

Report on the parish meeting on worship space 9/11/22

This document contains three broad sections.

First is the Summary and Highlights that was sent out earlier.

Second is a set of comments and reflections arising from my training and experience as a parish development practitioner.

Third are the documents from the session itself – the questionnaire, handouts, the newsprint.

As always, it is a pleasure and honor to work with the people of St. Clements.

Fr. Bob

Summary and Highlights - Parish Meeting 9/11/22

25 people were present. As is usual not everyone responded to all the items on the questionnaire.

Some basic information was provided about the standard names of parts of a worship space (nave, chancel, etc.). We also looked at images of chairs used in worship space and an example of a movable but substantial lectern.

A questionnaire on “Liturgical Space Considerations” was filled out by participants and collated on newsprint. Some of the significant results follow:

There was a very high degree of agreement about the first seven items on the questionnaire – things such as beauty, reverence, and quality, etc. That result is congruent with our identity as an Anglo Catholic parish.

Questions having to do with matters such as flexibility and arranging space so it can be used by the wider community were more spread out. The exception was in regard to arranging the space in a manner that allowed for a wide degree of variety for various liturgical uses—Eucharist, baptisms, burials and marriages, daily office.

On the questionnaire and in various comments there was a clear desire to make the space more accessible.

The question of using chairs vs. pews was addressed in two places on the questionnaire. There appears to be a desire for either all chairs or some chairs and some pews.

Questions about using local artists and artists with expertise received a high positive response.

There was a high desire to have the Presider easily visible to the congregation.

The overall question on making changes had this result –

“I’d prefer we make no changes to the worship space”

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Disagree	////	////		///	//	/	Agree

This shows enthusiasm for changes on the part of some. It also shows a need to engage others who, while not being strongly against changes, are also not totally convinced of the need.

There was a second testing process around three possible broad configurations of the liturgical space. The results did not issue the “valid and useful data” needed. There is more on this below.

Parish Development Comments and Reflections

Considerations

I’ll highlight three types of considerations that need to be addressed as parish leaders narrow down the primary changes to be made in the worship space. In practice these considerations will at times be in conflict with one another. A “perfect” liturgical space isn’t possible. There will always be trade-offs needed.

A. Basic principles

1. The altar and baptismal font are the primary points of focus in the liturgy
2. We are managing attention between sacred space and flexibility.
3. Find the best places for altar, font and the presider’s chair and leave them in place. (helps maintain the sense of sacred space)
4. The lectern is a reading stand that can serve readings and preaching.
5. The liturgy is undermined by physical clutter and human created distractions.

B. The various considerations noted on the questionnaire

Parishioners were pretty much of a common mind in support of a series of interdependent considerations that shape the climate of a space. So, as leaders narrow down some of the larger factors in a renovation, they will want to return to the list and ask whether their plan adequately advances a sense of physical harmony and integration, beauty, a space that draws us into a sense of the holy and beyond ourselves to God, reverence, and makes use of quality materials and artistry. See the first seven items in questionnaire below - “Liturgical Space Considerations”

C. Respect for the future

One aspect of a respect for the future, for those who will be here in 2040 and beyond, is to not create a worship space that a future rector will find difficult to work with. It’s no secret

that clergy have a wide range of views on the ceremony of liturgy and the arrangement of the liturgical space. Renovations made in our time might want to take into account that reality and head off potential conflicts and costs in the future as they make changes now. One area of consideration is whether proposed changes are reasonably consistent with or significantly at odds with what is typical in most Episcopal churches.

Optimal options

During the session there were two side comments that caught my attention. One was “we need to watch out for unforeseen consequences,” and the second was Roy’s use of the word “optimal.” How do you head off unforeseen consequences? How do you reduce the tensions and possible conflicts over space use?

Explore several optimal options!

Why? – 1) When a group looks at several possible ways of addressing a situation it is more likely to come away with a higher degree of internal commitment to whichever option ends up being selected. It’s 101 decision-making. When people experience a degree of free choice in making a decision, they will be more committed over time and under pressure. There’s likely to be less second guessing. A free choice is enhanced when there are choices offered and they are honestly explored. 2) People are more likely to come away from the project experiencing inclusion and respect. Even if their favorite option isn’t selected, they know it was honestly considered. Instead of a winners-losers emotional result, you have a civil and humble result.

How? – A working group explores all three lay-out options seeking to create the best result for each. What would each look like at its best? The working group would seek ways for the essence of each option to be fulfilled. In doing that the group needs to set aside cost concerns (for the moment), consider possibilities that some might see as radical – expand the space, knock out a wall, move instruments or sacred items, etc.

Who? – Fr. Kevin, the wardens, Philip, and John. Augmented when needed by an architect, someone skilled at working with the financial issues, someone with experience in worship space use processes. Making use of ideas and insights from the 9/11 meeting and possibly additional information gathered from servers, ushers, lectors, other parishioners, Fathers Tom and Bob. Such additional information gathering could be secured through individual interviews, questionnaires, and/or a group discussion.

Decision making authority

The 2040 process we’ve been engaged in provides for considerably more input from the whole congregation that we see in most parishes. My assumption is that in regard to worship space issues the September 11 meeting was one important element. I’d suggest that the rector, wardens, and vestry make it a point to keep the congregation informed as the discussion continues and optimal options are evaluated by a small working group.

Who has the final say? The short answer is -- the rector and vestry. The Rector has the authority about liturgy and a lay-out of the liturgical space. The vestry has the authority of authorizing funding. In practical terms the two need an adequate level of agreement about what's planned.

Who gets to have significant voice? These are people we might expect to be on a working group that explores all options in their best form. People who bring to the table special expertise and representation – for example, the rector, wardens, an architect, and Philip and John. Others that might productively be brought in for a session for a specific purpose might include the treasurer or someone else skilled in financial work, a consultant with experience in liturgical space use decision making, etc.

The exercise on the layout of the room ended up not producing “valid and useful data”

I'll start with an apology. I am sorry about the tension and confusion as we started to work on the three room lay-outs. I let that part of the session get away from me. It's possible I shouldn't have tried the exercise at all or should have provided a more detailed explanation of what the objective was.

In any case, the resulting data isn't what's called “valid and useful” in my field. Let me explain.

In regard to that kind of exercise there's a range of data that might be solicited. For example:

Superficial – just touching the surface of the issue

Informal assessment – each possibility is explored with its possible costs and benefits

Optimum – developing the best possible way in which each option could work (explained above)

In this case I wanted to get the group's cursory and top-of-the-head viewpoint (the “Superficial,” above). I thought it might be helpful for those doing more complex and detailed work later to know if there was an inclination in the group about lay-outs. For that to work we needed to simply allow the process to be top-of-the-head ranking. No debate. No discussion. As it turned out, there was some debate and additional discussion about one of the options, followed by the ranking. For that then to be “valid and useful data” in my work would have required a fuller exploration of each option with its costs and benefits (the informal assessment position on the spectrum). Because some discussion occurred about only one option, the group would have needed a fuller discussion that adequately looked at each option in order for the ranking to be based on “valid and useful information.” That was something we didn't have time to do and if done might easily have undercut the needed “optimum” work later.

As long as parish leaders conduct an optimum exploration of the options, we can trust that the necessary work is getting done. In any case, I apologize for the confusion. If anyone needs more discussion, I'd be glad to sit with you at coffee hour and explain.

Conflict and worship space

Making changes in the worship space can generate strong emotions. When not appropriately managed that can bring on a conflict. The process of managing all that falls in at least three fields: 1) the individual Christian taking personal responsibility to manage themselves, especially by engaging their capacity for kindness, gentleness, patience, perseverance and all the other virtues of faith, all grounded in common prayer; 2) the general culture of the parish that attends to disagreements and doesn't quickly move to behaviors of avoidance, accommodation and compromise; and 3) a decision making process that is transparent and collaborative, thorough, respectful, and timely. Parishes that handle such things well end up growing in holiness and strength.

In the decision making process we want to keep the work and any disagreements in the lowest level of conflict – focusing on what we want to accomplish and solving problems that emerge. By staying at that level, a group avoids entering into higher levels of conflict in which people get too cautious and self-protective, or focused on winning and having their way, or developing a climate that gets self-righteous and cold, or finally a total inability to work together and a desire to damage others.

The primary place fights occur over worship space involves factions, each with their image of "the perfect." Usually, it's a priest holding an image of the perfect space, or parish musicians with their view of the perfect sound, or people wanting to preserve what they are used to having, or someone with architectural or contracting skills coming at things from that vantage point. In some places, conflict can emerge from groups with a particular agenda (for example, they use the worship space for a feeding program, or a school). A rule of thumb is that any insistence by a person or group that the point they are making outweighs all other points or priorities sets the stage for problems later.

In the data gathered so far, there are two areas that could be the source of difficulty. One is how the space is laid out in regard to the location of the altar, choir, congregational seating, and all the other smaller consideration of space use. The other is the percentage of people who are somewhat uncertain about making any changes. Obviously other issues may (will) arise in the months ahead. The leaders and people of St. Clements certainly have the ability to navigate through all those issues in grace and truth.

Some odds and ends

This section picks up on some comments of individuals and possibilities rising from the results seen in the questionnaire.

There was a high desire to easily see the presider. In our current space that's not possible for half of the congregation during most of the Liturgy of the Word.

If you have chairs that are stackable, that may offer an additional level of flexibility

The width of the steps between the chancel and the sanctuary might be slightly enlarged in the renovation in order to provide more safety

There were several concerns or viewpoints, each from one person – keep the pulpit, a concern about how to maintain “sacred space” that isn't always changing, if we go to all chairs we can basically accommodate any of the space configurations, one person noted how they wanted to “make the facility safe and up to modern codes” (person may have missed how it was already assumed).

The meaning and mystery of being alive and being human

Occasionally you hear concerns about the amount of money that goes into our church buildings. Some are helped to put that in perspective by thinking of how much one warplane costs in comparison. Others draw our attention to the good done by so many churches. Some note the way in which parish churches, along with the local library and school, are institutions that help communities maintain a sense of identity and value. All that is true. In the end, though, the approach that is the most grounded and honest has to do with a sense of the sacred, of mystery and beauty. Here's what the one-time dean of Salisbury Cathedral said. He wrote of the cathedral, but the ideas apply to all church worship space.

And all this is built to provide a canopy over the acts of a worshipping community of believers, an organization of space in which movement and music, word and sacrament, can be presented with dignity befitting an action which is nothing less than a celebration of the Christian understanding of the meaning and mystery of being alive and being human. A cathedral is a theatre for a kind of liturgical dance to the music of time and the hidden harmonies of God.

A cathedral is both a protest and a proclamation. ...[A] protest against all ideologies and political systems which deny or diminish the spirituality, dignity and true liberty of human persons, and a proclamation of the Christian Way as an invitation to pilgrimage, an offered route by which human beings can find help in their search for the answer to their fundamental questions: 'Who am I?' 'What may I hope?' 'What should I do?' Sydney Evans

Documents from the Session

Below you'll find the results of the questionnaire, the handouts we looked at and the newsprint from the session.

st clements
9/11/22

Liturgical Space Considerations

To what extent are the following space considerations important to you.

	Very Low					Very High
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Unity – The space communicates a sense of harmony, integration and wholeness				//	///	### ###
2. Beauty – The total environment is beautiful; the space appeals to the senses					/###	### ###
3. Sense of the Sacred – The space makes us aware off the sacred; draws us into a sense of awe, a sense of the holy					###	### ###
4. Reverence – The space encourages rest & prayer when one is in it alone; has a sense of quite intimacy with God and other people					/### 	### ###
5. Mystery – The space draws us beyond ourselves, into a contemplation of God's presence		/	/	/	###	### ###
6. Symbolic focus – The space focuses our attention on the important symbols of liturgical faith – altar, being part of a community, baptismal font, light & darkness, etc.				///	###	### ###
7. Quality – The space suggest quality of materials and artistry; sense of harmony & wholeness; the objects serve the liturgical action and also carry the weight if mystery, awe and wonder			/		/### 	###
8. Responsible use of land, energy, etc.			///		###	###
9. Capacity for use by the broader community – for meetings, special events, etc.			###	/	### 	
10. Worship space flexible enough to allow for multiple uses while maintaining a sense of reverence when used for liturgy.		/			### 	
11. Parking space	//	/			/###	
12. Handicap accessible					### 	### ###
13. Seating is <i>in pews</i>	###			/		
14. Seating is <i>in chairs</i> appropriate for liturgical space	//	/		/		
15. Local Arts – Use skilled local artists as possible		/	//	/	### 	###
16. Arts – Use artists with expertise; do not fall back on using poor quality commercial items or work by unskilled volunteers						### ###
17. Music – Space allows for a variety of musical instruments				//	### 	### ###

18. Organ – There is an organ in the space (or one could be added)

19. Easy movement – Liturgical space allows for easy movement as people gather, for liturgical expression, etc.

20. Presider – The space allows us to easily see the presiding priest

21. Variety of Liturgical Use – Space allows for Holy Eucharist, Baptism, pastoral offices (marriages, burials, etc.), Daily Office, etc.

		/	/	//	/// /// //
			/// /	/// //	/// //
		/	/	/// //	/// /// /
			/	/// //	/// ///

In part based on the work of D. Paye, M. Mann, A. Mann; Ascension Press, 1984

St. Clements Issues to Test

Rank 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices

1. Congregational Seating

A. Some chairs and some pews (examples, chairs in chancel and at rear; or chairs toward front and pews in rear) 2 1 2 2 3 2 1

B. All chairs 1 2 3 // 2

C. All Pews 3 3 / 3 2 3 3

13
11
78

2. **Spending the \$400,000 – How much to improve the worship space?** For example, lowering level of the chancel area to match existing level of congregational seating, possible chairs, lectern, etc.

We assume funds will be used to deal with the electrical system. Also, a significant issue in this question is how much to reserve for other things – savings, communications work - website, signage, bulletin boards, mass mailings, etc.; efforts to develop a deeper relationship with the neighborhood and the music community. Other.

The rector and vestry will need to take all this in account. As part of that what's your sense of the amount of the \$400,000 that might go towards changes in the worship space? **Circle one**

A. Up to \$40,000

B. Up to \$60,000

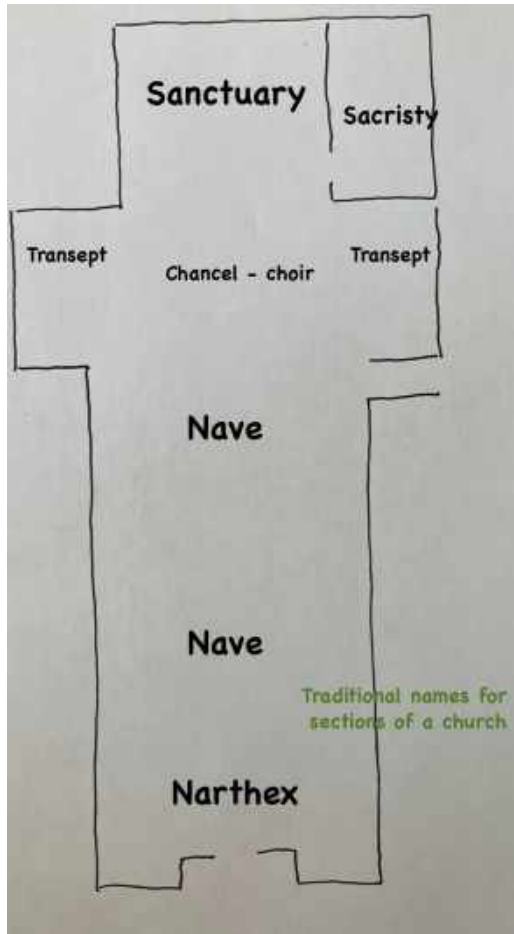
C. Up to \$100,000 ///

D. Up to \$200,000 /// //

3. I'd prefer that we make no changes to the existing worship space

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Agree
 /// /// // // // /

Various images



Chairs – examples





Stacking Chair





Lectern – Saint Mary the Virgin, Times Square

Very low

Very High

1. Unity

2. Beauty

3. Sense of Sacred

4. Reverence

5. Mystery

6. Symbolic Focus

7. Quality

8. Responsible Use

9. Capacity for use

10. Worship space flexible

	1	2	3	4	5	Very High
1. <u>Unity</u>				✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓
2. <u>Beauty</u>					✓✓	✓✓✓✓
3. <u>Sense of Sacred</u>				✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓
4. <u>Reverence</u>					✓✓	✓✓✓✓
5. <u>Mystery</u>		✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓
6. <u>Symbolic Focus</u>				✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓
7. <u>Quality</u>			✓		✓✓	✓✓✓✓
8. <u>Responsible Use</u>			✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓
9. <u>Capacity for use</u>			✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓
10. <u>Worship space flexible</u>	✓	✓✓	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓✓

Very low

Very High

1/2

	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
11. <u>Parking</u>	1 ✓✓	2 ✓	3 ✓✓✓	4 ✓✓✓	5 ✓✓✓ 6 ✓✓✓
12. <u>Handicap Accessible</u>				✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓✓ ✓✓✓
13. <u>Pews</u>	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓
14. <u>Chairs</u>	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
15. <u>Local Arts</u>		✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓✓
16. <u>Arts</u>				✓✓✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓✓
17. <u>Music</u>			✓	✓✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓✓
18. <u>Organ</u>			✓	✓✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓✓
19. <u>Easy Movement</u>				✓✓✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓✓
20. <u>Presider</u>			✓	✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓✓
21. <u>Variety of liturgical use</u>				✓	✓✓✓ ✓✓✓

St. Clement's Issues to list

1. Congregational Seating

- A. Some chairs 2 1 2 2 3 2 1
B. All chairs 1 2 3 1 1 1 2
C. All pews 3 3 1 3 2 3 3

2. Spending

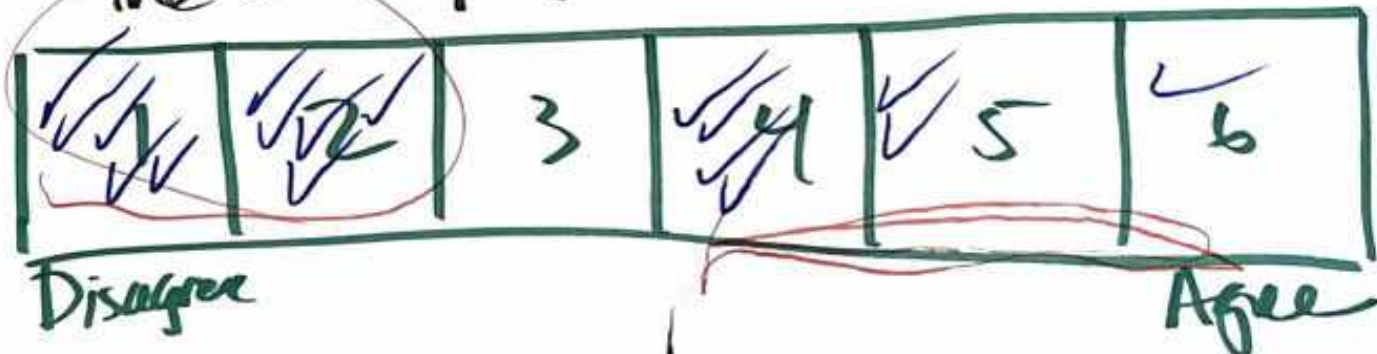
A. Up to \$40K

B. Up to \$60K ~~7~~

C. Up to \$100K ||||

D. Up to \$200K +++ ||||

3. I'd prefer we make no changes to the worship space



A

2 3 3 3 3 3 3

1 1 3 1 3 3
Altar

3 1 3
Congregational Seating

Congregational Seating

Choir

B

1 1 2 1 1

3 3 3
Choir

1 3 1
Altar

Congregational Seating

C

2 2 2 2 2

Altar

2 2 2 2 2
2-5-1 2-5-1

Congregational Seating