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St. Mark's Lutheran Church

St. Mark's Lutheran Church is a congregation in the Chicago suburb of Aurora, Illinois. The existing sanctuary, in lieu of traditional stained glass, has large windows that face enclosed gardens, and this connection to nature forms an important component of the congregation's spiritual life. However, the rapidly-growing congregation found itself constrained by their existing facilities, and commissioned a design for an addition and expansion of the space. The project's goals included:

1. An expanded worship space to accommodate the congregation's existing and projected membership, while maintaining an intimate seating configuration and visual connection to the outdoors.
2. Expansion of the Fellowship Hall to provide additional capacity for banquets and events, and to make it a more spacious and light-filled space.
3. To provide an inviting space that is welcoming to newcomers and provides opportunities for informal gatherings before and after worship services.

In response to these challenges, a concept was developed for a new worship space that:

1. Responds to the geometry and materials of the existing facilities, in matching the earth-toned brick and angular geometry to provide a seamless integration between the old and new spaces.
2. Provides for ample natural daylight and visual connections to the outdoors in the form of large clerestory windows, a tall prism-like window behind the altar, and a rose window at the southeast end of the nave.
3. Respects the congregation's customary liturgical and musical life, and allows for a wide degree of flexibility.

The new sanctuary features an octagonal seating plan, which increases seating capacity without sacrificing the intimate feeling of the existing space. Extensive use of glass, including a tall prism-shaped window behind the altar and large clerestory windows flanking the main aisle insure that a strong connection to the outdoors is maintained. The orientation of the sanctuary provides views to landscaped areas of the church grounds while avoiding glare inside the space.

The fellowship hall and kitchen in the basement of the existing sanctuary are relocated upstairs into the former sanctuary space, creating a spacious and light-filled fellowship hall that retains the views to the enclosed gardens, and is more fully integrated with the rest of the building both visually and functionally. A new, spacious narthex replaces the cramped narthex of the existing facility, opens to an internal courtyard that had formerly been inaccessible, and provides a gracious space for greeting newcomers and hosting informal gatherings before and after worship

services. Through the generous use of daylight and nature throughout the project, the design strongly reflects the Lutherans' belief that sunlight serves to illuminate God's glory, truth, and revelation.



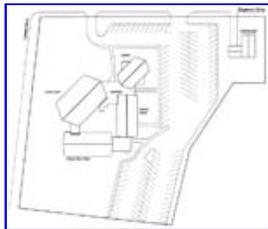
Exterior rendering



Interior rendering



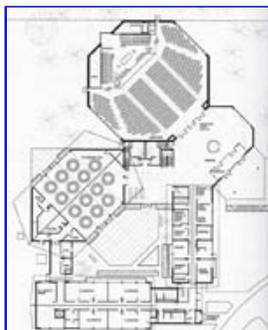
Axonometric of sanctuary



Existing site plan



Proposed site plan



Proposed floor plan



Section through sanctuary

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