



## St. Martins by the Lake as Sacred Space

*Dr. Suzanne Nordblom serves on our Worship Discernment Committee, and presented a forum on St. Martin's as Sacred Space in May as part of that work.*

**T**he very sacred space of St. Martin's rests on sacred space created by God from the beginning of time. As we make our Sunday morning pilgrimage to Church we leave our homes separating ourselves from our everyday mundane world and begin our journey from one state of being to another. As we travel to our destination, we are bathed in the heavenly light, which represents the guidance of God. We travel through the "Big Woods" that provide protection as we make our journey. We continue our journey and arrive at the sacred waters of Lake Minnetonka. They existed before the land and the trees, and symbolize the source of God and creative power. We are baptized in it. It stands for purity and without purity there is no access to the sacred. Lake Minnetonka is sacred, and as such creates the rupture in space that becomes our *axis mundi*, the place where we can pass from earth to heaven, and the place around which we build the image of our world, our *imago mundi*, the essence of our Anglican tradition. We arrive at St. Martin's to begin our transition from one state of being to the other and prepare ourselves for the presence of God.

We arrive at St. Martin's and walk into our sacred space. We are surrounded with new symbolic structures and become increasingly capable of entering into the experience of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It must be a space worthy of this experience. So as we enter we are almost ready to make our passage from earth to the heavenly house of God. We see the light of God beaming through the windows of the sanctuary. It is the light that allows us to experience the realm of heaven and the otherworldly presence of God. At the same time, we are surrounded by the sacred wood that panels the interior of our space. It is the color of the earth. It embraces us and protects us from the profane world. We look down the aisle, the nave of the church and notice that the building itself is in the shape of the cross, the ultimate symbol of Christianity. The arms of the cross embraces us as we enter into them. The aisle leads to the altar located at the intersection of the arms of the cross and the place where we

reenact the redemption of the Eucharist to make our transition complete. The great sanctuary of St. Martin's has been designed with the Anglican symbolism to accommodate the Divine Liturgy which we are about to enact. We have entered this very sacred space, surrounded by the symbolism of the Anglican tradition, ready to participate in the extraordinary experience of the Divine Liturgy.

There are certain things that we must do during our ritual. With each step of the ritual, we are more and more purified and become closer and closer to redemption. Our Clergy begin our liturgy with a procession and Hymn of acclamation to tell God that we are here and we are ready, and we tell Him this in an eager expression of praise. We hear the music and we sing. Rev Dave, Deacon Cindy and Lay personnel continue to lead us. In our Collect for Purity we ask God to cleanse our hearts and minds, and in our Collect of the Day we continue to praise His attributes and express our love for Him. We hear the music and sing our praise and admiration. We continue our Liturgy with The Lessons that serve to tell us the Word of God and cleanse our minds and purify our hearts. The Psalms are praises of joy, blessings and thanksgivings for God that assist us in communication. We hear the music and we sing! Through the reading of the Gospel we acknowledge the Good News and we stand to show how important this is to us. We hear the music and sing!

Rev. Dave's and Deacon Cindy's sermons address our spiritual truths and how they apply to our everyday lives. We repeat our Nicene Creed, our affirmation of faith; we pray, and thank God for hearing our prayers. We hear the music and sing! We share the Peace that the world cannot give, which can only come from mediation of Jesus Christ. And now we are ready for Holy Communion, the ultimate act. We say the Eucharistic Prayer that acknowledges the death and suffering of Jesus Christ upon the Cross, and repeat the Sanctus and Benedictus. They are words of adoration that acclaim the otherness and transcendence of God. We repeat the Lord's Prayer. We have been symbolically cleansed; free from structural sin we are ready for access to God and redemption. So we come together at the altar and repeat the words and actions of Jesus' last meal with his disciples. As we take the bread and wine we enter into the story of Jesus Christ and are redeemed. Of course, we hear the music and sing!

If we take a closer look at our Anglican Liturgy, two things are clear: 1) it is our space that shapes the liturgy, and 2) it is our music that moves our liturgy along. We process down the aisle, we sing; we pray, we sing; we speak the written word, we sing; we process to the altar to receive our Holy Communion, we sing; we recess, we sing. Music is exquisitely emotionally evocative. Never forget that music enhances our worship and allows powerful communication with God. It guides our transitional redemptive experience and allows us to put on Jesus Christ for a just a moment. It is our "hotline to God." What a wonderful and glorious gift we have to offer to God. We must not forget this as we move ahead in our discernment and the identification of our musical tradition at St. Martin's.