volume 2: 2005, p.20

<sup>34</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: October 11, 2004

<sup>35</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: February 17, 2004

The preexisting floors in the chapel had simulated marble tiles. To accommodate the theme of using natural, authentic material, the committee went with “midnight black” slate flooring.<sup>36</sup> The dark tone contrasted with and thus highlighted the tones of the chancel and its furnishings, and placed an emphasis on the beauty of God’s creation.

### Ceiling

When Shields first viewed the old chapel, he found the low, flat ceiling to be one of the most oppressive of the chapel’s features. “I immediately asked to be taken up into the attic to investigate what it would take to open the chapel up vertically into the tall gable roof that I had seen from the exterior. Two years later, you can see the significant effects of that demolition, and the new tie rods that give scale, rhythm and structural integrity to the renovated space.”<sup>37</sup>

The ceiling in the new chapel is now opened up to the tall gable roof. The white paint on the walls and ceiling is contrasted with the dark stone tile floors. By opening the ceiling and moving the organ case, the room now has ten exterior windows, all paned in clear glass. Steel support rods were installed, and the ceiling was plastered. The chandeliers were removed and new lighting was installed.

### Κηρυξατε Το Ευαγγελιον

This phrase was originally painted on the wall above the chancel in the late 1905s. In recent years, it has become a theme of the seminary and the mission of its students, to “preach the gospel.” The committee decided to retain the phrase and have it displayed somewhere in the chapel. At first, the committee desired to have the phrase repainted on the new chancel peak.

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<sup>36</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000046. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: September 13, 2004

<sup>37</sup> Tiefel, James P. “The Seminary Chapel.” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Volume 103: 1, p. 51

With the change of the axis and subsequent move of the chancel to the northeast side of the chapel, the phrase had to be painted elsewhere.

Although it does not have the same impact as it did over the chancel, it was decided to paint the phrase above the entrance to the chapel in the present foyer. There was a construction of a canopy over the four main chapel doors. A soffit extends down from the ceiling and intersects with the canopy, and the phrase is painted on the front of the soffit. Up-lighting installed in the top of the canopy highlights the words.<sup>38</sup>

### The seating arrangement

The former seating arrangement was set up according to the basilica floor plan. The worshippers sat in pews and faced the northwest situation chancel. When the committee decided to change the axis of the space, the floor plan naturally changed with it.

The initial seating arrangement departed from the former basilica floor plan and placed the worshippers to three sides of the room. Although the room was designed with flexibility in mind, and is able to be moved back to the basilica floor plan, the three sided arrangement have served the chapel since its dedication.

Part of the rationale behind the three sided arrangement was that the worshippers would speak to one another as they proclaimed the gospel in word and song. They would look at each other as they listen, confess, pray, and sing. The committee also found that the seating arrangement fit the idea that in liturgical church design, the focus of worship ought to be on Word and Sacrament, with the people gathered around them.

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<sup>38</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000048. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: February 26, 2005

## Chairs

In order to maintain the flexibility of the seating arrangement and adopt the three-sided seating arrangement, the committee decided to dispose of the old pews and purchase individual chairs. Serious consideration was given for wicker chairs from the New Holland Manufacturing company. These chairs proved to be too expensive, so the committee decided on sturdy oak chairs. The monastic chairs are complete with hymnal racks and kneelers, as well as the capability to be attached in rows to other chairs.

## Paraments

The previous paraments were made by sisters of a local convent in the early 1960s. By the time of the chapel renovation, they were in bad shape and were no longer able to be cleaned. The committee also found that they would not fit the style of the new chancel furniture. They recommended that new paraments, altar linens, and stoles and antependia for ordained ministers be purchased.

It was always the goal of the committee that the paraments, by displaying the liturgical colors of the Church Year, would draw attention to the altar and ambo. In turn it was hoped that the design of the worship space would heighten these colors and, along with the chancel furniture, make them the focal point.

The committee also found that the colors would add “symbolism for a vital component of the liturgy, the Christian church year and its focus on the life and ministry of Christ.” The paraments also allow for the inclusion of historic Christian symbols that testify to the teachings of the Scripture. The committee felt that these symbols would replace carvings on ambo or altar or paintings on walls.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000047. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: January 27, 2005

There was some discussion as to what size paraments would be purchased. The paraments that were finally purchased reflect a wide range of styles and shapes. The committee also decided to purchase matching stoles along with the altar and ambo paraments, a chasuble, and a matching burse and veil for the elements in Holy Communion.

Shields at first desired to design the paraments, but later agreed with the committee's choice to order the paraments from Slabbinck of Belgium through T. H. Stemper Co. of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.<sup>40</sup>

### Pipe Organ

The Martin Ott pipe organ, Opus 54 was installed in 1991. The organ had been originally placed in front of three tall arched windows and a fourth round window. Early in the planning stages of the renovation, it was decided that the organ be dismantled and moved to the northwest side of the worship space. The organ move and the heightening of the ceiling allowed four more windows to be visible in the chapel.

The committee contacted Martin Ott, the builder of the organ. Ott estimated that the relocating of the organ would cost about 10% of the organ's value, which at that time was estimated at \$250,000. The committee wondered if gaining the light from the covered windows was worth that kind of money. Although the price of the move rose to around \$35,000, the committee decided to go through with the move.<sup>41</sup>

The 25 rank organ is played regularly at seminary morning chapel services. The organ allows organists among the students and professors to enhance the worship life of the school with their skilled playing.

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<sup>40</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000048. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: March 21, 2005

<sup>41</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary archives: file # 000045. Chapel Renovation Committee minutes: January 21, 2004

### Grand Piano

The old 1970 Yamaha chapel piano was rarely used in worship because it didn't have the volume to support the singing of those attending daily worship services. The committee felt that it works well to accompany the choir but did not hold up its tune well. It was not adequate to support singing in the chapel when the seminary wished to use contemporary music with a piano.

The committee recommended that a high quality grand piano be purchased for the chapel. A donor came forward and purchased a six foot Yamaha grand piano. Morning chapel services on Thursdays now often incorporate the use of this new instrument.

### The Chapel Office/Sacristy

The Chapel Office now also doubles as a sacristy for the chapel. The room is complete with cabinets to house vestments, paraments, banners, and communion ware. A stainless steel cup sink serves as a piscina that is used to dispose of the consecrated wine used for the Lord's Supper. Also located in the sacristy are the seminary's music and other choral supplies.

### The Wartburg Castle Fresco

The fresco was painted by local artist Fredrich Kreft in the early 1940s. When the chapel was enlarged in 1971, the fresco was moved to the chapel foyer. Construction during the 2004 renovation caused the fresco to be moved again. Beyer construction successfully relocated the painting to the hallway leading from the chapel to the library.

### Processional Crucifix

A brass processional crucifix rests on the left (northwest) side of the chancel when not in use. It serves in place of the altar cross and is the central symbol of the chancel area. It is an

ever present Christological reminder that our salvation was won through the bloody sacrifice of God's one and only Son.

### Paschal Candle

The candle is placed near the font in keeping with its close connection to baptism. During the season of Easter, the candle is lit and placed on the left (northwest) side of the chancel. The Paschal Candle symbolizes the living presence of Christ, the Paschal (Passover) Lamb and the light of the world, who was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world.

### Features from the Old Chapel

Prior to demolition, the committee notified the architect and construction firms of several items of the old chapel they desired to keep. One of these was the Wartburg fresco, which was successfully preserved.

Perhaps the most identifiable symbol of the old chapel was not included in the renovation. The art glass windows in the chancel along with the oak paneling in which they were encased were removed. These were retained and are now installed in the preaching classroom in the basement (classroom #1). The old lectern, pulpit, and the wood panels of the previous chancel were also moved to the classroom, as well as a portion of the old organ platform.

The art glass windows along the northeast wall were not kept. These were taken down and given away to members of the faculty, committee, and others who desired them.

The symbols of the four theological disciplines along the northeast wall were painted on, and thus were also removed with the demolition. These symbols live on in the etched glass that replaced these windows.

The painted symbol of the Holy Spirit in the chancel ceiling was also not kept nor incorporated into the current design. The senior class of 2005 wondered if a portion of the ceiling might be spared and framed as a class gift. However, this did not happen.

## CONCLUSION

Since its dedication in 2005, the renovated seminary chapel has served the seminary as its primary worship space. Morning chapel services have been held there, as well as Evening Prayer, installations, anniversaries, presentations and homiletics classes.

Its beauty reflects God's creation. Its simplicity narrows the worshipper's focus on their Savior, Jesus Christ. Its symbolism recalls the teachings of Scripture and the traditions of the Church. Most importantly, it serves for a place where believers gather together to hear the gospel, receive the Lord's Supper, pray, praise, confess, and encourage.

“From this day forward let it be a place for the worship of our seminary community, a place for proclaiming the gospel through Word and Sacrament, and a place for bringing comfort, hope, and encouragement to all who gather here.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> These were the closing words of the dedication rite for the renovated chapel, read on August 28, 2005  
Tiefel, James P. “The Seminary Chapel.” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Volume 103: 1, p. 46



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## Addendum # 1

Email interview

former Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary **President David Vallesky**

received: 12/4/2007

### 1) What were your impressions of the architect's initial design?

I couldn't have been more pleased. As I recall, Jim Shields was the final architect we interviewed. After interviewing him and looking at some of his projects, including the renovation of St. John Cathedral in downtown Milwaukee, as a committee we were unanimous in choosing him and his firm to do the work. I remember his first visit to our chapel. He didn't see what *was*. He saw what *could be*. He didn't disappoint us.

### 2) What were your impressions of the finished project?

I was pleased with the finished project. My only reservation: If I had had a voice in the final stages of the work, I think I would have suggested that the chancel area with altar and ambo be a bit smaller, not a lot, because we wouldn't have wanted to lose the centrality of Word and Sacrament. But it seems to be a bit oversized for the space.

### 3) How does the chapel design best speak theologically to the students?

The chapel design puts strong emphasis on the Means of Grace, from the font at the entrance to the prominent altar and ambo.

Semi-circular seating accentuates the "we, being many, are one body in Christ" aspect of worship.

Use of natural materials, e.g., wood and slate, demonstrates how all of God's created works can be used in the worship of God.

Bright interior (as compared with the rather gloomy interior of the former chapel) underscores the joy and light of the gospel proclaimed within these walls.

Clear windows remind us that the church is not meant to be a fortress, cloistered from the world.

## Addendum # 2

Email interview

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary **President Paul Wendland**

received: 12/2/2007

### 1) What were your impressions of the architect's initial design?

I would say that it struck me initially as being breathtakingly different from anything I had expected. I've found that the same reaction is felt by many who, remembering the old chapel, walk into the new one for the first time. I would also say that it struck me as being just a little bit stark and unadorned.

### 2) What were your impressions of the finished project?

The longer I lived with the design and experienced the space in worship, the more I came to profoundly appreciate what the architect had done. I wouldn't change anything about it, now. In fact, after the chapel was completed, when we had our discussions about whether or not to put in etched windows, my initial desire was to leave them completely clear rather than to 'spoil' them with etching. I had so grown to appreciate the way our architect had opened up the worship space to the glory of God's creation.

### 3) How does the chapel design best speak theologically to the students?

I believe it speaks in three ways:

- a) In the simple, unadorned walls, the attention is focused on what really matters: the altar that reminds us of Christ and what he endured for us (also the meal by which the benefits of that deed are given to us), the ambo where the voice of the gospel sounds out, and the font we pass by as we enter, reminding us of who we are before God in Christ.
- b) In the way the windows bring the beauties of creation into our worship space, we are reminded that the God who spoke to us through a Son is the Almighty Maker of all that is, seen and unseen.
- c) In the way we worship in the round, we are reminded that God gathers us, his people, around Word and Sacrament. There he meets us. There we find a gracious God and true. By their power we are fashioned into a community where my neighbor's joys and sorrows are my own.

## Addendum # 3

Email interview

Martin Luther College **President Mark Zarling**

received: 12/9/2007

### 1) What were your impressions of the architect's initial design?

I came on board the chapel renovation committee rather late - replacing Paul Wendland after he became president and so he became ex officio. By the time I was on board, much of the early philosophical discussions about concept and direction of design was finished. In general, the new chapel grew tremendously on me.

### 2) What were your impressions of the finished project?

At first, since I'm not an advocate of a minimalist approach, the concept and development didn't grab me. In fact, though I appreciate the chapel now, I still see an incongruity of the interior design of the chapel in a building complex with such a totally different architectural design and emphasis. But it works.

### 3) How does the chapel design best speak theologically to the students?

I think that the symbolism, though not always directly visual, is still powerful, though one must now do a better job of instructing people about the meaning of the worship space. It is clear that the center is on the Gospel proclamation. The design also helps convey the gathering of the body of Christ around the Word, and the proclamation of the Gospel also by worshipper to worshipper as we join voices in hymns and readings and prayer. I especially appreciate the baptismal font.

And finally, though initially skeptical, I really grew to enjoy the clear windows that brought not only light into the worship space, but a marvelous reminder of the grace of our Savior Creator as he blesses us in creation. It is also important, though, to make sure we maintain a Christocentric focus, as the etching did.

## Addendum # 4

Email interview

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary **Professor Paul Zell**

received: 12/4/2007

### 1) What were your impressions of the architect's initial design?

Very positive. I thought he did exactly what we asked him too. Two sets of adjectives would well describe the old chapel design: a) dark, gloomy, shadowy, poorly lit; and b) cramped, narrow, crowded -- even when there was nobody in the room. Jim Shields took that on and corrected it beautifully. Likewise that there was no baptismal font; that the other symbols of the means of grace were not particularly striking; that there was no decent space for a piano or for other instruments other than the organ.

### 2) What were your impressions of the finished project?

I was very pleased. Still am. That's not to say that there are not a couple things I would want to do differently. In my view the chancel platform is too large for the room. Or at least it's too large for the number of people we occasionally want to have sitting in the room. I would have liked to have seen more chairs directly in front of the platform, for instance. I also think the baptismal font too easily blends into the scenery. Perhaps that's because it's virtually the same color as the flooring or tucked back a bit between the two sets of doors.

Otherwise I couldn't be happier with the prominence of the altar and ambo; with the fact that there is the sound of moving water; with the brightness of the room -- good artificial lighting, outstanding use of natural light; with the acoustics both for singing and for the spoken word; with the large, clear windows and for how they bring God's creation into our worship space; with the comfortable seating; with the space afforded for the piano and musicians; with the large doorways and thus the ability to exit the chapel at a good pace.

Some have complained that we do not have enough symbols in the chapel. I like the flexibility of what worshipers see -- that new banners can be added, for instance. I also appreciate the fact that our eyes are *not* being drawn away from the three symbols of the means of grace. Even the symbols in etched glass are pretty subtle.

### 3) How does the chapel design best speak theologically to the students?

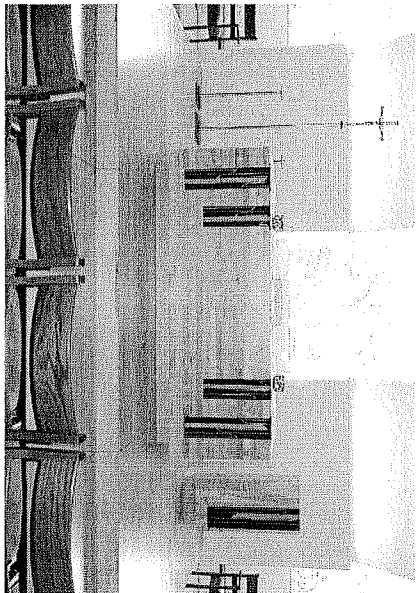
Symbols themselves do not teach, but they do remind us of what we have been taught. In the seminary chapel you can't miss the altar, can you? Right there is a daily reminder of Christ for us; of the Lamb offered up on behalf of sinners; of his death for us; of his body given and his blood poured out for us and given to each of us in the Sacrament of the Altar.

The ambo could have been wider. That's another thing I would have done differently. Yet the one that we have is nevertheless a prominent symbol of the Christ for us in his word. It's well positioned so that the preacher does not have his back to any of his listeners. I personally like its simplicity too, that there is no shelving cluttered with books and papers.

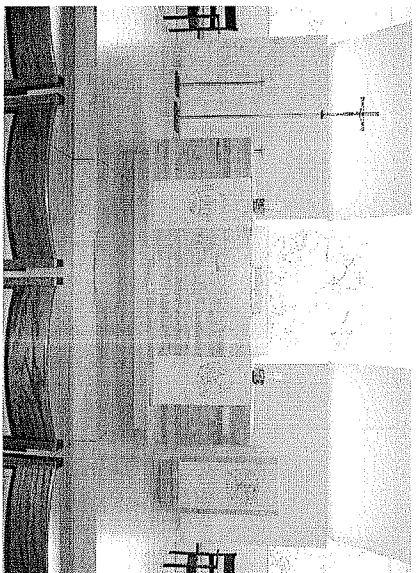
I mentioned the baptismal font earlier. I don't want to be overly critical, though. Just the fact that we have one in our worship space is a blessing. How could the seminary have worshiped without that furnishing in its chapel for so many decades? The sound of the water is a pleasant reminder of pure grace, that washing that each of us received in the name of the triune God. It's positioning at the entrance is wise too, since that is how each of us entered the kingdom.

Addendum # 5

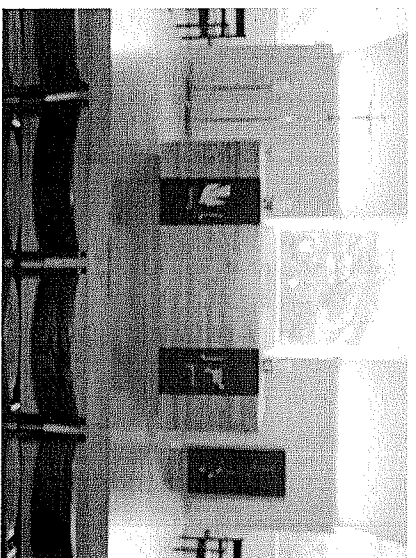
*Slabbink designed altar and ambo paraments*



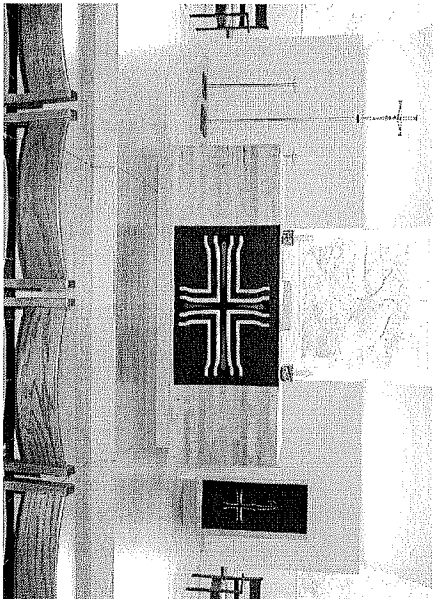
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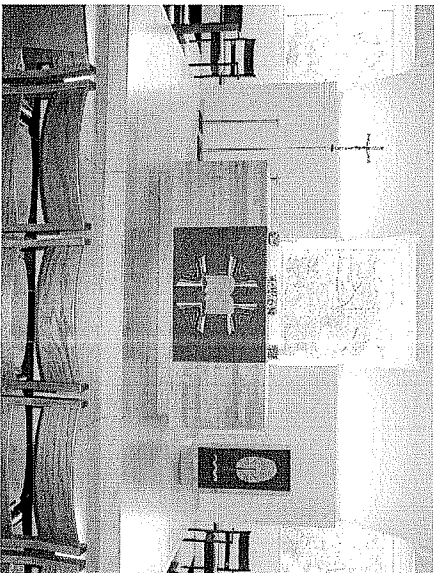
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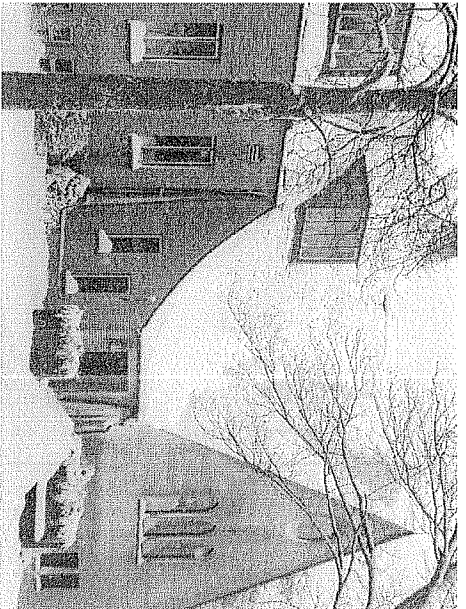
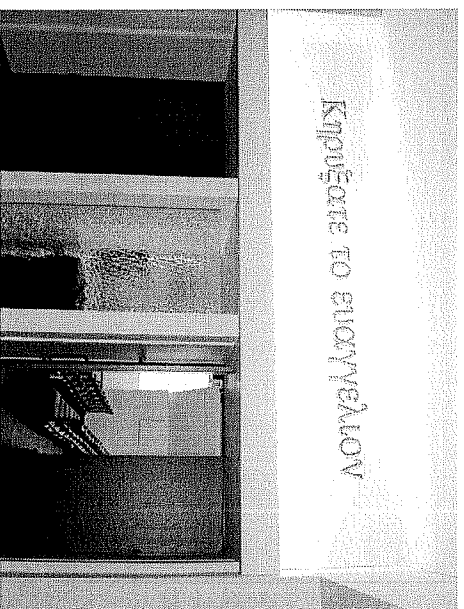
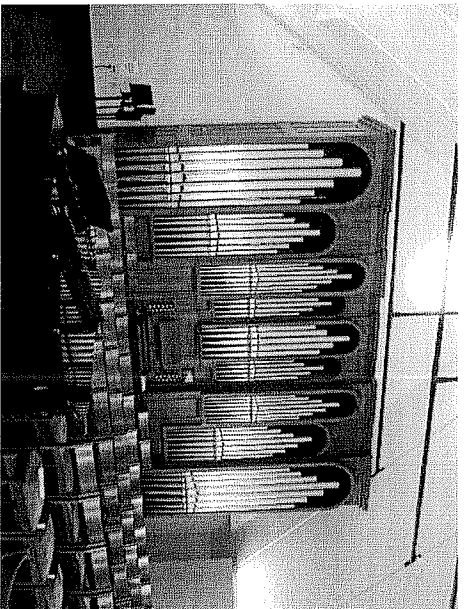
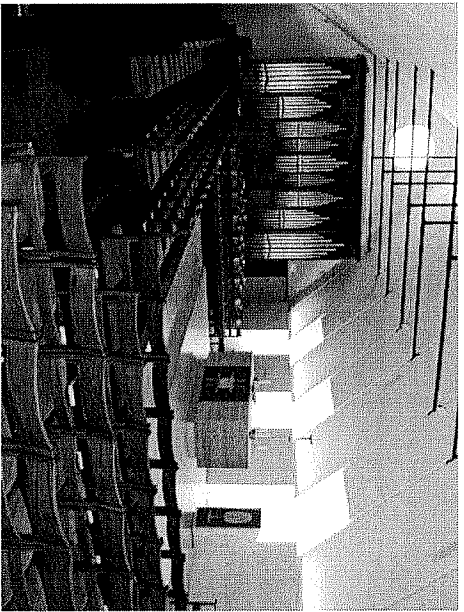


*Sundays after Pentecost*

*All photos courtesy of Prof. James Tiegel*

# Addendum # 6

## The Renovated Chapel

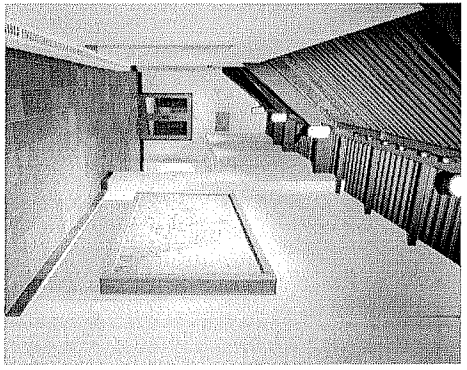
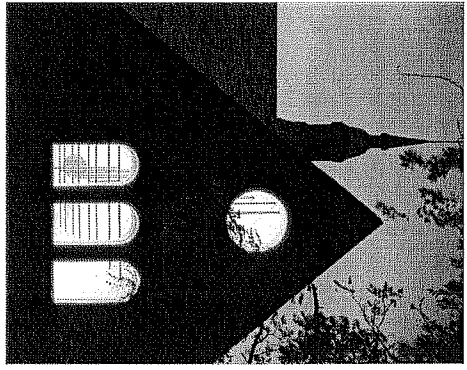
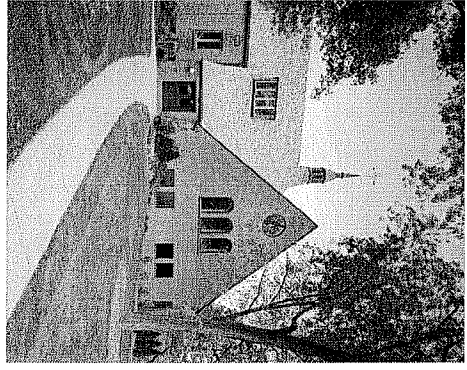
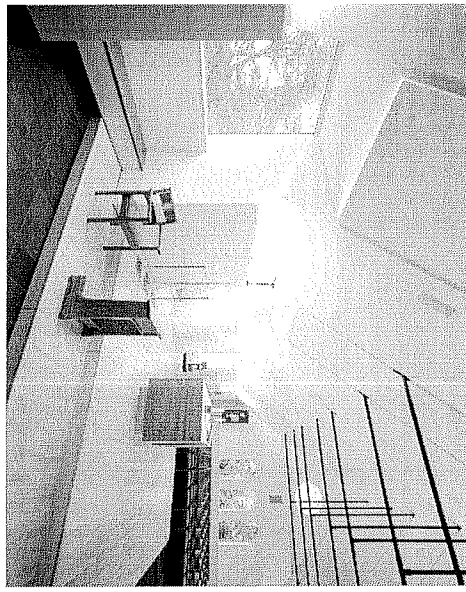


*All photos courtesy of Dustin Bergene*



Addendum # 7

*The Renovated Chapel*

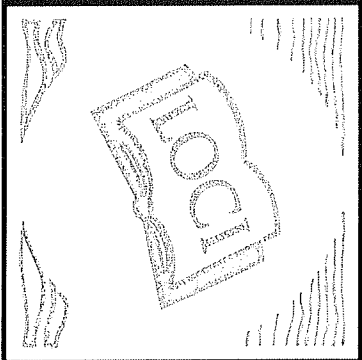
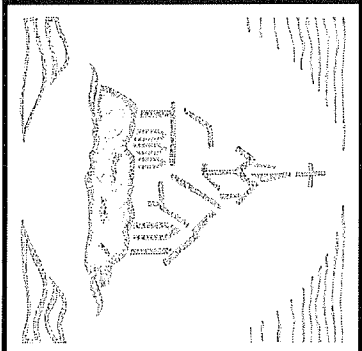
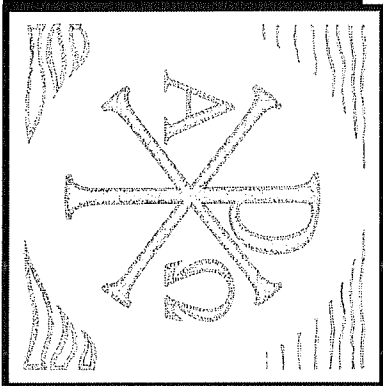
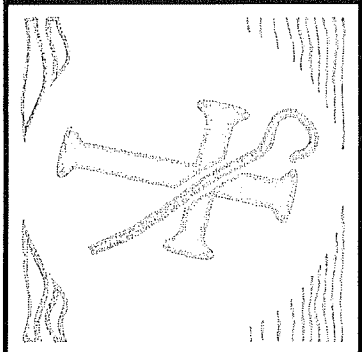
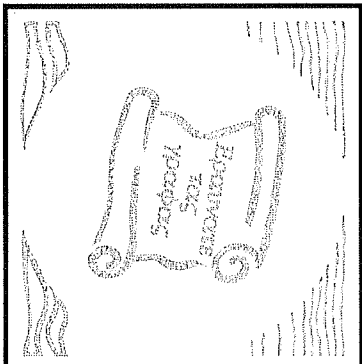


*All photos courtesy of: Prof. James Tiefel*



Addendum # 8

*Etched windows on the northeast wall of the chapel*



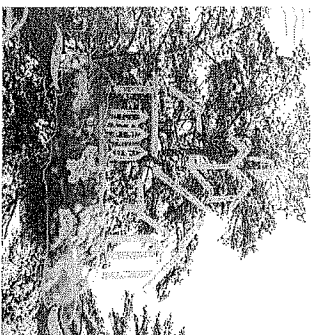
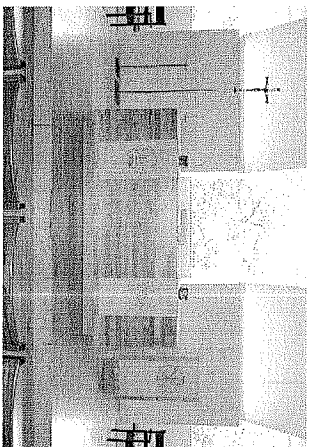
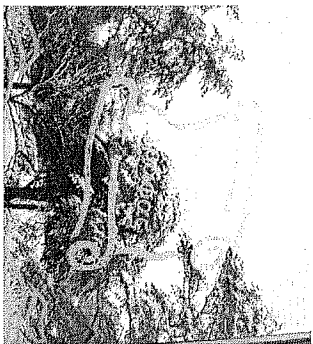
*Biblical Theology*

*Pastoral Theology*

*Chi-Rho / Alpha and Omega*

*Historical Theology*

*Systematic Theology*



*All photos courtesy of Prof. James Tiefel*