

→ CHAPEL ADDITION
→ 3SIX0 ARCHITECTURE

Each project's design gets launched by a diagram, a sketch that somehow holds together everything that is known about the project and can absorb what is coming. The sketch for the design of a chapel for Shepherd of the Valley, of Hope R.I., came out of many conversations and interviews with the parishioners, the two pastors and the building vision committee...their needs and aspirations for the church. SOV is the product of two churches, the Phenix and Hope Methodist Churches merging together in the seventies. Shortly after their merger they outgrew their prefab building and when we met them, we found that they outgrew their building again. The chapel is a part of a much larger master plan, also conducted by 3six0, which set the chapel's footprint shape, size and location...a semi-attached pavilion that is a northern extension of the existing education wing. The western wall was determined not to be parallel to the eastern wall, but instead it would swing in, forming a trapezoidal plan. This would define a more open space on the exterior of the west side of the chapel.

The diagram gained insight as a kind of accident. In one of our presentations to the church, we realized with embarrassment that we had forgotten the spire on our model of the existing church. Then, after adding the spire to the model, we found that it kept being knocked off.

Out of curiosity, we looked the word "spire" up in the dictionary. What we found addressed the purpose, history, aspirations of openness, expansion and the specific diagram of the chapel.

The word, "spire" comes from the Latin root, "spirare" or "spirit". "Spirare" is also the root of "inspire", "respire" and "spiral", a geometry that is always expanding and contracting like breath.

At the same time, we were starting to work on the chapel's design, with the narrowing trapezoidal plan and the supporting perimeter wall. We found that if the ceiling's geometry is square to each supporting wall, instead of being a compromised geometry in between the two walls, the lines of the geometry continue to spiral around like a string wrapping the space. This became a convincing order for the design of the chapel: the geometry of the ceiling/roof and floor spirals north-south, setting the structure, windows, and ceiling/wall acoustic fins.

Now looking back at the facades of the historic churches...the ones that formed Shepherd of the Valley, you can see something that is very interesting. The Phenix Church has its structure out of sight, within its skin of siding. The Hope Church has its structure poking out from the skin of siding and its roof is tucked in. It is as though the two churches were inhaling and exhaling: the body carving a cavity, the skin taut, revealing structure on the inhale and the body and skin relaxing on the exhale.



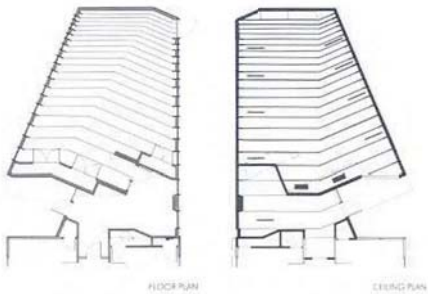
PHENIX FACADE



HOPE FACADE

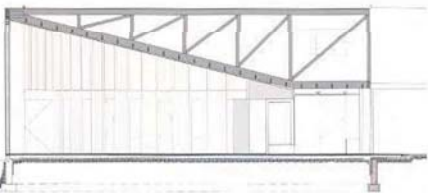


SPATIAL DIAGRAM OF SPIRAL



FLOOR PLAN

CEILING PLAN



LONGITUDINAL SECTION



Location: Rockville, Md., East, Hazel, Rhode Island
Total square footage: 1,200 sq ft
Completion date: August, 2008
Photographer: John Koenig Photography



