

Art, Architecture and Anecdotes

of the Dartmouth Bible Church



North Dartmouth, Massachusetts

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Senior Pastor

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These pictures are from my observation, memory and opinion. Protestant (and especially evangelical) building aesthetics tend to be very spartan, intentionally utilitarian and cost-conscious. Because the body of Dartmouth Bible Church had so long to dwell on design—ten years--plus our hiring of an outstanding architect (Peter Brown, who as it happened was lead architect on the SMU campus design thirty years before though we did not know this at the time) we managed a few design niceties originally, and have added a few others later... Note: We have no confusion that God is somehow contained in a “space”, in a building or in any other way. But I delight in the efforts of all kinds of people who occasionally bring talent and their art to the place of our community. They do so to the glory of God and because they love His people and their “space”.



This painting, done in 1991 by the late Frank (Francisco) Barboza shows our original little building, completed in 1968 and in itself a great undertaking of faith. Frank and wife Shirley (still our church Clerk) were part of the church at that time. Frank and Shirley gave me this picture not long before he went home to be with the Lord. It has been in my attic for many years and is at DBC now.



These bookcases in my old office were artfully crafted by carpenter Paul Matson, for me. He did not charge for labor, but only for materials. He still lives in Carver at Camp Clear.

At one point DBC owned two of these. We donated one to Pacific Union Congregational Church who owned one and wanted two, to use in a two-pulpit front end, which they have still.

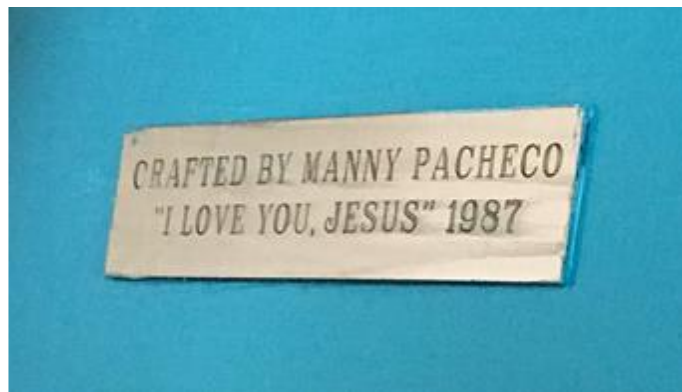


As near as I can tell, this was DBC's first pulpit and was a gift of a church in Westport which no longer had use for it. It was replaced early in DBC's history by our current oak pulpit when the first building was completed in 1968. From time to time I am encouraged to get rid of these old pulpits in favor of a Plexiglas replacement or no pulpit at all, in the name of hipness. Thus far I have resisted.



This classroom used to be very plainly, the back four pews of the old sanctuary (no wall). Rev. Bill Stack, a talented carpenter and now once again (2017) pastor of Haven Baptist Church in New Bedford, built this excellent classroom when he was an elder in DBC (2008-2016). It serves us well now.

This bookshelf, now stuck in a corner in the old building and painted many times—was built and donated by Manny Pacheco to DBC in 1987.



He was part of our church from 1984 until about 1998. He was a P.O.W. from the Second World War (captured in the Battle of the Bulge on the Elsenborn Ridge), marched into Germany and cruelly incarcerated in Bad Orb concentration camp,

until release on April 10th 1945. He weighed 78 pounds on that day. We miss Manny and Julie.



DBC began dreaming of an “addition” in the late 1970s and we built this lovely new building in 1999 taking occupancy with our first worship service on December 12th. This is the exterior of the worship team space with many windows. (The wood shakes say, “this is New England”). It is no European cathedral, but it is for DBC a legacy of stepping out in faith and trusting God to fulfill a vision for a growing ministry. DBC became debt-free of the construction loan in just eight years. God is good. All the time. (It only took one summer of occupancy with no air conditioning to trust God to provide the six compressor-ed central A/C system in the spring of 2001.)



Coastal Restoration foreman "T.C." (Tom Collins) told me "connecting an old building to a new building is the hardest part of the job." He was given prerogative to figure the problem out, and solve it. We were all pretty pleased. Mid-level on the elevator is here, which was originally outside, opening onto a long concrete ramp.

Lynn Brown (DBC Secretary)
did this stenciling in the old
foyer.



There was a time when stenciling was very popular. Lynn also did the stenciling and painting in the old kitchen, the cabinets of which were donated by the late Don Rodrigues in memory of his mother.





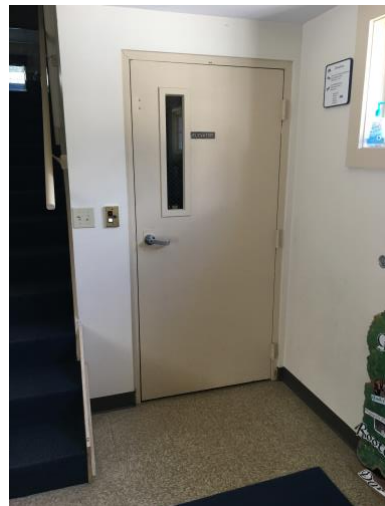
This area in the old “upstairs” was originally the pulpit area. It is now a hallway with these nice closets that Mike Holmes recently constructed for us. Mike is our part-time maintenance person, and is also at this time an elder-in-training. He is a retired US Coast Guard Captain, commander of the USS Bibb, and helicopter pilot. We are glad to have Mike and his family with us! This space has seen many preachers come and go. It also used to have a “pocket” door from the pastor’s office to the pulpit.



For some reason this space “between the buildings” is a favorite place for people. Mike Holmes installed this fence and gate and the space is used for a children’s play area in nice weather and there are sometimes playground items available.



Recently we renovated the “old building” and the downstairs has come to be a nice living room space for youth events, Sunday School and adult small groups too. This layout was former Youth & Christian Education Director (2009-1017) Natasha Ferro’s brainchild. She did a nice job.



In 1993 we knew we would eventually build a new building. We hired architect Dan Lewis from Southborough to design an elevator enclosure for us, which would integrate into any new building design. Bob Graham and then-Associate Pastor Lou Parascand constructed this great 3-stop elevator for us in the summer and fall of 1993.

(Another five years would pass before we broke ground for the new building). The “elevator” and “access” boards

in Boston allowed us to obtain variances for construction because we had been hand-carrying wheelchair bound double amputee Nancy Graham into and out of the building and up and down two flights of stairs by hand for years. Even bureaucracies find some common sense sometimes! We have benefited from Bob’s and Lou’s hard labor for many years now!

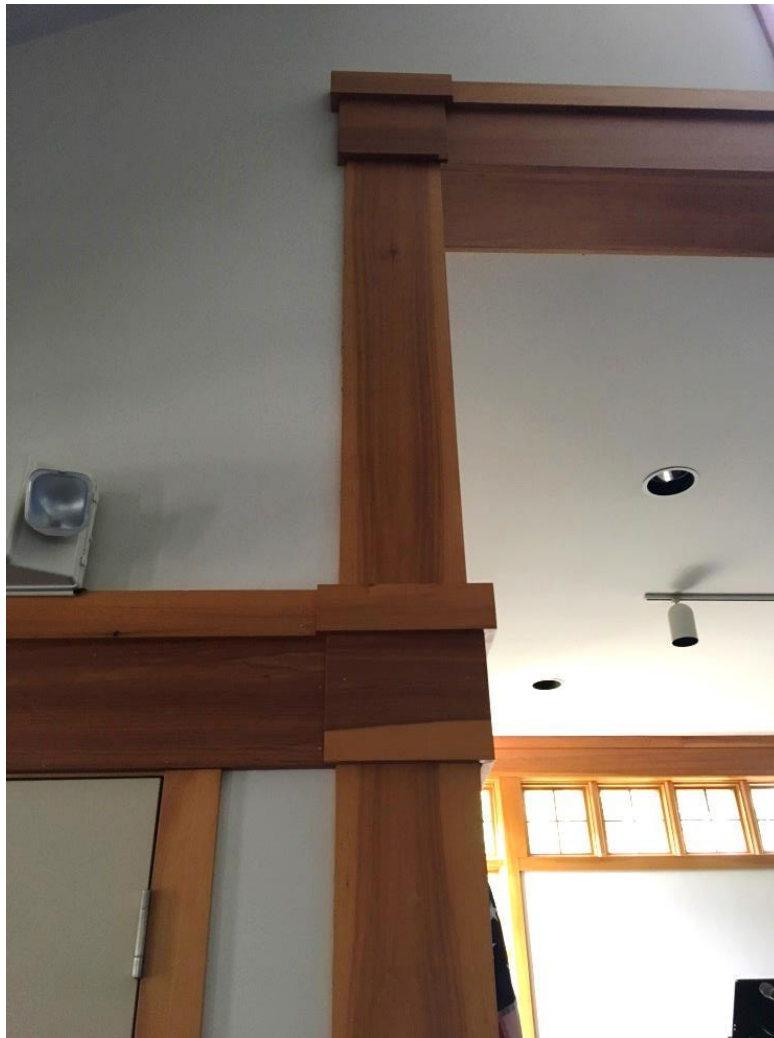
Bob Graham crafted this headpiece for over the exterior door to the elevator:



Based on the sign at Rumney Bible Conference in New Hampshire, Bob Graham also, and son Craig, drew up and built this sign for DBC. Later, Matthew Whitlow electrified it for us as part of his Eagle Scout service project. It has always been something simple and elegant that all are proud of. Church member Deb Ashworth plants greenery each year.



Before DBC came to 52 Morton Avenue, the land on which there is now our building had a pond. Contractor Phil Cronin and his construction architect, the late Jay McMichael (who sadly passed away at 56 in June 2014), discovered terrible “dirt”. All of what you see in this picture had to be removed and replaced with “buildable fill.” This is the less-artsy real-world part of “architecture.”

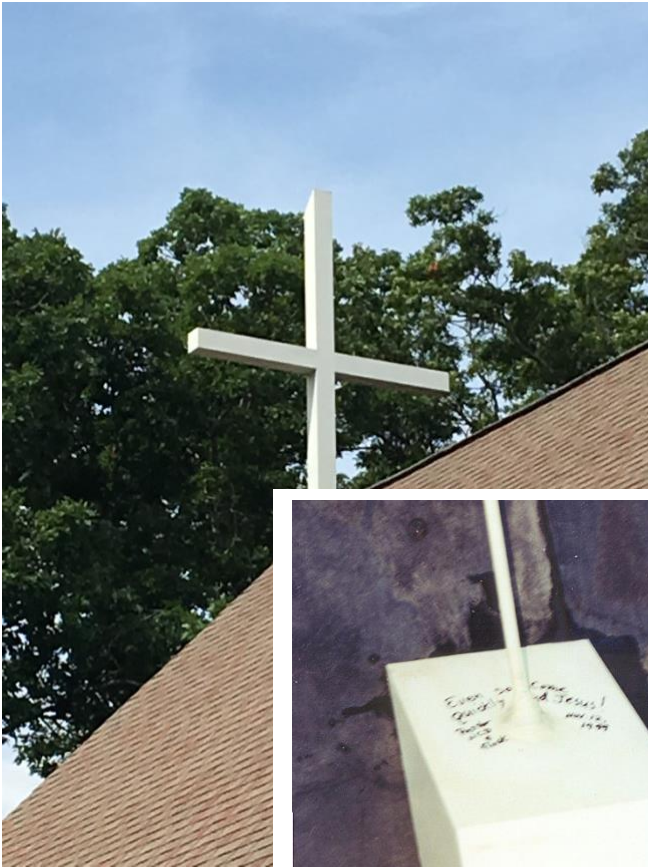


Coastal’s finish carpenter Joel Pontz envisioned lots of warm wood, with interesting detail features. We were not disappointed. (I love the grain colors and flow). At that time CR owner Phil Cronin empowered Joel to make detail design decisions on interior projects. On the October 1998

day of receiving construction bids at architect Peter Brown's office in Yarmouthport, as it became quickly obvious we would be accepting Coastal Restoration's bid, Peter invited me to stop by Christ Chapel where Joel was finishing up a project. He was the first Coastal employee I met and a true artisan. It was a joy to work with him.



Everyone always loves the big windows that open onto lovely trees, sunshine and blue sky. This was the vision of architect Peter Brown and finish carpenter Joel Pontz. What is not known is that when the large windows arrived, it was soon discovered by foreman Tom Collins (T.C.) that the angle of the top windows did not conform to the angle of the roofline. T.C. gave us two options, a. wait 6 more weeks for a re-order of the windows; b. use this shipment and receive one more room of sheet-rocking and ceiling installation at no additional charge. We took the latter and no one ever even notices the incongruity and we have even been told that the unmatched angles subtly suggest an upward arrow!



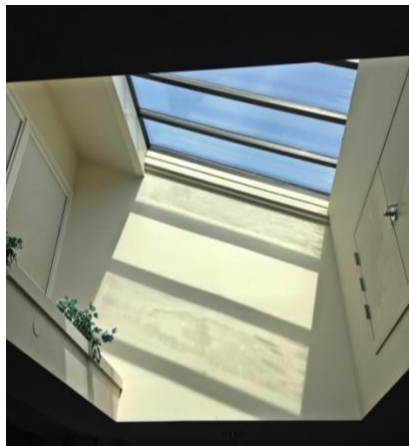
As construction neared completion and the cross was placed on the building, Bob Whitlow and I wrote these words on the top of the cross: "Even So Come Quickly Lord Jesus" on November 12th 1999. The spike in the middle of the cross is a lightning rod.



This is our ROCK. Coastal was “all done” removing stones and boulders from our site. This one came from right under what is now where our grand piano is. Coastal placed it here, to stay. In 2002 Bob Bouley said, “Let’s get a stone-cutter to put a verse on it”, and contributed the money. I chose the verse: First Corinthians 10:4, “and the rock was Christ.” Recently, I imagined ROCK to stand for what is our vision: **R**edemption, **O**thers, **C**hristian education, **K**ingdom—the four priorities of our church.



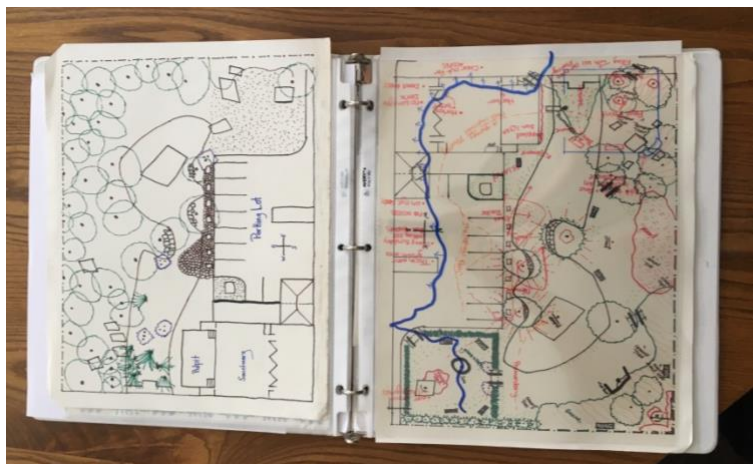
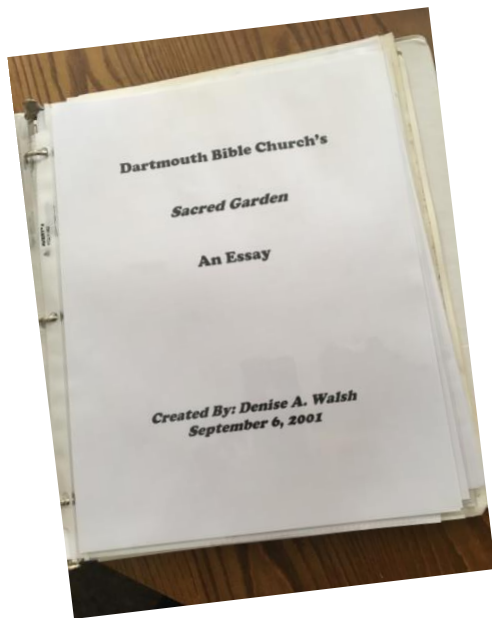
Another favorite design feature of our church is the canopy “out back”. Or is it “out front?” I never know what is the back and what is the front. Our address is 52 Morton Avenue, suggesting Morton Avenue is the front. But all access on Sundays comes through this canopy, from the parking lot—off Delano Street. It hints of our being “strangers in a strange land” or as the writer to the Hebrews put it: “and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13b). The canopy almost “wasn’t”. It was one of the design features targeted for deletion from construction to save costs. No one has ever regretted keeping this beautifully lined feature. During construction I was intrigued that a full and heavy foundation was laid in under this canopy structure. It will not be moved!



Everybody loves the skylight. It is yet another design feature we might easily have deleted during the actual construction phase in 1999 to save money. I credit our building committee chairperson Barbara Gahan, who said, "Can't we keep this this?" We all agreed and it has been a blessing ever since.



It doesn't look like much today but our drainage "pond" is a clever innovation. The idea is that the entire property, including the two buildings "drain" to this area. The grading of the property during construction and the underground drainage system—which is extensive—ensured this. Twice in 18 years I have seen this "pond" briefly filled during heavy rains. In 2001, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth senior Denise Walsh completed a senior project for Professor Jim Sears (UMD retired 2002) that would see this area beautified and improved into a garden, while retaining its engineering mission. Thus far, we have not seen fit to engage Denise's vision. (Professor Sears lived across Delano Street from DBC in the ante-bellum blue house, which he had moved intact from New Bedford.)





Speaking of Professor Sears, long before we began work on a new building he offered us this tree, from his own yard. His home (on Delano Street) is an 1850-vintage dwelling that was originally in New Bedford and moved to this location. In adding on to his house, Professor Sears needed to move and re-plant this ginkgo tree. He asked me if DBC would like it. I said yes and Sears hired a backhoe to place it where it is today. Every year its leaves all turn yellow at once almost and



fall to the ground in about 48 hours. Professor Sears said the ginkgo itself is a very ancient species of tree. He was a botanist and retired biology professor. And speaking of Delano Street it has always given me cause to wonder if this intersection of Delano and Morton does not hint of two Plymouth pilgrims meeting up here in the wild. Phillip de la Noye and a pilgrim named Morton came to Plymouth early in its history. De la Noye was a believer and lived a long life. Morton, I am unsure of except that I feel Morton Avenue bears his name and the section of town in

which our church lies was called Morton Park in the late 19th century. It is fun that the site of our church brings together two very early colonists. Delano also points to the Delano family of Fairhaven of which FDR was a member.

This all of course has nothing to do with “Art or Architecture” of our church. But it is an interesting “anecdote” to ponder. We live in a place where the nation’s earliest Christians (English though they be) wandered, explored, met up with the Wampanoag, hiked, hunted, fished, died, married, had children, built thatched roof houses, managed their church covenant, and never went back to England. I often imagine those same pilgrims wandering through North Dartmouth. The last Mayflower pilgrim, John Cooke, who lived in our area, died in 1695 at 88 in Dartmouth (which at that time included Fairhaven, where his bones still presumably lie). Of course before too long they began to build homes here. Russell’s Garrison in Padanaram is still seen for its foundation from King Philip’s War (1675-76). I easily imagine those Christians, sporting a Geneva Bible, wandering through the woods near our church, going to see Massasoit.

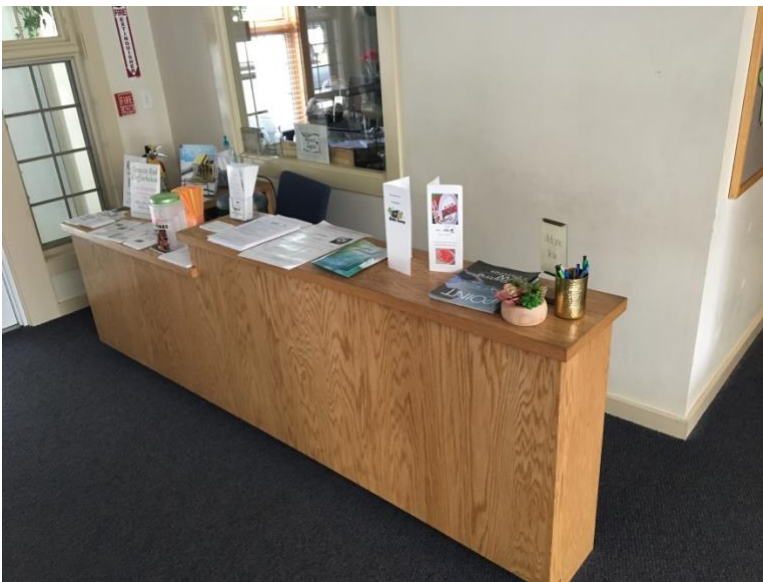




Our baptistery is hidden under the drum kit. The fiberglass unit with pump and heater is below floor level, a clever design by Peter Brown and Coastal Restoration. When the baptistery was delivered during construction the workmen did not know what it was and asked me, "Why are you putting a Jacuzzi in the front of the church?" After each baptism service I write the names of the baptized on the underside of one of the four large covers. To date, about 110 people since construction in 1999.



The steps and platform face were simple carpet covering (and starting to become worn) until 2014 when we hired finish carpenter Ed Charette, then attending DBC, to replace with a nice wood design—which was, to me, essentially completing the original design.



The tops and steps match the pulpit and communion table and the faces match the existing darker wood trim in the sanctuary. I look at this step design every Sunday and it makes me happy! Ed did two other wonderful jobs for us:

- This welcome desk in the foyer
- and the re-design of the pastor's office. Ed deconstructed all the SJBailey book cases and re-fashioned them into a corner desk after my own design.



This was an exceptionally creative and cost-effective way to redo the office and provide more workspace and shelving than we had originally.



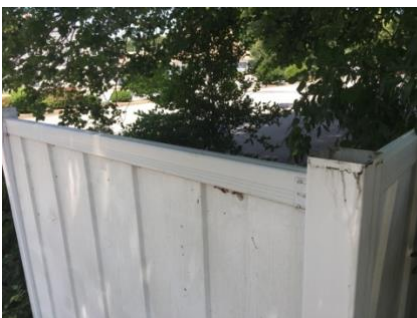
This picture displays three pieces of DBCs design resourcefulness. The pew is the last remaining of the original pews from the old sanctuary. These were purchased by the late Amy Carter and given to DBC on the occasion of opening the first building in 1968. This last vestige of those days is used every Sunday and reminds of an earlier day. The missions banner was the creation of member Valorie Schofield with the Bailey family helping. The electric missions map is the work of DBC member Michael Gemaly of New Bedford.



Our Library and Conference Room were my brainchild and I had to withstand pressure to make this room an additional Nursery.



Max and Tuesday Bethoney offered to paint the mural in our Nursery. We have loved it ever since!



The little white two-sided corner fence on the S.E. corner of our property was the gift of one-time DBC attender Alicia Sullivan who was with us for just a couple of years. She was once married to the “Chief of the Boat” on the U.S.S. Enterprise, the top enlisted man on the aircraft carrier. She said she was home alone most of the time!

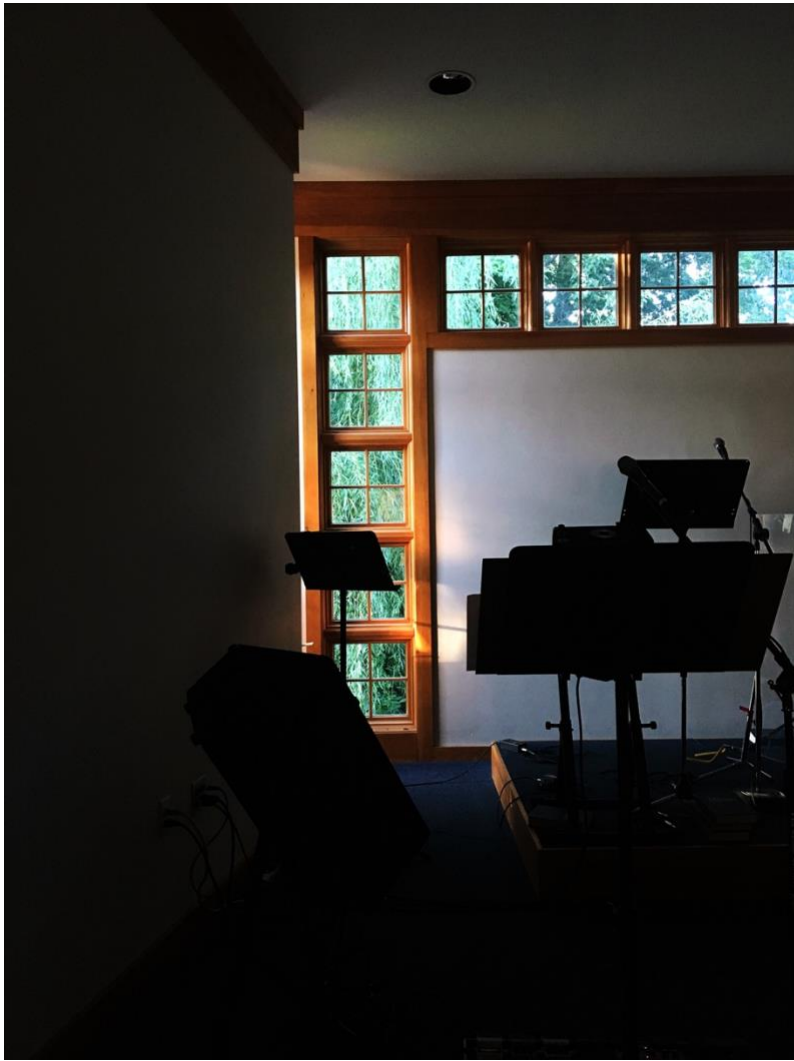
This pottery item was the gift of missionary Martha Gushee to me a number of years ago. We are given lots of little momentos and special gifts by missionaries but this one is special because it is from the Navajo reservation near her. It is displayed in my office.



A parking lot hardly seems like something worth noticing... But we parked in mud, on uneven ground, on ice, in water puddles for many years. When Coastal finished this aspect of our

property I was happy and it was actually very aesthetically pleasing—two levels, a nice slope down—I would love to see a white gazebo erected over the short walkway between the two levels--many boulders surrounding (they're all covered with foliage now), two beautiful lighting poles, curbing and close-in handicapped access. Also all the town-required plantings which really look nice now, 18 years later. I am thankful for this wonderful enhancement of 64 parking spaces.

I love what light does in our building, Peter Brown being very mindful of this aspect. Over the years I have discovered more and more examples. Here are a few pictures that I caught at good moments. Here is what I call “the front end.”



The late afternoon sunlight on the warm wood...

Another late afternoon sun picture, but coming through one of Tom Marginson's stained glass gifts... Again, the sun on wood and the shadows enchant me, just a little. I am so weary of warehouse- like evangelical churches, that SOME design and even unanticipated discoveries encourage me.





No credit to us, Peter Brown or Coastal, the sunset recently just hit me right. The profile of our whole facility seems “right” to me. I wonder if our people even ever look up to see what presents itself...



Here there are four kinds of light—direct late afternoon sun, muted skylight blue, a little bit of stained glass bleed-through under the kitchen counter and the plain daylight-in-dark-sanctuary-effect. I love them all here, in one shot.



As the light comes through the *hidden* side windows in the worship area, it complements the glow of the main front windows.

And one more time, the large windows and what everyone except the preacher can see every Lord's Day.



No more delay—here are retired New Bedford District Fire Chief Tom Marginson’s lovely four gifts to DBC, done two at a time...



Few things are so “easy on the eyes” as Tom’s creations. It harkens to the ancient sacred glass makers of Europe. One example:

The Good Samaritan from Chartres Cathedral, France.

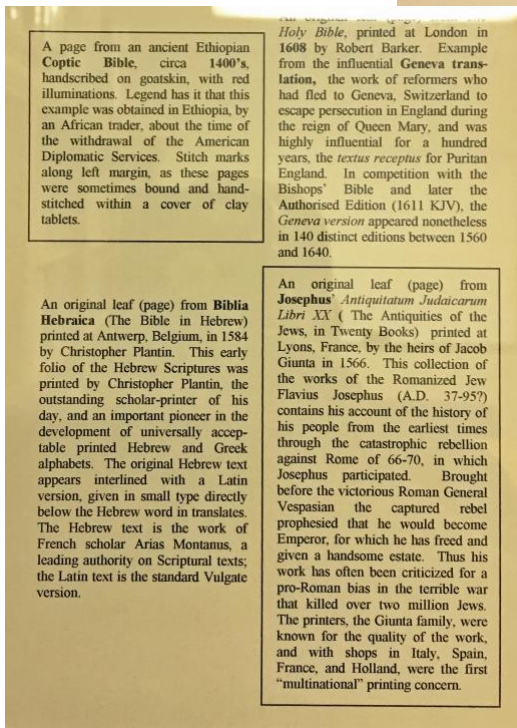
c. 1200 A.D.





Alison Sherman was a server at a little café near Westport Harbor called Ellie's Place, now closed. Dr. Dean Schmidlin (Electrical Engineering, UMD), Brendan Gahan and many others of us spent years enjoying breakfast there. Alison was also a U.Mass.Dartmouth art student, and she displayed some of her work in Ellie's. As our merger with Elim Baptist Church took place in 1991, and we knew and planned to construct a new facility, Dean Schmidlin commissioned Alison to draw each of Elim Baptist Church (Middle Street in New Bedford and constructed in the 1880s) and the Dartmouth Bible Church (1968) for future display in the new building. This would be a reminder of the unity and hard work of two congregations who each loved their own communities, to bring them together in "something new." These pictures were stored in my old office from 1993 until 2000 when we took occupancy of the new building and happily hung them in the new foyer where they still are. I continue to appreciate Alison's unique drawing style and Dean's gift to us all, and his forward-looking insight, foreseeing a good new day for the two churches.

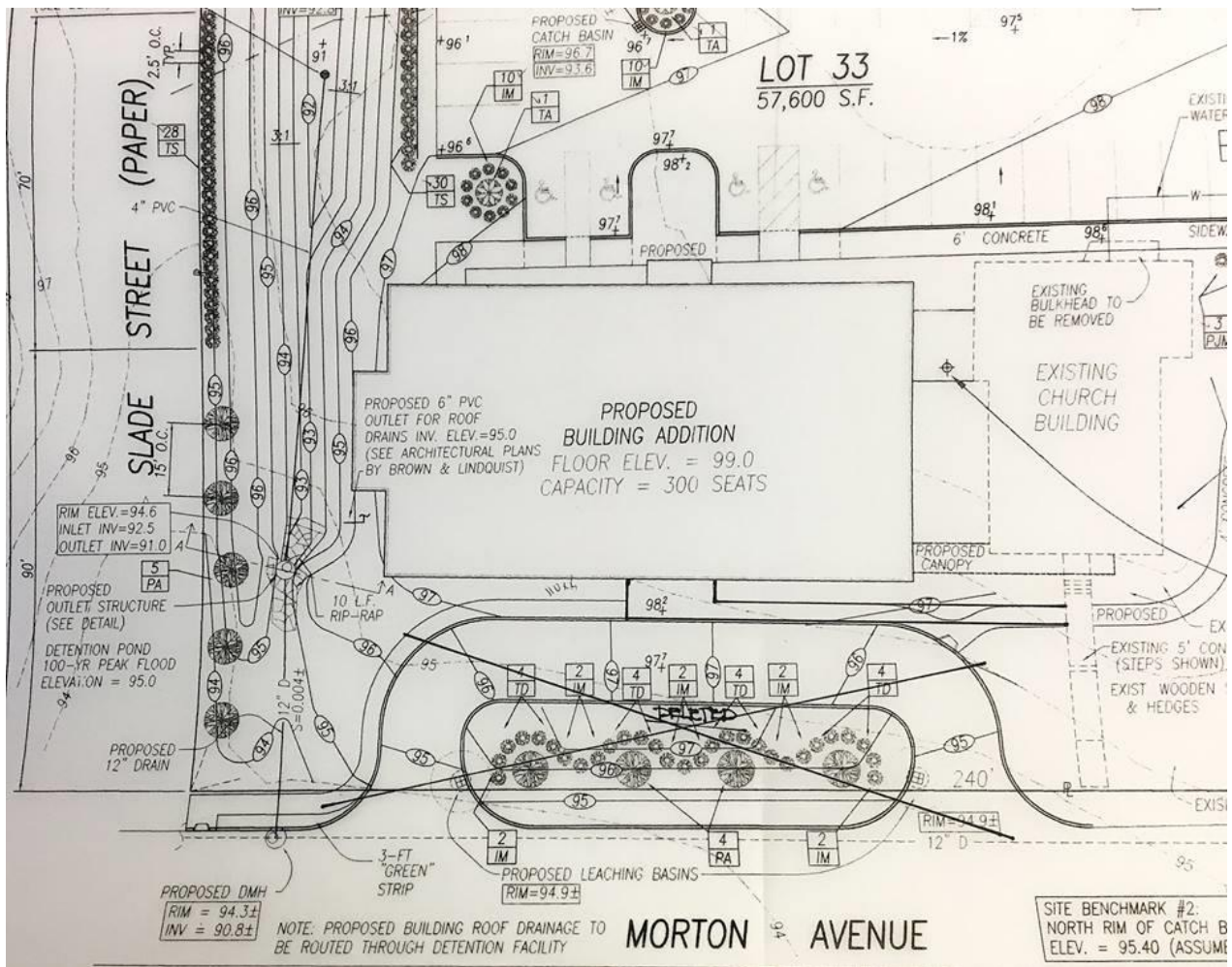
I purchased these documents a number of years ago from a rare documents dealer in Rhode Island. I always intended them for display in a Library. They are each unique!



These (and a key that I wrote up) include a page from a 15th century Ethiopian Coptic Bible (just having ANYTHING which predates the discovery of the New World is pretty cool don't you think?); a page from a 1608 Geneva Bible, which was the Bible used by the Pilgrims in Plymouth;

an original page from a 1584 Hebrew Bible printed in Antwerp, Belgium; a page from a 1566 French copy (from Lyons) of Josephus' "The Antiquities of the Jews".

In high school and college I took four full years of "mechanical and architectural" drawing. I was in high school when DBC's original building was built from "blue prints." By 1998 architecture had evolved to electronic drafting and computer assisted design. This drawing makes me sad. It shows the circular driveway we could have had if we had not eliminated it for cost reduction at the end of the project. I still wish we had it. (But I love the drawing of it!)



But on a happier note, we are ever more amazed each year at the art that is brought to us for Vacation Bible School (or Camp). This is a promotional display for VBC 2016. Natasha Ferro recruited many visual and thematic-minded people to bring their effort and art to us!

We tend to think of a church's ministry as limited to Bible teaching, evangelism and discipling people. But part of worship is bringing our creative gifts into the fellowship and using them as tools for glorifying God and instilling joy among us.

I am grateful for the many people—probably only here a sampling of them—who have contributed their artisanship, skills, hard work and ingenuity to make our church a delightful place to be.

Thank you, Lord, for gifting us so wonderfully. And thank you, Lord, for bringing the Gospel to 52 Avenue North Dartmouth where once, there was just a simple field and pond.