WHERE IS THE HOUSE YOU WILL BUILD FOR ME?

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

The adaptive reuse of secular buildings as churches signals a return to the fundamental belief that architecture is not necessary for Christian worship. Following are the stories and photographs of fifteen churches in the Greater Toronto Area where congregations worship inside buildings designed for non-religious purposes. These photographs document the utilitarian architecture of secular buildings as a backdrop to the act of worship and fellowship that have become the sole embodiment and expression of faith. While the stories behind these churches testify to the adaptability of Christian worship and the power of faith and community during times of economic struggle, they also ask us to reconsider our role as architects in the relationship between architecture and faith.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, for their love and support. Thank you for your sacrifice and guidance through it all.

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INTRODUCTION

Churches have always been architecture's most photogenic subjects. The scale of the central nave of Chartres, the complex geometry of Borromini's ornamentation at San Carlino, the sublime glow of Ando's cross in the Church of Light: all submit willingly to the camera's lens as portraits of architecture that inspires faith. Photographing secular buildings as churches however, presented me with a problem. I was faced with the challenge of documenting buildings that showed no physical evidence of being used as places of worship. While photographs document what has been seen, their power rests to a greater degree in the implications of what is not seen, declaring something intangible beyond the bounds of physical existence.[1]

Historically, the buildings erected by the Christian Church have served different purposes at different places and times. Christian worship as we first encounter it in history is domestic in character because there was no where to go to escape religious but the houses of Christian people. The house-church provided early Christians with a temporary congregational space for worship,

and the *domus ecclesiae* developed, as houses were converted into full-time churches. It wasn't until the early third century that the construction of permanent church buildings arose as a practical alternative for growing congregations.[2]

The legalization of Christianity in the fourth century and its adoption as the official religion of Rome introduced the iconographic tradition of architecture. What had been established by pragmatic considerations now had symbolic value. The success of a Christian building or a piece of Christian art depended on its ability to invoke the spiritual as a physical object. The Roman Basilica, which has since become synonymous with Christian buildings tangibly communicated liturgy to the masses. However magnificent as architecture, the buildings and practices of the Catholic Church provoked Martin Luther's call for reform agaisnt the products of a defective ecclesiology and a liturgical tradition in an advanced stage of decay.[3]

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was a period of radical change to the practice of Christianity and the design of its churches. Protestant Reform set off a wave of iconoclasm throughout Europe. Stained glass windows were destroyed, images of saints defaced, and pipe organs pulled down. As emphasis moved away from glorious buildings to Bible readings and sermons, the altar and tabernacle of reformed churches were replaced by a pulpit, and marble statues, gold fittings, and hardwood pews all disappeared. With proscriptions against images and symbols, architecture lost its need to signify the sacred.[4] Instead, emphasis was placed upon the community centered on the liturgy with the building as the servant of the holy people of God rather than as a holy place in itself.[5]

While Protestant architecture became increasingly frugal, as its design no longer focused on inspiration but rather function, the Catholic Church continued to reaffirm its commitment to an iconographic tradition. The Counter-Reformation of the mid-sixteenth century introduced the exuberant and elaborate

Baroque style, and in 1963, the Second Vatican Council declared the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, a new constitution re-emphasizing the practice of placing sacred images in churches for veneration by the faithful.[6] The Protestant Chuch, meanwhile, splintered into countless denominations as Reformers continued to strip away the extraneous from both buildings and practices leaving behind buildings that neither inspired Christian faith nor adequately accomodated worship.[7]

As the Protestant and Catholic Church continue to move in diametrically opposite directions, the gap between architecture and faith is being stretched more than ever. Today, many Protestant congregations are abandoning the outdated image of their buildings altogether. Under the financial burden of maintaining aging buildings in a time of skyrocketing operating costs, they are being forced to reassess the value of their buildings on their ministry. While architects turn old churches into condominiums, theatres, and nightclubs, many displaced congregations are no longer turning to architects to build new churches. Instead, they are finding suitable and economical accommodations in a move that represents a return to Christian fundamentals and an echo of Luther's call for reform. They are adopting the secular architecture - warehouses, movie theatres and office buildings - as their new places of worship.

Following are the stories and photographs of fifteen churches in the Greater Toronto Area where congregations worship inside buildings designed for non-religious purposes. These photographs document the utilitarian architecture of secular buildings as a backdrop to the act of worship and fellowship that have become the sole embodiment and expression of faith. While the stories behind these churches testify to the adaptability of Christian worship and the power of faith and community during times of economic struggle, they also ask us to reconsider our role as architects in the relationship between architecture and faith.

TEMPLE TO MEETING HOUSE

"This is what the LORD says: Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?" [8]

Isaiah 66:1 | *The Holy Bible NIV*

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands." [9]

Acts 17:24-25 | *The Holy Bible NIV*

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill." [10]

Acts 17:29 | *The Holy Bible NIV*

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" [11]

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 | *The Holy Bible NIV*

"It is wrong that a love of walls has seized you; wrong that you venerate the church of God in roofs and buildings." [12]

John Calvin | *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

"Can there in fact be any genuine renewal of church architecture without a prior renewal within the Church of the meaning of the Church?" [13]

Peter Hammond | *A Radical Approach to Church Architecture*

"It is painfully true that most who ask that a new church should 'look like a church' have no real idea of what a church *is*." [14]

Charles Davis | *Church Architecture and the Liturgy*

"The practical necessity of some kind of building will ultimately prevail for most worshipping groups, as it did for the early Church. In the end the *ecclesia* will be found to need its *domus*." [15]

Harold W. Turner | *From Temple to Meeting House*

"Everywhere today one finds Christians attempting to worship in buildings that imply beliefs they do not hold and patterns of worship they do not practice." [16]

Martin Halverson | *Religious Buildings for Today*

"It was not unnatural that what had been established by pragmatic considerations should afterwards have reasons of symbolism attached to it; but we have suffered too long from the medieval welter of mystical significances that wholly divorced the inner meaning of a church's design from the function for which it was built. Actually, in so far as a church building has any justification over and above the pragmatic, it is as a visible embodiment of what the Church's worship really is." [17]

H. Benedict Green | *A Liturgical Brief*

"A church has to be an authentic image of a living and active community that has a message for the present world. To imitate past styles is to convey the impression that the Christian Church is an anachronistic survival, irrelevant to the modern world and its problems. If the material church represents us, it must speak in our language. Unfortunately, it is probably true that our weak, nostalgic church architecture reflects well enough the ineffectual, fossilized state of our Christian faith." [18]

Charles Davis | *Church Architecture and the Liturgy*

"Perhaps we ought not try to symbolize the truths of our religion in stone and steel. The result is usually some unhappy combination of the sense of divine majesty and human pride." [19]

Charles Davis | *Church Architecture and the Liturgy*

"Churches are built to 'express' this and to 'symbolize' that. We have churches which look like hands folded in prayer; churches which symbolize aspiration or the anchor of the industrial pilgrim's life; churches which express kingship of Christ; churches shaped like fishes, flames, and passion-flowers. There are still very few churches which show signs of anything comparable to the radical functional analysis that informs the best secular architecture of our time." [20]

Peter Hammond | *A Radical Approach to Church Architecture*

"If the minimal argument for churches derives from the provision of suitable accommodation for particular purposes they have been reduced to the category of the instrumental or the strictly functional. The church then becomes merely a machine for performing the liturgy parallel to the house conceived as a machine for living." [21]

Harold W. Turner | *From Temple to Meeting House*

"Up till now the church – in common with almost all secular buildings – has always been thought of as a monument, as something that is going to last forever. Though modern buildings, if they are maintained, are probably no less durable than ancient buildings, this ideal of indefinite longevity is no longer held and this fact has had a profound influence on architectural form. A good modern building has an undeniable sense of impermanence and transience, and it is this, I think, that is felt to be at war with fundamental aims of church building." [22]

Lance Wright | *Architectural Seriousness*

It is conceivable that in the future our churches may come into being solely out of the act of worship itself. At the beginning there would be no space and at the end none would be left over. The space would come into being and would sink away simultaneously with the service. It would be only a final step to give up the fixed structural space entirely and to use the structure simply as a means with which to render, in free creation, the ever-changing space. Then the liturgy would not only be a 'cathedral' in its secret structure: every day the Whole would be visibly erected." [23]

Rudolf Schwarz | *The Church Incarnate* | 1958

"Church architecture can never be exactly equated with secular architecture; its purpose lies in a higher order, and so it makes peculiar demands on the insight and skill of architects. But a genuine quality of sacredness will not be given to a building by adventitious religious symbolism or by a trite repetition of what is popularly regarded as religious in tone, but it will come – when it does come – by a working out with sympathy and understanding of the problems involved in designing a building for Christian liturgy. The first step towards a good church architecture is the recognition by client and architect that in building a church they must be concerned above all with the requirements of the liturgy." [24]

Charles Davis | *Church Architecture and the Liturgy*

PORTRAITS OF FAITH



The Abbey | Howard Park United Church | Toronto | 2005



Attwell Food | Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship | Etobicoke | 2005



Entrance from Railside Road | Salvation Army Korean Church | North York | 2005



Parking Entrance | The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



Parking Garage | The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



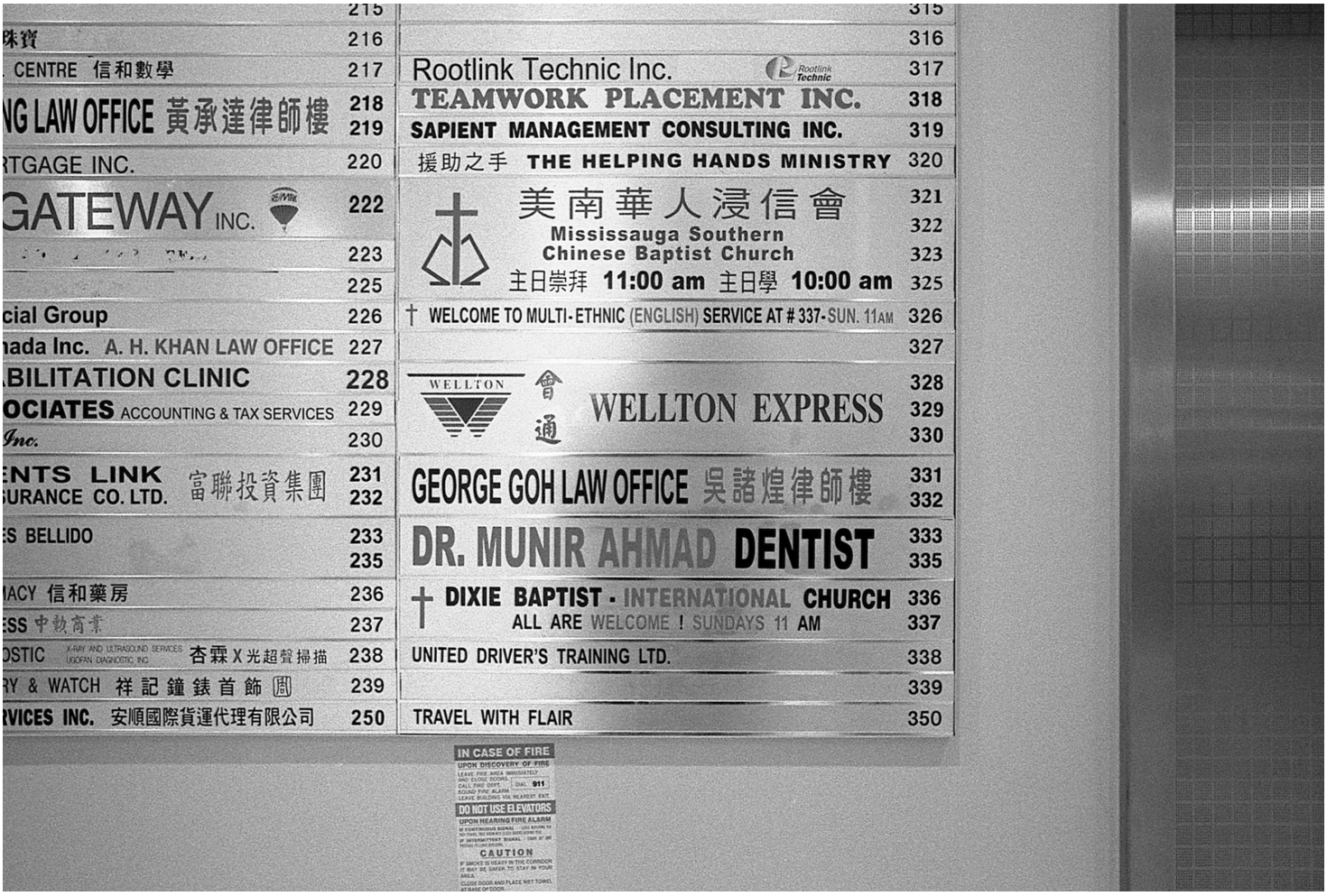
View from Parking | Young Nak Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



Entrance | Hour of Praise Assembly | Etobicoke | 2005



Lobby | West Toronto Church of God | North York | 2005



Directory | Dixie International Baptist Church | Mississauga | 2005



Lobby | Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship | Etobicoke | 2005



Sanctuary | Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship | Etobicoke | 2005



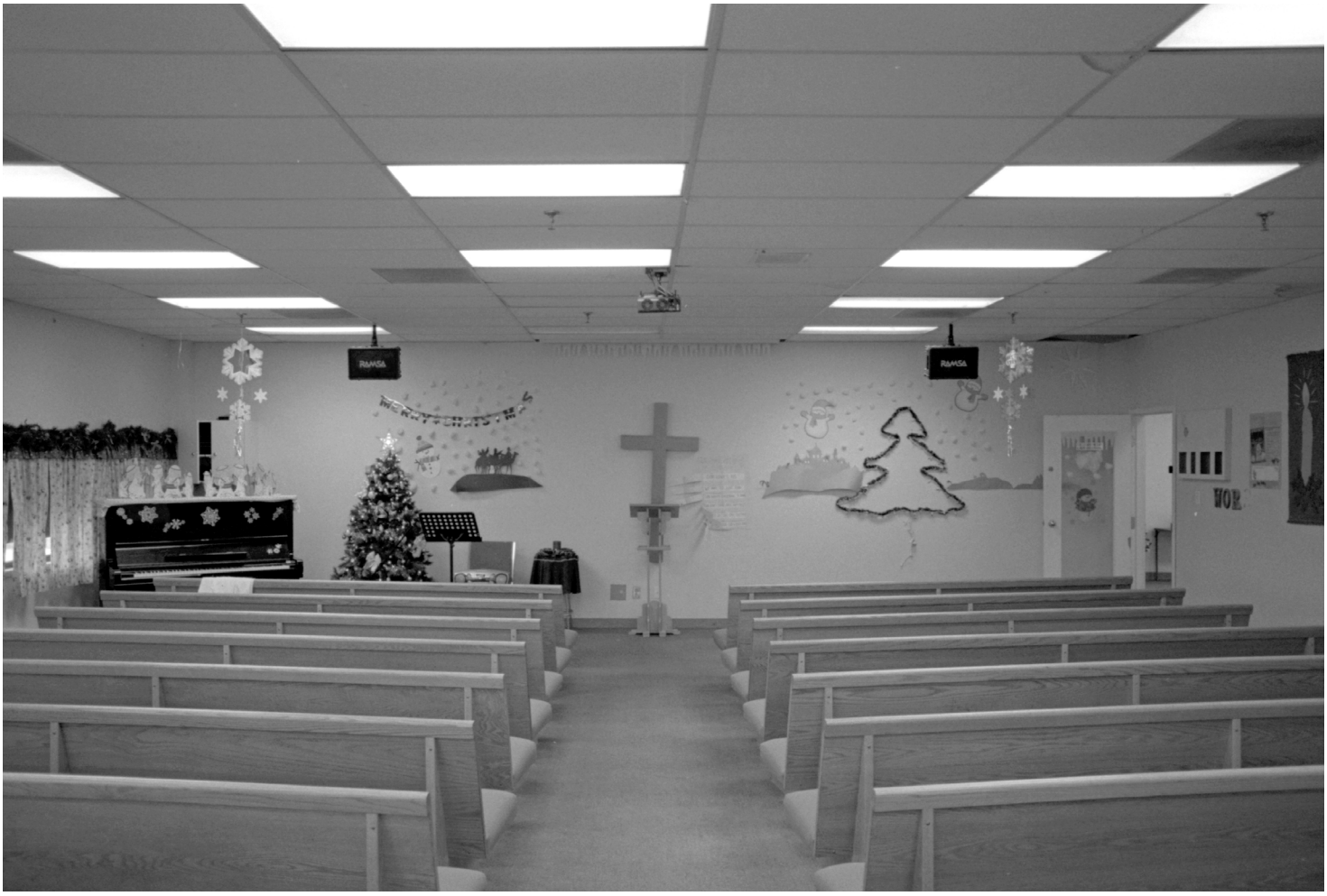
Vision Statement | Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship | Etobicoke | 2005



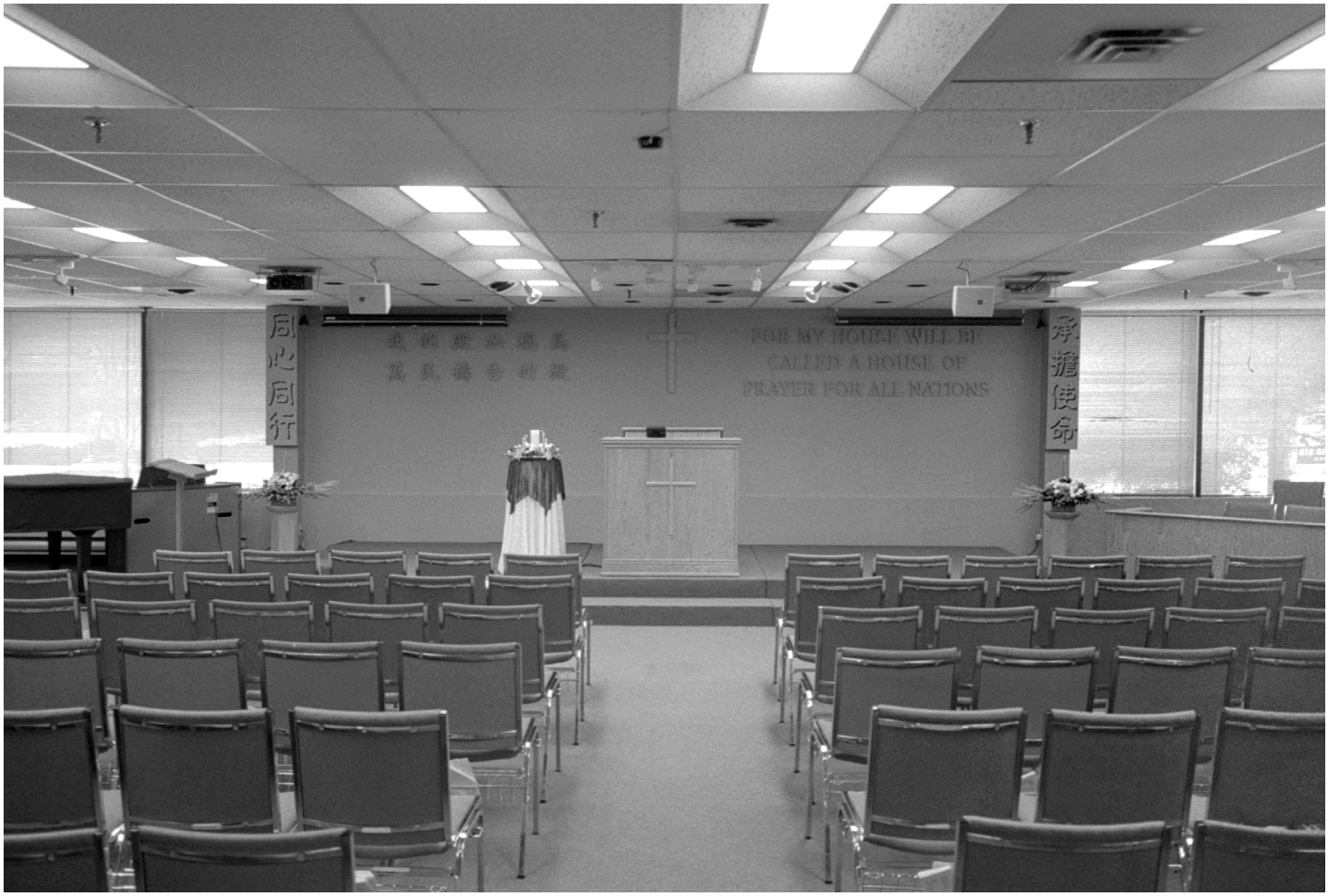
Unit 337 | Dixie International Baptist Church | Mississauga | 2005



Kindergarten Chapel | Young Nak Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



Children's Chapel | Young Nak Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



Worship Room | Don Mills Baptist Church | North York | 2005



Worship Room | Dixie International Baptist Church | Mississauga | 2005



Sanctuary | Salvation Army Korean Church | North York | 2005



Sanctuary | The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



Evangelistic Room | Carmel Logos Baptist Church | North York | 2005



Worship Equipment | Dixie International Baptist Church | Mississauga | 2005



Bible Study Rooms | The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



Future Fellowship Room | The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



Dance Hall | Don Mills Baptist Church | North York | 2005



Projection Room | Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship | Etobicoke | 2005



Praise Night | Toronto International Celebration Church | North York | 2005



Gymnasium | Young Nak Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



Cinema 3 | West Side Presbyterian Church | North York | 2005



View from Wilson Avenue | West Toronto Church of God | North York | 2005



Future Building | Assyrian Church of the East | Etobicoke | 2005



Future Site | St-Mark's Coptic Orthodox Campus | Markam | 2005

ECONOMY OF SALVATION

May 29th, 2005

Heading East on Queen Street the street car passes through the Beaches neighbourhood of Toronto stopping at every intersection as people get off to enjoy a Sunday afternoon at the beach. I get off at Kew Gardens to visit an old church across the street. The building is a shell of its former self. The stained glass windows that once glowed are boarded up, the bell that signaled Sunday service to the community has been replaced by a speaker system that no longer seems in use, and street vendors have moved into the niches of the façade, selling jewellery to passers-by.

Built in 1922, the main building of Kew Beach United Church sits on property estimated at a value of $2.5 million. Added on in 1957, the extension at the back of the building is valued at $1.5 million. In anticipation of a post-war baby boom, the Toronto United Church Council commissioned the construction of the extension to provide Bible study classrooms and a secondary chapel for 1,000 new Sunday school children. Its ambition was never realized. It now serves as office, archive, and administration space for the church,

and is rented to non-profit organizations like the Montessori School, Cub Scouts Canada and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Just four blocks down from Kew Beach is another United Church with a similar history. As a result of land parceling by Toronto's founding pioneers, where one plot of land for every seven was allocated to the church, many churches today find themselves around the corner from each other, serving the same community. I first read about the dilemma of the United Church in a newspaper article titled, *United We Amalgamate,* published by the National Post on March 12th 2005. Kew Beach and Bellefair are two of ten United churches in East Toronto located within a one mile radius of each other, struggling to survive in the face of increasing operational costs and dwindling attendance. With regular attendance as low as 50 in buildings with sanctuaries built to seat 500, amalgamation was discussed as a possible solution to save congregations from the burden of their buildings.

As its closest neighbour, Kew Beach has been in talks with Bellefair for many years regarding the possibility of amalgamating their congregations. While they continue to acknowledge the urgency of the situation, both agree amalgamation is a last resort. The congregations are proud of their unique identities and are adamant they be preserved. In response to the article, talks resumed between Kew Beach and Bellefair. Last month, an open house was held by the congregation at Kew Beach to encourage discussion on the future of their church. This was followed by the election of a Guiding Council to explore the feasibility of options raised at the open house. I was on my way to Kew Beach United the morning a decision on the future of the church was to be presented to the congregation by the Guiding Council. Reverend Bill Bruce, with whom I had been in contact after reading the newspaper article, invited me to attend a special Sunday service before the meeting.

Above the sanctuary doorway, a banner hangs in commemoration of the United Church Centennial Celebration – 'Building for tomorrow on a century of faith, 1882-1982.' Inside, the sanctuary is almost at capacity with some 300 people in attendance this morning. The service begins with the opening hymn, 'The Church's One Foundation.'

Bill begins by greeting the many familiar faces he has not seen in a while. Acknowledging the importance of today's Guiding Council meeting, he thanks everyone for coming out and jokes that this is the most people he's seen at Kew Beach since Christmas.

"What is the difference between what is necessary, what is sufficient, and what is efficient?" he asks.

"What is necessary is what you can't do without, what is sufficient is what is enough without anymore, and what is efficient is what makes a difference."

On stage, Bill invites the children to come up and play with the giant building blocks he has set up as props for his sermon. He begins his sermon by reading today's Bible passage:

"Wise man built a house on a rock, foolish man built on a foundation of sand - Matthew 7:21-29."

I first met Bill last year to discuss the issues surrounding amalgamation. Bill understands that times are changing and the church needs to let go of the past in order to look towards the future. He is aware that the new generation of Christians no longer responds to the traditions and iconography of the Church and that it is finding inspiration instead in the real-life experiences of worship and fellowship.

During our conversation, Bill lamented that too many people had become casual Christians, only attending service on Christmas and Easter and showing up for baptisms, weddings, funerals and Guiding Council meetings where donation dollars are on the line.

The older members of the congregation belong to a generation with roots in the community and the church. They have watched their children and grandchildren grow up here, only to see them leave in recent years. As a sign of hope however, Bill told me about a recent church community picnic event that was well attended by young adults and children from Kew Beach United and neighbouring Baptist, Unitarian, and Presbyterian churches. According to Bill, a day of worship and fellowship together under a tree seemed to inspire more faith in the community than another afternoon sitting under the glow of stained glass windows on hardwood pews.

On the issue of amalgamation, I think Bill was hoping that as an architect, I was the saviour that had come to fix their building or even better, design them a new one. We discussed many options and played out different economic scenarios, but Bill was always quick to remind me the foundation of the Church's problems lay deeper than the $7,000 heating bills they pay each month during the winter. Amalgamation has been a part of United Church history since its formation in 1925 through the merger of Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist denominations. With 3,709 parishes, the United Church of Canada owns property worth and estimated $887 mission on the open market. Over the past century there have been 94 amalgamations and closures involving second and even third generation amalgamated churches in Toronto. Like Kew Beach, most are surviving off income from tenants and bake sales to keep their doors open. Bill likened it to the old car that keeps on running as long as we keep putting money into it. It was just a matter of time before an amalgamated congregation would have to amalgamate again to survive another decade. According to Bill, the only way to buck the trend was a fresh start. This meant letting go of the sentimental attachment we have for old church buildings.

The plan proposed by Guiding Council is presented in three parts:

1. Maintain our current growing ministries in our current facilities through Easter 2006

2. Develop a detailed plan to sell the north, and fix the south building by April 30, 2006

3. Continue bilateral and multilateral conversations with neighbouring churches in that context

The Guiding Council's decision to move forward with the sale of the sanctuary and renovation of the gymnasium came as a shock to many older members of the congregation. They stressed the importance of worshipping in a historic building in order to maintain traditions for future generations. But the final decision was logical, considering the gymnasium was used throughout the week while the sanctuary was only used for half a day on Sundays.

While Kew Beach has decided for now to remain in their building, Bill sees it as only a temporary solution. Many congregations have already moved out completely as their churches are sold to developers and are no longer being used as places of worship. Had the decision been up to Bill, Kew Beach would be moving into the second floor of a commercial building on Queen Street, or for that matter, any humble and affordable structure that put a roof over their heads and kept them warm in the winter. While utilitarian in his vision for Kew Beach, Reverend Bill Bruce still acknowledges the sentimental value of old church buildings. This summer, he is moving into a new heritage loft in a recently converted Anglican church.

July 12th, 2005

Opening the door, my father is greeted by an awkward laugh and a pat on the back. They look sincerely happy to meet again but the tension that has distanced them over the years is still present. Shan's face tells the story of hardship he has struggled through as a pastor. His hair is streaked with silver, his eyes are proud yet humble crescents, and his smile is both friendly yet reserved. Thanking us for supporting his mission fund, Pastor Shan presents us with a painting by one of the underprivileged children our donation had provided bicycles for in Kenya.

Shan marvels at how much I have grown, reminding my father that I was a young boy the last time they saw each other. My father begins to update Shan on the last twenty years of my life and finishes by mentioning that I am doing some research on Christian churches in Toronto as part of my thesis. Ecstatic at the prospects of an architect going to work for God, Pastor Shan looks over at me with wide eyes.

"You should become a pastor!" he declares.

My father and Shan were colleagues at the University of British Columbia in the early seventies. I remember stories my father told me about cruising around in Shan's '63 Chevy. It wasn't a beauty, Shan would say, but it was always sufficient. They went on to pursue graduate studies in their respective fields but Shan dropped out in his first year and began working in Saskatchewan as an engineer in the forestry industry.

During that time, Shan was a devoted member of a small grassroots Methodist church outside of Regina. For Methodists and Baptists, a congregation's faith is sufficient to anoint a lay member as pastor. After years of commitment, Shan was elected pastor by the congregation of his church. An inspired supporter even went so far as to promise the church a new building if Shan accepted the position. Shan had found his calling. He left his job that day and devoted his life to doing the work of God.

My father once told me how ideological differences regarding the legitimacy of Shan's pastorship had distanced them over the years. He warned that while passionate and charismatic, Shan too often bordered on the fanatical. Regardless, my father mentioned that Shan had recently moved his church into a newly renovated building after years of struggling to maintain their old one. It took me a while to find a way out to Mississauga but one morning I finally managed to pay Pastor Shan a visit.

August 27th, 2005, 10am

Heading east on the 401, I exit at Dixie Road and look over the crumpled road map on the passenger's seat. Dixie Road is characteristic of Mississauga. Six lanes lined by strip malls and office buildings, where every intersection is doted by a gas station and a Tim Hortons. Only the occasional bus shelter tells me people

actually come here without their cars.

Waiting at a set of lights, I look suspiciously across the intersection at a typical three-storey office building. 1550 South Gateway Road is the address of Pastor Shan's church. I turn into the parking lot of Dixie Park Centre scanning the façade for signs of a church. The only signage on the building is for the predominantly Chinese businesses inside.

Dixie Park Centre is a typical shopping mall, albeit a Chinese one, with retail shops, kiosks, a food court on the ground level and offices occupying the upper two floors. I find Pastor Shan's church at the bottom of the directory between a travel agent and a dentist. Stepping off the elevator, the third floor smells of fresh paint and new carpeting. A man is sitting on a bench pensively reading a Bible. Looking up at me, he points to the end of the hallway where a glowing cross directs me to the door of Suite 337. Looking through the wired glass Pastor Shan is standing at the front of the room praying hand in hand with a young man on his knees. Opening the door, Pastor Shan looks up at me and smiles before lowering his head again to finish his prayer.

The room is nothing more than a typical office unit with seating for a modest 70 people. The ceiling tiles, blinds, carpeting and chairs are office standards. The smell of fresh coffee reaches me from a kitchenette at the back of room. Posted on a bulletin board by the door is a calendar of church events, a members' list with contacts, a mission budget spreadsheet, and photographs from a recent church event. I learn the church has recently changed its name to Dixie Baptist International Church in response to growing ethnic diversity within the congregation. In celebration, the women at Dixie recently invited the community to a multicultural fashion and talent show with proceeds from the event going to help mission projects in the Philippines and Zambia. The photographs are of recent full emersion baptisms that have been performed by Pastor

Shan in this very room. The most recently blessed were two Korean youths, a man from Lebanon, and one from Egypt.

Pastor Shan motions to me and greets me with a firm handshake and a pat on the shoulder. After taking a seat, Pastor Shan looks around the room with a proud smile.

"It may not look like much," he acknowledges. "But it has been more than enough!"

For nine years, Dixie Baptist Church worshipped inside a converted indoor swimming pool at the back of a high rise apartment building. Pastor Shan described it as ugly and uninspiring but it was more than sufficient. They could afford the rent and it met their needs. Shan claims that problems began when Dixie's fervent evangelism became a source of tension in the predominantly Muslim building. At the time, the building was in severe disrepair and the landlord refused to pay for repairs in an effort to pressure them to leave. When it rained outside, it rained inside, requiring a bucket and mop brigade to get to work before services. One winter they were even refused heat by the landlord in another attempt to drive them out of the building. On the coldest days of winter, portable heaters had to be brought in, and when the electricity was finally cut they resorted to using kerosene to build fires inside the swimming pool. It was illegal but they were helpless. They would persevere by worshiping louder than ever.

With up to 80 people meeting every week, Pastor Shan finally decided it was time to move. But with every penny being put into mission funds, no savings were left for any kind of building fund. Unwilling to take from the mission budget, Pastor Shan decided to meet with a realtor. He described the realtor as a Catholic business man dressed in an expensive suit holding the keys to a fancy car. This man wasn't the saviour Shan was praying for. For Shan, only the poor could understand the poor and he decided at that moment

that begging for money wasn't the job of a Protestant pastor. God would provide them with a new place to worship.

One morning before service, Pastor Shan's prayers were finally answered. While on his hands and knees mopping up water from an overnight leak, Pastor Shan claims to have been visited by an angel. The woman, who was a real estate agent on a business trip from Hong Kong, came across Dixie's banner in the swimming pool window on her way to another church down the street. Pastor Shan's humility so inspired her that she decided at that moment to put an end to Dixie's struggles. A few days later, she introduced Pastor Shan to her husband, a prominent developer in Toronto. Almost overnight, they took care of everything. On the day they were formally evicted from their building, God provided them with a brand new home.

Dixie Baptist International Church now occupies three units at Dixie Park Centre, one for worship, one for children and youth ministry, and one for an office and library. The space had started out as bare concrete walls. Significant upgrades were needed – plumbing, electrical wiring, drywall, lights, painting, and carpet. Through the diligence of Pastor Shan and a small army of volunteer tradesmen, the space was ready within six weeks for use on Easter Sunday. Since then, over $20,000 has been given to the facility. Members have donated a new piano, an improved sound system, and have even been able to arrange lower bank funding to consolidate Dixie's debts.

I ask Pastor Shan what will happen when the church outgrows its new facility. Pastor Shan warns that they won't be looking for a bigger place in the future.

"Who cares about a church if it is filled with 1,000 blank faces?" he asks. "Why do we need a big church when we can have many small ones?

"The church is not the building," he says. "The church is its congregation, the energy of its congregation. The building is merely a shell to house the congregation. If you don't spend money on the building you will have more to spend on the ministry.

"That's the problem with churches today," Shan laments. "They are not churches but religious institutions that spend all their money on buildings and salaries."

"Why give to the church and pastor?" he asks. "Let the money do the work directly. You can build a church in Egypt for $3000!"

Looking up at the clock on the wall, I realize I am late to pick up my father at the airport. Pastor Shan passes on his best wishes and invites me to come back anytime. Walking out the door, I look back at Shan who is still smiling proudly.

"You can be a pastor too!" he reminds me again.

October 23rd, 2005

I pull into the first gas station and reach over to the passenger's seat to pull out a road map from the glove box. Marked by little crosses are the locations of all listed churches in the Greater Toronto Area. I was on my way to visit a recently converted Anglican church on the west side of Toronto when I missed the exit for the southbound 427. Instead, I found myself on Airport Road heading towards the airport. As expected, there are very few cars on the road this early on a Sunday morning. The only traffic is in the sky as planes flying dangerously low prepare to land. Circling the airport, I look over my shoulder at the empty office park below. The city begins to disappear below the horizon when a peculiar site catches my attention. A dense grid of cars parked in the middle of an otherwise empty lot. I exit onto a side road and find my way to the parking entrance of 272 Atwell Drive, where I am welcomed by a glowing sign that cuts through the haze of the airport air – Welcome to Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship.

This area of Etobicoke is shaded grey on my map, indicating it as an industrial zone. Aside from the Royal Woodbine Golf Club that sits curiously in the middle of it, Skyway Industrial Park is like any other industrial park. It has wide roads lined on both sides by mirror-glass office buildings and sprawling parking lots dotted with the occasional tree. Skyway Industrial Park is the most profitable office node in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) West market. It comprises 118 office buildings, over 10 million square feet of space, and 40,000 parking spots. The average leasing rate in Skyway Industrial Park is $14.67 per square foot. This includes 4.96 parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet of leased space. The average operating cost of a Class A building in Skyway Industrial Park is $13.75 per square foot. For Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (TACF), which leases 70,000 square feet of space and 300 parking spaces, this represents an annual operating budget of over two million dollars.

In the parking lot, I wait my turn as cars begin double-parking while others drive around in circles hoping for a better spot. Reserved parking is available only for the 'Worship Leader' and 'Teacher of the Month.' I decide to park in an empty parking lot across the street.

Walking toward the building, I meet a man setting up a food stand by the side of the road. Mr. Muthusamy, who runs a cart downtown on Queen Street during the week, sets up on Atwell Road every Sunday to offer hotdogs, pop, and blessings to visitors of Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship.

"My friend, do you believe in miracles?" he asks while flipping a hotdog.

Before I can answer, Mr. Muthusamy opens his mouth and proudly displays his gold fillings. He reminds me however, raising his finger and quoting the words of the Apostle Peter:

"One's faith is still of greater value than gold. It can withstand fire, but can be worn away by other means!"

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship began in the 1970's as a tiny church of under 50 members that met in rented locations throughout Toronto. As a member of the Vineyard Churches Movement, an Evangelical Christian organization with 850 churches worldwide, the church grew exponentially out of the basements of family homes. In March 1999, Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship was the site of a medically documented dental miracle. Mr. Muthusamy is one of three hundred people who claim to have received physical evidence of God's blessing when, one night during a revival service, all their amalgam dental fillings and porcelain crowns were 'supernaturally' changed to high-quality gold. The 'Golden Sword Prophecy', as it became known around the world, turned Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship into a global destination for believers seeking miracles.

Making my way to the entrance at the back of the building, a TACF mini-shuttle bus pulls into the drop-off portico where a group of elderly tourists exits. I follow closely behind them into the lobby. The receptionist greets us before leading the group into main hall for a tour of the building. With the reception desk vacant, I decide to welcome myself by taking an English version of their brochure. Looking nervously inside the cafe, I notice a plaque on the wall informing me that TACF is a 'proud distributor' of Starbucks coffee. The receptionist returns and hands me a copy of today's service leaflet. She asks if this is my first time visiting TACF. Holding my map and camera, I confess that I have just come from the airport.

"Thank the Lord!" she rejoices. "Have you come to receive 'The Blessing'?"

The 'Toronto Blessing', as it became known, is a term coined by

British press to describe the miracles that began in January 1994 at Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. At TACF Revival services, worshippers are said to exhibit unusual behaviours attributed to an encounter with God. The most common behaviours included hysterical laughter, physical spasms, falling to the floor, and speaking in tongues. Less common behaviours included manifestations resembling the roaring of lions and the barking of dogs. Since 1994, 3 to 4 million people from around the world have walked through the doors of TACF hoping to receive and take home the 'Blessing'. This transferable prayer is believed to have originated in Toronto and, it is said, has since been spread around the world by visitors to the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship.

In response to its growing international status, a new location close to the airport with hotels within walking distance was needed. In January 1995, the church found its first permanent home when it purchased the former 3,500 seat IBM convention centre to meet its growing needs. Today, a staff of over 100 volunteers manages an in-house book store, gift shop, café, and resource centre in addition to running praise nights, workshops, and a Sunday morning worship service that draw over 2,000 people every week. A daycare service is even offered inside a replica of Noah's Ark.

Standing behind a sea of waving arms I can only see the worship leader on a projection screen next to the stage. His words are drowned out by the singing and music amplified from the speaker above me. A projection room on the second floor mezzanine reminds me that this space was formerly used as a venue for corporate events. Other than a Christian themed set design and a large wooden crucifix hanging on the wall, there is little physical evidence that this is a church. Missing are the hard wooden pews, raised altar and gold collection trays. Instead, I am sitting comfortably in a padded seat, watching worship service on the big screen, and able to make my

offering with any major credit card.

After the service, I sign the guest book and pass through the gift shop to pick up a postcard 'Blessing'. Unsure about where to go next, I find a row of payphones in the lobby and begin flipping through the phone book. Going down the list of churches for the City of Etobicoke I begin marking little crosses for the missing addresses in the grey zones of my map.

CONCLUSION

Photographs are portraits of us as much as they are portraits of the world. They speak openly not only about their subjects but also very much about our attitude towards them. A good photograph does not critique its subject; rather, it challenges us to face our own bias towards it.

Throughout this investigation, I was forced to confront my own bias about the role of architecture in Christian worship. My belief in the ability and responsibility of architecture to inspire faith was challenged by these congregations that were renovating existing non-religious buildings into churches rather than turning to architects to design new ones. The adaptive reuse of secular buildings as places of worship represents a contradiction to the iconographic tradition of architecture that embodies and inspires faith through the design of physical structures. Just as architects and theologians have struggled for centuries with the problem of reconciling architecture with the intangibility of faith, I struggled as a photographer to present evidence that it is faith, in fact, which transcends architecture. Stories of economy, community and

ideology present a portrait of faith that I have captured through photographs. The banality of these physical spaces presents an image of Christianity that is as much about ceiling tiles, projector screens and parking lots as it is about worship, prayer and miracles.

Kew Beach United Church lets go of its archaic past; St-Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church holds an international design competition for a vision of its religious campus; Christian churches continue to search for an identity to present to the world. While the adaptive reuse of secular buildings as places of worship is a step for many congregations in transition, it represents an honest manifestation of what has always been fundamentally Christian – it is the assembly of a congregation and not the building that determines the structure of the church. For those congregations that have turned utilitarian secular buildings into backdrops for spiritually inspired acts of contemplation, fellowship and celebration, the distinction between architecture and faith is clear. The juxtaposition and reconciliation of the spiritual and physical needs of these congregations are documented in these photographs, evidence that the struggle between architecture and faith continues.

Edward Lee
2006

CATALOGUE



21

The Abbey

Howard Park United Church
Toronto | 2005



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Attwell Food

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005



Entrance from Attwell Drive

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005



View from Parking

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005

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Lobby

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005



Procession

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005



38

Sanctuary

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005



39

Vision Statement

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005



Boat Crew Room

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005

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Projection Room

Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship
Etobicoke | 2005



View from Parking

Carmel Logos Baptist Church
North York | 2005



Entrance

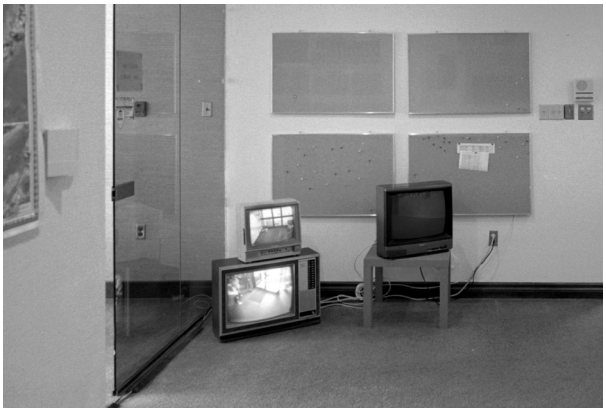
Carmel Logos Baptist Church
North York | 2005



49

Evangelistic Room

Carmel Logos Baptist Church
North York | 2005



Lobby

Carmel Logos Baptist Church
North York | 2005



Worship Room

Carmel Logos Baptist Church
North York | 2005



Alliance Atlantis Bayview Village

West Side Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005

65



Cinema 3

West Side Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



View from Skyway Avenue

Hour of Praise Assembly
Etobicoke | 2005



31

Entrance

Hour of Praise Assembly
Etobicoke | 2005



33

Lobby

West Toronto Church of God
North York | 2005



67

View from Wilson Avenue

West Toronto Church of God
North York | 2005



Sanctuary

West Toronto Church of God
North York | 2005



Wilson Avenue

West Toronto Church of God
North York | 2005



South Gateway Road

Dixie International Baptist Church
Mississauga | 2005



Third Floor Directory

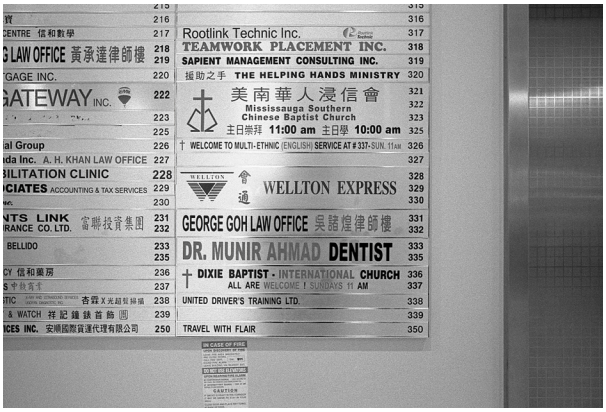
Dixie International Baptist Church
Mississauga | 2005



41

Unit 337

Dixie International Baptist Church
Mississauga | 2005



35

Directory

Dixie International Baptist Church
Mississauga | 2005



Third Floor Lobby

Dixie International Baptist Church
Mississauga | 2005

43



Worship Room

Dixie International Baptist Church
Mississauga | 2005

51



Worship Equipment

Dixie International Baptist Church
Mississauga | 2005



View from Parking

The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



View from Codeco Crescent

The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



26

Parking Entrance

The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005

27

Parking Garage

The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



47

Sanctuary

The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



53

Bible Study Rooms

The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005





Music Room

The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



55

Future Fellowship Room

The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



61

Praise Night

Toronto International Celebration Church
North York | 2005



View from Railside Road

Toronto International Celebration Church
North York | 2005



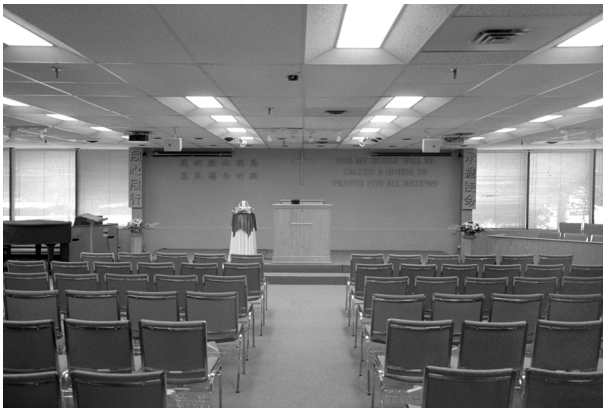
View from Scarsdale Road

Don Mills Baptist Church
North York | 2005



Fellowship Hall

Don Mills Baptist Church
North York | 2005



42

Chinese Worship Room

Don Mills Baptist Church
North York | 2005



English Worship Room

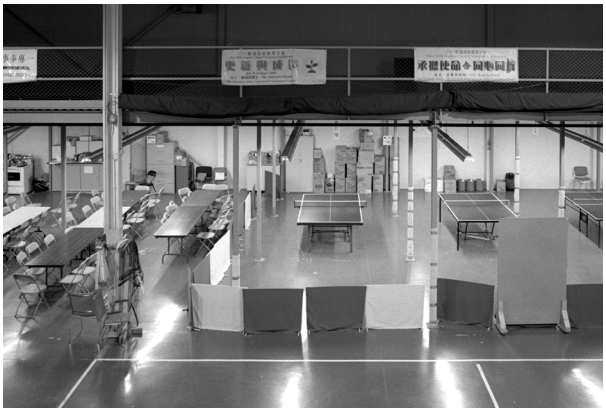
Don Mills Baptist Church
North York | 2005



57

Dance Hall

Don Mills Baptist Church
North York | 2005



Ping Pong Hall

Don Mills Baptist Church
North York | 2005



Activity Room

Don Mills Baptist Church
North York | 2005



Entrance from Fasken Drive

Korean Central Presbyterian Church
Etobicoke | 2005



Entrance from Sky Parx

Korean Central Presbyterian Church
Etobicoke | 2005



View from Parking

Korean Central Presbyterian Church
Etobicoke | 2005



Lobby

Korean Central Presbyterian Church
Etobicoke | 2005



Entrance from Yorkland Blvd

The Garden Church
North York | 2005



Dining Hall

The Garden Church
North York | 2005



Lobby

The Garden Church
North York | 2005



Entrance Portico

The Garden Church
North York | 2005



Congregation Bus

The Light Korean Presbyterian Church
Etobicoke | 2005



25

Entrance from Railside Road

Salvation Army Korean Church
North York | 2005

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Sanctuary

Salvation Army Korean Church
North York | 2005



View from McNicoll Avenue

Young Nak Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



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View from Parking

Young Nak Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005

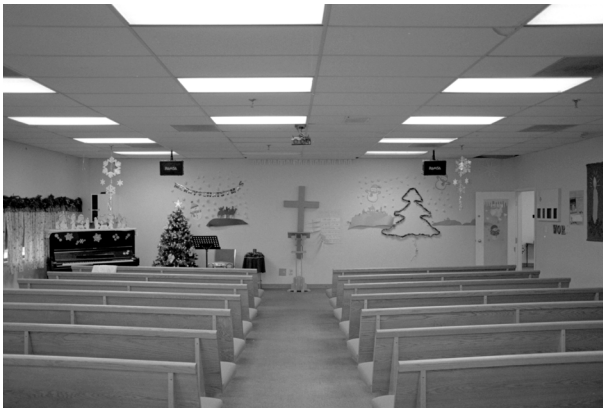




44

Kindergarten Chapel

Young Nak Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



45

Children's Chapel

Young Nak Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005



63

Gymnasium

Young Nak Presbyterian Church
North York | 2005

View from Don Mills Road

Assyrian Church of the East
North York | 2005



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Future Church

Assyrian Church of the East
Etobicoke | 2005



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Future Site

St-Mark's Coptic Orthodox Campus
Markam | 2005



DIRECTORY

1 Howard Park United Church | Amalgamated | Toronto

2 Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship | 272 Attwell Drive | Etobicoke

3 Carmel Logos Baptist Church | 225 Consumers Road | North York

4 Westside Presbyterian Church | 2901 Bayview Avenue | North York

5 Hour Of Praise Assembly | 151 Skyway Avenue | Etobicoke

6 West Toronto Church Of God | 720 Sheppard Avenue West | North York

7 Dixie International Baptist Church | 1550 South Gateway Road | Mississauga

8 The Philadelphia Presbyterian Church | 8 Codeco Court | North York

9 Toronto International Celebration Church | 190 Railside Road | North York

10 Don Mills Baptist Church | 99 Scarsdale Road | North York

11 Korean Central Presbyterian Church | 23 Fasken Drive | Etobicoke

12 The Garden Church | 260 Yorkland Boulevard | North York

13 The Light Presbyterian Church | 312 Rexdale Boulevard | Etobicoke

14 Salvation Army Community Church | 150 Railside Road | North York

15 Young Nak Presbyterian Church | 650 McNicoll Avenue | North York

16 Assyrian Church Of The East | 161 Skyway Avenue | Etobicoke

17 St-Mark's Coptic Orthodox Campus | Future development | Markham

NOTES

1 Berger, John, *Understanding a Photograph*, p.181

2 Green, H. Benedict, *A Liturgical Brief*, p.98

3 Hammond, Peter, *A Radical Approach to Church Architecture*, p.36

4 http://www.wikipedia.org

5 Turner, Harold W., *From Temple to Meeting House*, p.217

6 http://www.vatican.va

7 White, James F., *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture*, p.69

8 New York Intl. Bible Society, *The Holy Bible NIV*, Isaiah 66:1

9 New York Intl. Bible Society, *The Holy Bible NIV*, Acts 17:24

10 New York Intl Bible Society, *The Holy Bible NIV*, Acts 17:29

11 New York Intl. Bible Society, *The Holy Bible NIV*, 1 Corinthians 3:16

12 Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p.3

13 Hammond, Peter, *A Radical Approach to Church Architecture*, p.30

14 Davis, Charles, *Church Architecture and the Liturgy*, p.110

15 Turner, Harold W., *From Temple to Meeting House*, p.325

16 Halverson, Martin, *Religious Buildings for Today*, p.5

17 Green, H. Benedict, *A Liturgical Brief*, p.99

18 Davis, Charles, *Church Architecture and the Liturgy*, p.115

19 Niebuhr, Reinhold, *Essays in Applied Christianity*, p. 43

20 Hammond, Peter, *A Radical Approach to Church Architecture*, p.24

21 Turner, Harold W., *From Temple to Meeting House*, p.325

22 Wright, Lance, *Architectural Seriousness*, p.239

23 Schwarz, Rudolf, *The Church Incarnate*, p.198

24 Davis, Charles, *Church Architecture and the Liturgy*, p.109

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