

HICKS MEMORIAL CHAPEL



HISTORY OF THE BUILDING



In the spring of 1970 the Hicks Memorial Chapel was constructed, thanks to a generous gift by the Hicks family. The large Georgian edifice includes a noble spire surmounted by a golden weathercock (recently refurbished), a traditional symbol warning against denial of the Lord. The building also contains a large, theater-like auditorium and offices. One of the first special events held in the new chapel was a "Festival of the Gospels," which brought together some 70 notable scholars for a broad discussion of topics related to the Gospels.

The three-manual Schantz organ in the Hicks Chapel, which has a positive division and 39 stops, was dedicated with a concert. And the two-manual Schantz

organ from the McCune Chapel (previously located in Long Hall and where the community gathered for worship) is now in the auditorium. The first concert in the auditorium was by the Carnegie Mellon String Quartet.

THEOLOGY OF RENOVATION

THE STORY OF OUR WORSHIP SPACE

As part of an ongoing revitalization of worship life at PTS, Hicks Memorial Chapel has undergone significant changes. The intimacy and flexibility of our renovated space now support the diversity and creativity of worship planning and leadership that we encourage through our worship program.

The process of revitalization began in 2010 with conversations as to the importance of worship both to our communal life and to theological education. A number of changes to the PTS Worship Program grew out of these conversations.

We integrated the traditional and contemporary services that were once divided.

We made our students much more central to worship leadership.

We emphasized multi-sensory forms of worship over liturgies that appeal solely to heads and hearts.

We lifted up the denominational and theological diversity of our community.

We put structures in place that assist our students in their worship preparation and reflection.

As part of this revitalization, we needed a sanctuary that would allow for more intimacy and more flexibility.

Renovation of the sanctuary began in the summer of 2012. We first removed the pews of the lower part of the sanctuary and replaced them with chairs. We then installed carpeting and repainted the walls, contributing to the space a sense of warmth that was previously lacking. Finally, we ordered a liturgical suite made by the Rev. **Erich Thompson**, a Presbyterian minister who has found a calling in the design and construction of liturgical furnishings.

The sanctuary's default set-up embodies a theological understanding of the Church. Upon entering the sanctuary, worshipers are immediately greeted by the Baptismal font as a reminder that we do not enter God's presence on our own accord, but because God reached out to us in the covenant of baptism. In the center of the space, the chairs are arranged in a circle, creating an intimate atmosphere that allows us to integrate worship leaders, musicians, and choirs into one community. It is from this community that God calls upon members to proclaim God's Word. Therefore, the pulpit is placed as a part of the community circle. The pulpit is flexible but not multi-functional. It can be moved, but not because it is merely a lectern. When we preach, we speak not in our own name, but in the name of the Lord. To

symbolize this, our pulpit reflects the shape of a traditional pulpit in which the preacher, as it were, disappears into the surrounding structure. In this way, the worshiping community's focus is directed toward the Word, rather than the speaker.

The centerpiece of the sanctuary is a large, square Communion Table. It is supported by three legs on each of its four sides. According to Rev. Thompson, this three times four design aims to remind us of the Trinity, the four Gospels, and the 12 Disciples. Additionally, the face of each side shows the Hebrew letter shin – standing for *shalom*, *Shaddai*, and *Shekinah*.

We intentionally chose a square table at the center of our worshiping community. For each service, the community is literally gathered around the Table. And when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, there is no "head" to the Table. This reminds worshipers that it is not the presider who is the host, but Christ himself.

These renovations have greatly impacted the worship experience at PTS. The flexibility of the space invites community members to engage a variety of liturgical forms with openness and creativity, while the default set-up ("church in the round") creates an intimate setting that enables a dynamic experience of community even in light of the magnitude of the building.

Our Communion ware was designed and created by a local potter, Bill Foglia, who owns Penn Avenue Pottery in the Strip District.



BUILDING USE

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-362-5610



FIND YOUR PROGRAM

REQUEST INFO

APPLY ONLINE

VISIT THE CAMPUS

News & Events**Contact****Directions****Employment** **Save Page As PDF**

Privacy Policy

COVID-19

Accessibility

Anti-Discrimination

Title IX And Anti-Harassment