



# *"What do you desire for your church home's heart?"*

*A guide to the condition and needs in our Bethany Sanctuary and a vision of future enhancements to our worship space.*



**Pictured is the original Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Bethany Church in Denver at 32nd and Gilpin.**

Our church was established in 1909 to serve the Northern European immigrants who worked in the smelters and ore processing facilities in Globeville.

As industries and needs changed the congregation diminished and church leadership decided to relocate. When Bethany was moved to its new home at 4500 E Hampden Avenue there were high hopes for renewal and future growth ...

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## Where have we been?

When a fire claimed our original sanctuary on Hampden Avenue in 1984, a determined congregation set about to rebuild, bigger and better. Some of the members who guided this effort still attend our church!

What rose on the grounds in 1987 was the "Beacon on the Hill", our current church home. It's cathedral sanctuary reflects the heritage of the Lutheran tradition, with massive beams and soaring space, which is capped by an amazing illuminated cupula. The architecture is reminiscent of the buildings found around the area where Martin Luther developed his reformed church.

We have incredible organ pipes that can pipe in the sound of a spring bird or shake the foundation with deep resonant sound. Unlike many modern churches which use chair seating, we have traditional pews made of fine woods that allow us to truly sit together during worship. Other craft touches which bring a sense of solid faith are our altar and chancel furnishings anchored by our marble baptismal font where we are reminded of our promise of community, love,

and protection by the acceptance into Christ's care that it represents.

All of these elements have been well and lovingly used for just under forty years. Think of the thousands of worship services, baptisms, weddings, funerals and other gatherings held in our worship space. It has been host to the installation of a synod bishop (Jim Gonia), media celebrities who joined us in worship, ecumenical events such as a visit from the Catholic archbishop of Denver, and even interfaith worship.

And we remember that there have been thousands of concerts presented in our sanctuary, with both local and national musicians performing a wide range of music. And each set up and break down of risers, staging, and moving furnishings have inevitably left their scratches and scrapes.

And as the need for alternative forms of worship participation developed Bethany slowly has grown its virtual presence. But even with this development, we are still using lighting and sound equipment that is very old news, and is failing us.



## Where are we now?

### Our technology is failing US ...

Our chancel lights are power hungry old technology, and do not provide sufficient illumination for the best worship experience. And many do not work any more.

Our sound system includes inadequate speakers, non working microphones, and sockets that no longer hold the plugs in place.

Our Sanctuary and its infrastructure are best viewed through two lenses. The first, and paramount, lens is seeing our sanctuary as a space that supports a welcoming, worshipful experience without distractions from the spiritual connection that our congregation seeks. As our “temple” the sanctuary should stand out as an effective place to connect with God.

The second lens focuses us on the sanctuary as a performance space. We embrace this as an ethic for many reasons, not the least of which is its potential for generating income to offset any refurbishment costs.

We are well known throughout the Denver metro for our performance hosting. Groups find Bethany very desirable from a performance standpoint due to its acoustics, location, very adequate parking and appearance.

So, examining the

Sanctuary and its infrastructure from this binocular lens, we clearly see the need for meaningful and high quality improvements.

Yes, Bethany sanctuary is a stunning setting for worship and an amazing venue for events. It also is looking tired, worn, and too well-loved. Our wonderful wooden furnishings and fabrics are stained, outdated, scratched and dented and unintentionally appear as neglect.

Note that these observations do not just include our pews. The altar and other liturgical fixtures are not at their shiny best. And the altar rail has taken so much abuse that is in truly sad shape. Attention to these elements can go a long way toward bringing our worship space back to a state of “United in Renewed Faith.”

As one of our pastors said, these appearances are

distracting. In subtle (and not so subtle) ways it can effect our congregation’s ability to achieve a worshipful state of mind.

And imagine the impression give to a new worshipper, or an attendee at an event who might be wondering if they should consider Bethany as a church home.

One not obvious but very important detail of our sanctuary needs has to do with our incredible “blue wall” behind the chancel. Those panes of blue glass are vulnerable to damage, particularly when large groups are installing or removing risers or other equipment. For a long time we have had no replacement panes left. Based on past damages it appears we are on borrowed time in this area, and having some replacement panes crafted is essential.

*As a congregation united in faith, guide us through this campaign, inspiring us to share our gifts of generosity. You bless us with these gifts, a church community, and a wondrous ministry.*

*With a firm foundation in place, guide us to wield these tools to build Bethany's future, as we reflect your image of bountiful love, kindness and strength.*



## Where can we go?

You might look at the audio visual booth in the back of the sanctuary and think, why do we need fancier equipment than this?

When the recent covid pandemic shut us down, Bethany Councils made a determination that our virtual presence needed immediate improvement if we were to survive as a worshipping community.

It became quickly apparent to those involved in this project that whatever needs for infrastructure we could afford to improve our virtual presence would also reap huge benefits when we were reassembled in person.

The original impetus was to improve our livestream by upgrading our cameras from parking lot security cameras (really) to high-definition maneuverable units.

With the funds available at that time, we were able to seriously improve our audio-visual recording and streaming gear. We also expanded and redesigned the AV control space to the booth you now see at the back of the sanctuary.

And we were able to do

a little bit in terms of microphones and equipment.

We subsequently found the funds to install the large screen at the front of the sanctuary so that all of us could see the baby being baptized. But that was the extent of our budget.

At the time we consulted with the national experts at Ford Audio-Visual and learned that what goes into those cameras and into the in-person congregation's senses is, of course, in large part determined by the light and sound produced within the space, not just the equipment.

Clear and sufficient sound coupled with adjustable and adequate lighting is every bit as important as comfortable seating when it comes to creating a great worship experience and eliminating distractions.

And we also understand that it is not just the social, psychological and spiritual factors being improved with the current proposed upgrade - there is a highly pragmatic motivation to do this as well.

Our old incandescent stage lighting is sorely in need

of upgrading to the vastly more cost-efficient LED technology that is now available. The US Department of Energy estimates electric cost savings in this kind of upgrade to be greater than 75%

So, you might consider this section of this guide to our needs as the "we see better, hear better, worship better and save lots of money!" And these improvements will certainly help us hold on to and attract new performance groups and events at Bethany.

One area of sanctuary improvement that might not occur to folks who are not actively involved in staging, producing, and guiding either worship or performance events is the use of and movement through our chancel space.

Factors such as traffic flow, visibility, and fluidity are very much present in the minds of our clergy and staff who are responsible for creating our marvelous worship experiences. And they are certainly at the front of the minds of anyone who is evaluating our space for performances, conferences, or large weddings.

## How does the condition of a worship space effect attendance?

Studies on church condition and attendance are well represented by this chart:

POSITIVE IMPACT ON ATTENDANCE	NEGATIVE IMPACT ON ATTENDANCE
Pews: Comfortable, clean, inviting	Uncomfortable, worn-out, uncomfortable
Floors: Well-maintained, safe, aesthetically pleasing	Dirty, slippery, unkempt, uneven coloring
Carpets: Clean, vibrant, enhances acoustic feel	Stained, old, distracting

An example of needs for improvement in "flow" during worship is situations where the chancel and its surrounding area are crowded with a combination of a piano, microphones, musicians, music stands, bell tables, director's stand, communion servers, a chamber orchestra at times and possibly stage sets. And multitudes of flowers during Lenten and Advent seasons!

And for performances that are done at Bethany, we see choruses and choirs with more than 100 souls, orchestra, conductor, and even dancers at times.

This is a reminder that when we evaluate needs for our amazing church home heart, we are looking through that dual lens mentioned earlier. We must consider it both as space for our primary purpose, meaningful and relevant worship, and as a source of income and service to our community in the form of performance groups who value

our sanctuary. We learned last year that one of our premier Lutheran college choirs performed in Denver. At *Montview Presbyterian Church*. Reportedly we could not accommodate their performance needs!

The concrete floors of the sanctuary are not just for walking on. They do contribute to the wonderful acoustic properties of our space. But they are worn, unevenly colored, with chipped edges on the steps. There are some wonderful options available for recoating the concrete. We anticipate this having some advantage also in preventing or minimizing some scraping damage that goes on during set up and break down of performance apparatus.

We love the Colorado sunlight that streams into our spaces and illuminates our stained glass, but at times the high windows on the west side of the sanctuary let in so much light that it becomes distracting.

Afternoon services or events in the space would benefit from motorized shades. And there are other needs than those highlighted here.


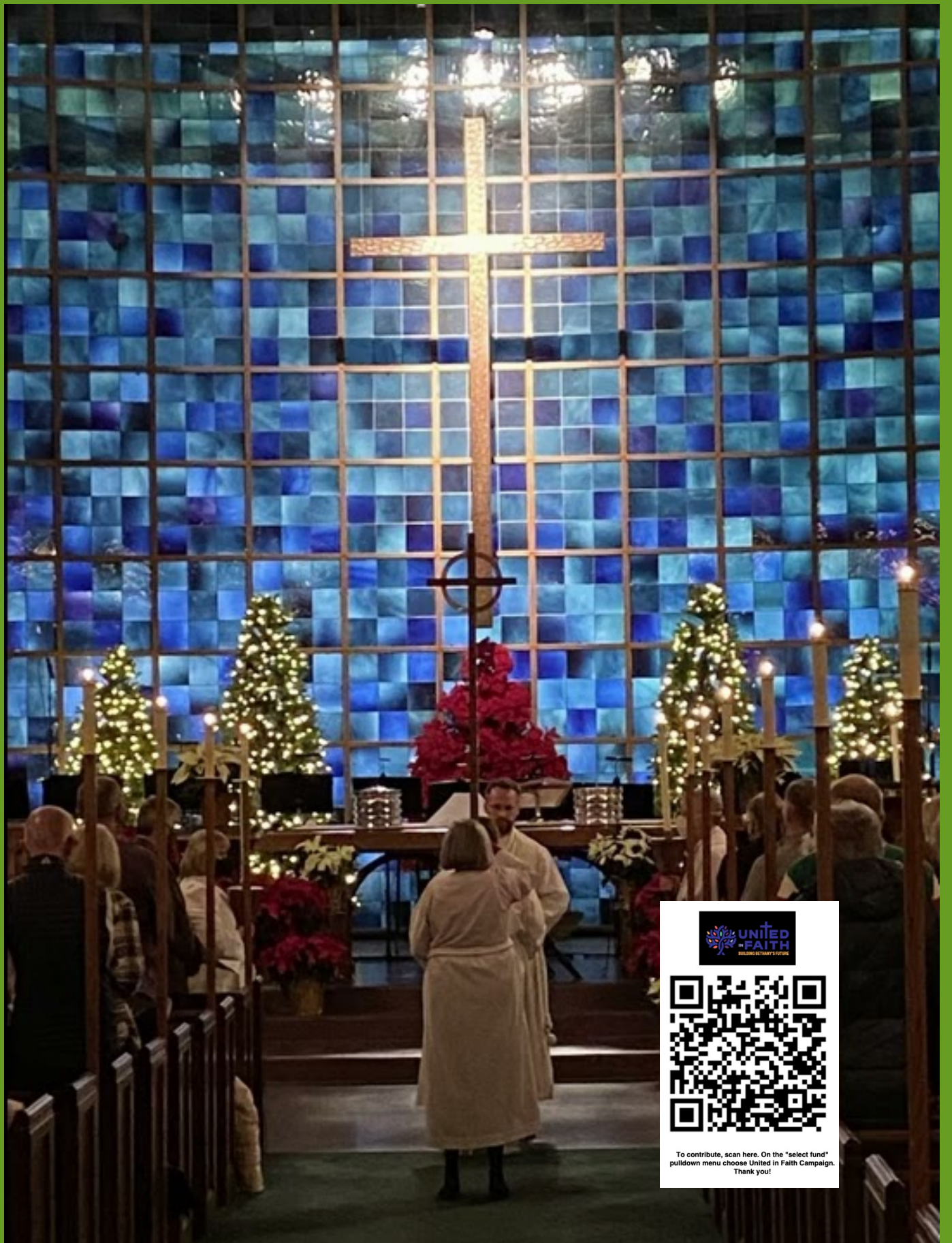
The story is told of the process followed by the architect of our amazing space. It is said he gathered his design team at the spot on the hill where the sanctuary now stands, handed out hymnals to the group and had them sing "A Mighty Fortress is our God." When we raise our eyes to the beams and the cupula, we can't help but see a reflection of the architecture of Martin Luther's home.

Luther brought renewal to the world. It is time to bring renewal to our beloved church home.

It is hoped that this guide to our sanctuary needs will assist you in discerning your role in this stewardship effort.



**"Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work." – 1 Chronicles 28:10**



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