

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 2 K. WORSHIP

The use of multi-purpose worship centres

Prepared by the Department of Visual Arts. Adopted by the Commission on Worship, January 1988. Revised May 1998.

Edited October 2001.

1. Ideally, a congregation should set aside a building exclusively for worship to express its reverence for God and to acknowledge the priority of worship.
2. However, for a congregation with limited resources, a multi-purpose worship centre can be the means of providing the best range of facilities not only for the congregation but also for the community it serves.
3. With careful design, such centres can fulfil all the basic requirements for worship as set out in the statement 'Public worship and its environment'.
4. A separate worship space can stand throughout the week as a constant reminder – to members and visitors alike – of the importance of worship in the life of the congregation.

This cannot occur if, between formal worship services, the visible pointers to the means of grace, such as the altar, font, and lectern or pulpit, are removed from sight.

5. A congregation can demonstrate the priority of worship in a number of different ways. For example:
 - a. The sanctuary area can be set apart so that it is not used for any function other than worship, but stands visible to users of the building at other times.
 - b. A small chapel can be created, possibly near the entrance to the building. The chapel can be used for private meditation and other acts of worship.
6. When a multi-purpose space is used for worship, special pointers can indicate the unique nature of the activity which takes place in that space. For example, different kinds of natural and/or artificial lighting over the sanctuary area, works of art, and

colours and textures can show that this area has been set aside for worship.

7. If no space is available for a permanent sanctuary, it may be preferable to locate the baptismal font to a permanent position near the entrance to the building. The font thus serves as a constant reminder of the significance of baptism as the means of entering God's family.
8. Many practical problems need to be overcome for a multi-purpose worship centre to function effectively. These include consideration of lighting and acoustics; seating arrangements; and, if moveable platforms are being considered, their size and relocation. Fears that large moveable platforms might be too cumbersome should not cause a congregation to skimp on the size of the sanctuary.
9. The congregation needs to remember that the primary reason for building such a centre is worship. All other purposes are secondary.