

Mount Cross Lutheran Church
Sanctuary Task Force Report – January 2024

Dear Church Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the church. As you know this task force was started by the church council to look at the needs and changes for the Sanctuary of the church in light of the use of the sanctuary since it was built in 1988 as well as looking at changes to be made for our current situation and planning for the future. During this process we prayerfully considered all possibilities and did our best to represent our fellow congregants in our mission. We kept in mind first and foremost that this is a space for worship and should always be treated as such. With this main goal in mind, we set forth to discover what this space could be and how it would fit the needs of our congregation. We considered many factors and talked with groups and individuals. Please see the following report as a record of our process, observations, and recommendation to the council.

In Christ,

The Sanctuary Task Force

Gayle Johnson – Co-Chair

Mary Kienitz – Co-Chair

Scott Fajnor

Bryan Honda

Susan Prosser

Brian Stouch

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

To recommend to the church council improvements to the sanctuary space to increase safety, functionality, flexibility, and refurbishment. These recommendations are for current use and for the future of the church.

1.2. Scope

The scope of our work was specific to the sanctuary building itself and did not expand to the additional buildings on the property.

However, this committee also believes that it is important to critique our church campus as a whole as we look closely at the Sanctuary. The campus is like a body where all the parts are necessary and intertwined to work together. This was taken into consideration as we went through the process.

1.3. Meeting Dates

May 28, 2023	October 8, 2023
June 19, 2023	October 19, 2023
July 10, 2023	October 29, 2023
July 27, 2023	December 3, 2023
August 16, 2023	January 10, 2024
September 10, 2023	

2. Process

2.1. Background

Improvements to the Sanctuary have been considered over a number of years including when the decision was made as to whether to build the pavilion or focus on the Sanctuary particularly the condition of the pews. Obviously, the decision was to provide additional multiuse space by building the pavilion. Currently the pews require even more attention which presents an opportunity to consider how else might the Sanctuary be improved to offer the best use to the Mount Cross congregation and the community going forward.

2.1.1. Ad Hoc Facilities Committee

The Ad Hoc Facilities Committee did research prior to the formation of the Sanctuary Task Force and was the starting point for this effort. The important notes and take aways from their report were worship needs in addition to creating flexibility and the need for multi-use space. Important aspects are bringing the Sanctuary up to ADA access, changes needed due to live streaming and recording of the church services and events, use for classes, seminars and beyond and refurbishing or replacing the pews. Another important area is the need for changes made to alleviate safety concerns in several areas of the Sanctuary and the elongated hours of the CDC.

2.2. List of Priorities to Review

- 1) Seating (Including accommodation for ADA and Playground needs) Current pews are in disrepair and require repair or replacement.
- 2) Musical Groups
- 3) Technology (Projector)
- 4) Narthex
- 5) Chancel
- 6) Loft
- 7) Storage
- 8) General and specialized Lighting
- 9) Restroom
- 10) Flooring
- 11) Front Entry

2.3. Special Guest and Group Meetings

Bill Dawson – Bill came to a meeting to provide input of wants and needs from the technology team. Bill provided a lot of good information including but not limited to the history of sound, the history of the church livestream, current locations and used of conduits, current livestream and technology capabilities and flexibilities, ideal placement of cameras and speakers, and reasons for various quirks of the current system. Ultimately Bill displayed a vision and concern for providing the best possible technological solutions for the church.

Carol Browning, Music Director – Carol also attended one meeting to provide input from the musical group's perspective. Carol's concerns mainly focused on supporting worship and providing the best musical experience possible. She likes our current set up but had some safety concerns about the loft. She also expressed the need for better and more accessible storage for the music group.

Pastor Julie Morris – Pastor Julie attended the same meeting that Carol did. She seemed excited about the new possibilities and was open to the changes that the committee brought forth. She did express need for additional storage or more efficient use of the sacristy.

Bill Stoll, Council President– Cy attended a few meetings and was mainly there to refocus and affirm our efforts to what the council wanted.

Cy Johnson, Property Committee Chair – provided support and consulting regarding plans and property.

Family Faith Formation – Gayle and Bryan met with FFF to express our plans and receive feedback as it regarded to the playground. The overall reception to the playground has been positive and FFF requests were to increase the size of the playground if possible. They also mentioned the need for soft flooring for parts of the playground, which could be achieved by rugs. Other requests were better signage and tables for small children.

Church Council - Input through Council Liaison and attendance by Council President – Confirmation of the expectations of the Church Council was sought during the process with a response that directed the Committee to pursue “flexibility” in the use of the space as a very high priority since recommendation(s) would entail major refurbishing of the Sanctuary.

2.4. Meetings and Procedure

Meetings were held in person at Mount Cross Campus on the schedule provided in Section 1.3. These meeting were mostly conducted in the Sanctuary and involved exploring the space as well as table discussion. Meetings lasted on average 1.5 hours and minutes were taken and approved by the task force at the beginning of each following meeting. Additional communication was handled by email.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Seating – presented in no particular order of preference.

Option One:

Remove all existing pews and replace them combination of chairs and smaller pews. Create two additional aisles (keeping a center aisle) for movement and flexibility. Chairs to be in the front two or three rows so the chairs can be moved easily for a larger chancel area when necessary. Chairs to be on the side of the church by the technology room. The Playground could stay in its current spot or switch space with one of the new chair areas. ADA access can be formed in areas around the Sanctuary (a minimum of 6 is necessary).

Option Two:

Remove all existing pews and replace all with new chairs throughout the Sanctuary. Create two side aisles (keeping the center aisle) for movement and flexibility. The all-chair option will give much needed alternatives for various forms of worship as well as providing possibilities for other church activities, CDC worship and special events, and community use of the space. ADA access seating can be placed in many different areas within the Sanctuary (minimum of 6) and can vary by those predicted to attend. This

option will allow the Playground to be placed in different areas of the Sanctuary and change the size of the area depending on the need.

Sanctuary current safety concern:

One current safety issue is the stacked chairs in the narthex open passage area compromise space for walker parking, etc. and general movement (very important should there be a need for evacuation as an example). Some action toward improving this has recently been approved in allowing the removal of two additional pews in the back of the church to be replaced by existing chairs. Both permanent proposals will also take care of this concern.

3.2. Musical Groups

Additional or all chair seating can offer different areas within the first floor of the Sanctuary that can be designated for musical groups of the church. This could include the Sanctuary choir, Praise Band, song leaders or even Children's or Youth choirs, bands, or musicians.

The Bell Choir director has requested that the Bell Choir stay upstairs. See recommendations under loft area.

3.3. Technology

It is the assessment of the Task Force that the technology equipment needs changes especially for safety and to make it non-visible while yet as functional as possible.

The Task Force recommends:

Increasing space in the existing technology room by removing unrelated and nonessential items and installing a larger window.

Mounting an alternative remote-controlled camera on the balcony wall. This would take care of both a safety issue as well as a very unsightly area as you enter the church.

A current safety issue is the placement of the video camera and operator on riser in the back row of pews on the right-hand side of the church facing forward. The edges of the riser extend beyond the pew in front of it and create a potential hazard to those walking in the aisle on that side. We have been lucky that nobody has thus far been injured. Mounting an alternative remote-controlled camera on the balcony wall above the aisle would allow this camera set-up to be removed. In the short term, the placement of chairs in front of the riser will permit a chair in front of the riser to better block the aisle edge.

Technology requests 6 large lights at the sides of the choir loft to be replaced with LEDs to support live streaming.

3.4. Narthex/Entry

Discussed the idea of closing off the narthex with window view (glass moveable walls) into sanctuary. This separation from the main sanctuary will reduce the sound that currently is heard from conversations and late arrivals in the narthex and help create an added degree of safety with an additional set of doors that could serve as a barrier to entry into the sanctuary.

Install more cabinets and much better display capability for information than the existing limited narthex counter and which could include welcome materials.

The kiosk would not be needed if there was a welcome area in the narthex. This would remove something that requires a large amount of storage space either in a closet or directly in the narthex.

The Task Force considered several options with no specific recommendation when it came to the entry. The task force does recommend that measures be taken to help remove exterior moisture drip that falls onto the doors to help maintain their integrity.

3.5. Chancel

Recommend taking the chancel down to one level as well as making it a smaller area. The one step is for safety as there have been many trips and falls. The smaller area will give room for other options for choirs or musical groups to sit in the front of the church. Plan to keep kneelers and railings.

It is also recommended that the entire chancel structure be relocated to connect with the "cross wall". This will eliminate a small area of kneelers and railing but not so much as to compromise the giving of communion. Among the reasons for this specific recommendation are the wasted space currently with the gap between the chancel and the wall and the opportunity to create more usable space in front of the chancel with this move.

Create Pulpit and Lectern compatible with revised altar. If they are to be free standing, making it easy to change their location would be essential.

3.6. Loft

Since the Bell Choir would stay in the loft for the near future it is our recommendation to make the loft area safer. Currently the steps need railings. Also due to live streaming there are equipment cords in balcony areas creating trip hazards. This equipment does not belong to the church and funding has recently been provided for replacement for some or all the items at issue. The sanctuary committee has generally felt that audio visual equipment may not require replacement with identical items since the church has benefited from the loan of very sophisticated equipment that may frankly exceed our need if we were to start from scratch. This same statement would be true for tech items not necessarily placed in the balcony.

If song leaders and Praise Band are going to continue in the loft there needs to be something done with the cords to make it a safe place to walk. This includes the outdoor stairs where lines travel for patio live stream viewing. This is of course also necessary to ensure the safety of musicians who play from the balcony on a routine basis.

Other things that require consideration in this area are seating, the railing that overlooks the main sanctuary, and better music storage cabinets to replace the filing cabinets currently in use. The committee also considered the possibility of the loft providing seating for services with a large attendance if possible.

It was suggested that we replace the current piano with a clavi nova (digital piano) This would create more space for safety as well as a better sight line for musicians.

3.7. Storage

Additional storage is very necessary. Start by cleaning out current areas. Move banners to sacristy on pulley system. Create more storage in the narthex with more cabinetry. Sacristy needs wine storage area sooner rather than waiting for other improvements to be agreed upon. Note: Storage also discussed with recommended bathroom addition.

3.8. Lighting

The committee considered both general and specialty lighting needs with in the sanctuary needing improvement. Complaints are frequent from the congregation during evening hours that general lighting is insufficient throughout the church for all to easily read either bulletins or hymnals.

If it is determined that we proceed with a major improvement to the sanctuary, improvements to all forms of lighting requirements can be addressed. Otherwise making what improvements with current lighting arrangements should be pursued.

3.9. Restroom

An additional restroom is recommended outside the CDC fenced in area. Due to preschool regulations and their 7:30 am to 5 pm weekday hours, the current restrooms (other than the church office) are not available to others during school hours. It is problematic for having any other daytime functions Monday through Friday. These currently include weekday worship services, funerals, bible studies, committee meetings. etc. which meet either in the Sanctuary, the pavilion, the office building or in a few instances in the Parrish Life Center by prior arrangement.

It is recommended to build a single restroom externally connected to the Sanctuary building. Due to limited available space, it is envisioned as being without gender distinction, meeting ADA requirements and equipped with a changing station so that all potential users are accommodated. Also recommended that storage space have access other than through the actual restroom. The use of this storage area has yet to be determined but could obviously support the restroom and the pavilion as possibilities.

3.10. Flooring

Recommend all new tile flooring for the Sanctuary. The current tile floor is troublesome and removing the pews will make replacing tiles necessary. There are many varieties and sizes of tile, and the ultimate decision will include the wide differences in cost as well. The utility of tile over other flooring possibilities includes: 1) it replicates the acoustics of the sanctuary at present; 2) if needed sections can be replaced without needing total flooring replacement; 3) seating that allows movement and reconfiguration has been recommended and tile presents flooring least likely to be marked by furniture movement; 4) regular cleaning of tile flooring can be accomplished by mopping; and 5) when designing the Sanctuary changes, variations in tile color and style can be considered for special areas outside of the general seating if desired.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion we have kept in mind that the sanctuary is first a place for worship. We offer suggestions for designing space that has flexibility in its future use. The decision to offer a variety of forms of worship and/or other gatherings will always rest with the pastor and the elected church council at any point in time. It is not for this committee to determine how or when space will be used but rather provide what we feel are reasonable and doable suggestions.

There are also a few of the recommendations we would like to highlight again here as this task force sees them as safety issues that need to be addressed regardless of whether the council goes forward with any of the other recommendations made in this report.

Existing Safety Concerns – some of which are currently being addressed due to degree of immediate importance and available funds.

- Camera and riser on main floor – possible injury
- Stacked chairs - compromises passageway
- Balcony lighting placement – possible injury
- Lack of railing in the upper loft area – possible injury
- Technology cabling in general – possible injury
- Amount of space consumed in loft by full size piano

This report basically concludes the work of the committee who do, however, remain available to respond to questions. It is up to the Church Council if they wish to formally accept the report or to just use it as a starting point for further action on their part.

If the Council determines that there is interest in further pursuing improvements to the Sanctuary, we recommend that the next step would be to secure the services of professional design architect(s) with experience in the design/renovation of church

interiors and space utilization. Completing conceptual design will move discussion of improvement of the sanctuary from discussion to the specifics and allow cost and time estimates.