

Hope Church RCA Facility Design Brief

June 4, 2014

“A church is not a building. But buildings matter a lot. They are signs of our spiritual condition and resources for our ministries. Our challenge is to use them well, so that they are not monuments but living stones, sheltering and nurturing new life.”

--Barbara Melosh, a pastor in Wilmington, Delaware, *Christian Century* 2013

“We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.” --Winston Churchill, 1943

What do we propose to do?

To serve our present needs and equip future generations at Hope Church by renovating our facility to

- Be welcoming, hospitable, and accessible to all
- Offer options for alternative worship and community, including for smaller groups
- Encourage the engagement with, service to, and development of community
- Communicate the values and character of Hope Church
- Address infrastructure issues that result in a building that costs more to operate than it should on a continuing basis.

By **welcoming, hospitable, and accessible to all** we mean

- Outside, inside, and throughout the building
- Unintimidating, with visual cues that invite and guide
- Physically accessible for full participation, with sensory and auditory comfort

By **options for alternative worship and community, including for smaller groups**, we mean

- Sacred space as an alternative and addition to the sanctuary
- Flexible arrangements for different styles of worship
- Comfortable scale and flexibility for groups of various sizes to gather
- Multiple spaces for small groups to meet simultaneously

By **encouraging engagement with, service to, and development of community**, we mean

- Sharing the asset of our facility to meet needs in our community
- For the foreseeable future, hosting Child Development Services for weekday child-care services and Washington School Neighbors for office and meeting space
- Offering our facility as a gathering place for community organizations
- Keeping our building active, useful, and accessible during the week as well as on weekends

By the values and character of Hope Church, we mean

- The centrality of worship--and creativity in it--to our lives together
- Stewardship of our resources for God's service, including leadership in creation care
- Desire to serve and witness to the community in which we live
- Desire for and expectation of continued change: We value both our tradition and our pioneering
- Finding value in our facility through what we're able to *do* with and within it, so that we are better able to express who God has made us to *be*: Grateful witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ.

By infrastructure issues, we mean

- Current HVAC systems and energy efficiency
- Limited incorporation of technology for sound, internet access, media sharing
- Areas of the building and grounds that have required frequent repairs and maintenance or are not responsible with resources, including storm water

Why is now the time to act?

Our facility requires significant investment for maintenance. Some of the complications of addressing the immediate problems arise from the last 50 years of facility development, during which we have completed multiple smaller-scale projects. As a result, we have a hodgepodge of HVAC, rooflines, and walkways. We are not content with the experience that results.

We could invest only to address the immediate problems. We acknowledge with gratitude, though, that generations before ours thought about and invested in the future and how the facility would serve it. We believe that the same thinking and investment are required of us now, so that Hope Church remains a vital community and voice, continuing to serve current members and attracting new ones.

In addition to eliminating some maintenance issues and supporting new activities, we believe that a renovated facility can be at least cost-neutral to operate, if not more cost-effective, lessening the financial burden on future generations and bearing witness to how congregations can respond to the call to care for creation.

Having just completed 150 years of service and witness in our community, we believe it is time to look ahead to the next 150 years.

“Design depends largely on constraints.... Here is one of the few effective keys to the design problem: the ability of the designer to recognize as many of the constraints as possible, his willingness and enthusiasm for working within these constraints.”

--Charles Eames, 1972

What are the constraints we ask a designer to enthusiastically embrace?

Given the size and resources of our congregation, and the competing needs in our community and around the world, Hope Church’s Consistory has approved a target of \$2.5 million for a facility renovation and benevolence component. Our typical size, and given our location in the city and resulting traffic and parking, is likely to be a congregation of about 350 in attendance at any one time.

Our sanctuary has proven to be a sacred space and is an important part of our legacy. We’d like to change it as little as possible while accomplishing our objectives for the larger facility. We also want to preserve stained glass windows from the Commons and Gathering Area; they are a meaningful part of our lives together.

A memorial garden is located on the west side of the sanctuary and carries with it a long-term commitment to families and friends of those remembered there.

Our location in the city of Holland is part of our heritage and our witness; we are located in a historic district as well as a city and will comply with local requirements. As a part of a neighborhood, we seek to maintain a proportion of green space we can share for appreciation, recreation, and sustainability.

What do we hope to accomplish in practical terms?

- Instill a sense of the emotional security and serenity of God’s house, which is a sanctuary. Make all areas of our facility, and especially the sanctuary, safely accessible to all. Provide comfort by creating an apparent, coherent, intuitive flow among spaces for a unified whole; provide cues for protocols, like where to enter and where to be quiet.
- Add a space for alternative worship, smaller weddings and funerals, and other special services
- Increase the flexibility of our facility for groups of various sizes, incorporating technology and assuring auditory quality. Make it possible for more and more varied activities to happen at the same time. Nurture a sense of community, both within the Hope Church community and for the community of which we are a part. Reflect a playful, child-like spirit; be welcoming to youth and friendly to children
- Reorder the facility for hospitality, bringing, for example, the nursery closer to the mainstream. Recognize that the church is the people; foster connections, fun, and caring; reflect an organization that is relationally alive
- Apply principles of sustainable architecture and construction so that operating cost as measured by energy expended per square foot is reduced by 40 percent and total

operating costs are no greater than current regardless of any increase in facility size. Seek to benefit from criteria noted in various certification programs (like LEED) without committing to the certification process. We are motivated by our call to care for creation and by our desire to be stewards of our resources for following generations; we can witness to what churches and sustainable architecture can accomplish.

What would we like an architect to understand about the ethos of the Hope Church community that may affect design?

- People coming together in community for nourishment and comfort; individuals within a community, both together and independent and distinct; eclectic, not uniform or regimented; involving all the senses and a zestful spiritual life
- Joyfully open to everyone, embracing diversity, communicating care and respect; human-centered; connected across generations, abilities, interests, and other differences
- Appreciation for symbols of the faith and deliberately tended sacred spaces; nature, natural light, and quiet as nurturing and spiritual elements of God's creation
- More Shaker, less cathedral; neither self-conscious nor pretentious; concerned with content and substance; foster and nourish spirituality
- Deliberate; appreciative of God's gifts of intellect and beauty; thoughtful and thorough
- Building as a canvas or empty vessel for the activities and expression of the people who come together there; a place that is peaceful and calming, that allows people and activities to flow without chaos

Process

Compromises and trade-offs are a natural part of any design process, and we understand that everything we desire may not be possible with the level of investment we've determined is appropriate for us. Sustainability and accessibility are values that we hope to champion throughout.

Decisions as required will be made as guided by our mission:

- **TO GROW IN FAITH:** We seek to grow not only in numbers but, most importantly, in depth of Christian commitment. We seek to identify and engage each person's particular gifts and to direct all our gifts in faithfulness to God's Word.
- **TO PIONEER:** Founded as a pioneering congregation, Hope Church is willing to experiment courageously and to press ahead in new directions. We continue to seek creativity and excellence in worship, nurture, governance, and outreach.
- **TO BE OPEN:** We celebrate and proclaim God's welcome of all people. Hope Church is blessed and strengthened by the rich diversity of background, race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, gifts, and interests present among and around us.
- **TO LEAD IN CHRISTIAN ACTION:** Hope Church is committed to service, both locally and worldwide, and we support the work of justice and compassion by all people of good will. We serve both as a congregation and individually through our daily living.

“There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, varieties of service but the same Lord, varieties of working but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” I Corinthians 12:4-7