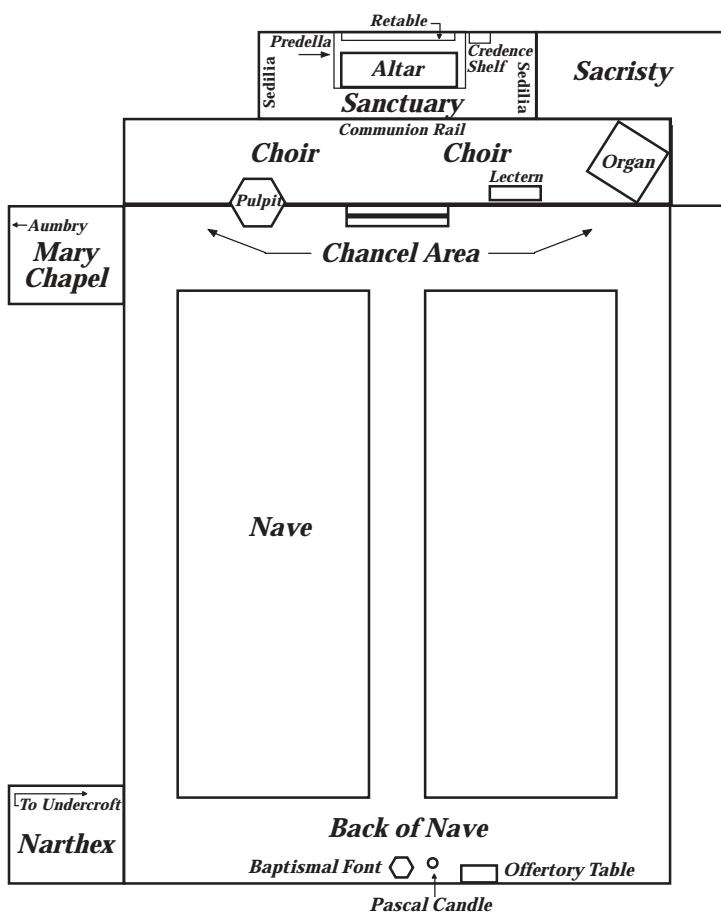


The Church

The building in which we worship and its furnishings

Through the centuries, Christians have made some decisions about their places of worship—how they should be designed and furnished. While no two church buildings are exactly alike, most are very similar in room design and furnishings: we always need a place to gather and we always need certain furnishings for the liturgy.



The Place

- **Narthex** is the room that serves as the entryway into the worship space. In other buildings, this room would be called a lobby or a vestibule. The narthex is a kind of “decompression chamber” for worship; it’s a place where worldly distractions are put aside and thoughts are directed toward the liturgy that is about to happen.
- **Nave** is the room where the believers gather for the liturgy. It is derived from the Latin word for ship. The nave has pews and stained glass windows depicting stories from the Bible or church history. Naves usually have a central aisle that leads toward the altar, as well as side aisles; all aisles provide passageways for liturgical processions.

- **Saint Mary Chapel** is dedicated to the Blessed Mother of Our Lord. Traditionally it is located to the left of the altar, and at All Souls the aumbry is located here. This private chapel can be used for confession and as the Altar of Repose during Holy Week. Mary Chapel and Lady Chapel (Our Lady) are shorthand references to the space.
- **Chancel** is an area in the worship space; it includes everything in front of the nave. In the chancel are spaces such as the choir and the sanctuary, and furnishing such as the altar, pulpit, and sedilia.
- **Sanctuary** is the name of the most prominent and most significant space in the building; it's where the altar is located. The word *sanctuary* means “holy place.”
- **Sacristy** is a room in the church that is very important to acolytes and other worship leaders. In some churches, there may be more than one sacristy, one for the altar guild and one for putting on of vestments. The sacristy is the place where the vestments, paraments, sacramental vessels, and linens are kept. This is where the altar guild prepares everything for the service, and where linens and sacred vessels are brought after each service for proper cleaning and storage.
- **Undercroft** is the large meeting and social hall under the nave.

The Furnishing of the Church

Christians have a need for several items as they participate in the liturgy. It is helpful to remember that Christian liturgy began at a table, with food, with cups and plates, and with places to sit.

- **Altar**—this is the most important object in the church. It is the place where we celebrate Holy Communion. It is the “table of the Lord.” The word altar means “high place.” In our church buildings, the altar is positioned so that all worshipers can see it, and it is constructed and adorned so that all may know that no other furnishing match its importance. An altar may take the shape of a table. The fact that Jesus was at a table when he instituted Holy Communion helps us understand why a table is still used in many of our churches.

Some altars are shaped as a long, oblong box. This is known as a “tomb altar.” During those early years of Christianity when believers were killed if they were caught at worship, the graves of those who died for the faith were regarded as holy places. Their tombs were used as altars, as places to celebrate Holy Communion.

- The top surface of every altar is called a **mensa**. It is quite common to find five crosses carved into the mensa: one in the middle and one at each corner. These five crosses remind us of the five wounds of Jesus on the cross—one in each hand and foot, and one in his side.
- Historically, the two ends of the altar are referred to as **horns**: the Epistle horn and the Gospel horn. It was once the custom to read the Epistle lesson from the right end of the altar and the Gospel from the left. Altars are still described as having an Epistle side (on the right as you

face the altar) and a Gospel side (on the left as you face the altar).

Predella—is the platform on which the altar stands.

Retable—is the shelf directly behind the altar on which are the cross and two groups of office candles, that is the Gospel candles and the Epistle candles.

Communion Rail—Sometimes called the altar rail, it is the place where the people kneel or stand to receive communion.

- **Candles**—at least two candles are on or beside every altar. They are called the communion candles. The candles behind the altar on the retable are called the office candles. Candles remind us of Jesus the Light of the World and of those dangerous days when Christians had to huddle in secret around a dimly lighted table or tomb to celebrate Holy Communion.

- **Altar Cloths**—two linens are on the altar at all times: ***Cerecloth*** (SAIR-cloth), placed directly upon the mensa, and

Fair Linen, placed on top of the cerecloth, its end covering the sides of the altar

During the celebration of Holy Communion, these linens are also used at the altar:

Corporal, a square cloth, placed in the middle of the mensa, on which the sacramental vessels are set

Pall, a small, stiff, linen-covered square that is set upon the chalice (communion cup)

Purificators, small linen napkins used to cleanse the chalice

Chalice Veil, a covering for the chalice and pall

Burse, a fabric covered “envelope” for the corporal

Paraments

These are fabric coverings for the front of the altar, pulpit, and lectern. Their color is determined by the season or day of the church year.

Sacramental Vessels

These are the “dinner pieces” used to serve the Lord’s Supper:

Chalice (CHALus), the metal or ceramic cup that holds the wine to be distributed during communion.

Paten, the plate that holds the bread to be distributed during communion.

Ciborium (sih-BOR-ee-um), looks like a chalice, although it has a lid; contains wafers for Holy Communion. At All Souls, it holds the reserved sacrament and is placed in the Aumbry.

Host Box, a container used to store communion wafers. It is this box which contains the unconsecrated bread, and may be brought to the altar by the oblationers.

Cruet, small pitchers used for pouring wine and water. All Souls uses glass cruets at communion. A silver cruet with consecrated wine is placed in the aumbry after Communion.

Flagon, a large pitcher used for pouring wine into the chalice. It may be brought to the altar by the oblationers.

Lavabo (lah-VAH-boe), a small basin used to cleanse the fingers of the presiding clergy.

Other Furnishings

Missal Stand—This book holder rests on the mensa and holds the altar book (missal), the clergy's edition.

Baptismal Font—This stand, usually made of stone and literally meaning “spring of water”, holds the large vessel containing the water that is used for the Sacrament of Baptism. It is also the container for holy water to be used when crossing oneself upon entering the nave.

Paschal Candle—This tall, white candle stands in a holder next to the Baptismal Font and is a symbol of Easter, of baptism, and of the new life. It is lighted for each baptism. From the Vigil of Easter until Pentecost it stands lighted near the Gospel end of the Chancel.

Sedilia (suh DEE-lee-yah) —It is customary to provide seating for the celebrant, the one who leads the liturgy as the representative of Christ. The sedilia is the name of such seating, and usually includes space for two additional worship leaders. The celebrant is often seated in the middle space of the sedilia. At All Souls there are two sedilias. The Gospel side sedilia contains the Bishop's Chair.

Credence Shelf—Situated near the altar, it holds the sacramental vessels and linens until they are brought to the altar.

Offertory Table—A small table, set close to the middle aisle in the back of the nave, which holds the bread and wine until they are brought forward to the altar during the Offertory.

Pulpit—This is the “place of the Word,” where the sermon or homily is preached. It is usually elevated to symbolize the importance of the Word.

Lectern—This furnishing is placed in the chancel opposite the pulpit and used for reading Lessons.

Lectinary—This is a book containing the readings assigned for each Sunday and holy day of the church year. It rests on the lectern.

Thurible—This vessel holds the burning incense. Sometimes it is called a *censer*. A special kind of charcoal is used in this vessel to burn incense. The one who carries the thurible is called the *thurifer*.

Incense Boat—This vessel holds the incense until it is spooned into the thurible. It is sometimes carried by a younger server, called the boat bearer, who walks with the thurifer in the procession.

Processional Cross—This is a special cross on a tall staff so that all may see and acknowledge the cross when it is carried in procession. The one who carries this cross is called the *Crucifer*. (See the description of the *Crucifer position*.) At All Souls, there are two crosses of “Latin” form used at different times in the service. There is a third cross or circular outline, the Canterbury cross, carried in procession preceding the clergy. (See the description of the *Ministers’ Cross position*.)

Processional Torches—These are special candles on tall staffs that accompany and illuminate the processional cross and the Gospel book in procession. Those who carry such candle are called *acolytes or torch bearers*. Torches are always carried in pairs.

Processional Banner—This is a decorative fabric attached to a tall staff carried in festival processions. Bannerbearer is the title for the one carrying this item in a procession.

Sanctuary Party—the group inside the sanctuary, that is the celebrant, assisting priests, deacons and other servers inside the communion rail.

Aumbry—The aumbry is a small cupboard in the chancel wall or in the sacristy in which consecrated bread and wine are kept. At All Souls it is located in the Mary Chapel.

Lucifer—This basic tool for lighting and extinguishing candles incorporates an adjustable wick and a “bell” extinguisher.



Contents of A Handbook for Servers

Booklet #1—General Information

Booklet #2—The Church

Booklet #3—The Service

Booklet #4—Processions

Booklet #5—Acolyte

Booklet #6—Crucifer

Booklet #7—Gospel Book

Booklet #8—Ministers' Cross

Booklet #9—Thurifer

Prepared by Barry E. Huber and Mike McGee

Published December 1998

Revised September 2004

*Please direct any questions to Paul Carter,
Acolyte Guild chair,
at 202/332-0899*