

Architect  
Church of the Resurrection  
New York  
Architect

## Small Blessings

*A little new space and a lot of careful thought add bright new facets to an ecclesiastical gem.*



**D**on Dickinson's addition to an addition to the Church of St. Joseph of Arimathea doubles the size of the existing parish house and completes it visually by capping it with an upper story. But to parishioners, less dramatic enhancements—a window cut here, a hall widened there—are no less important. Built in 1883 as a mortuary chapel for a wealthy family who added an ell c.1900, St. Joseph's is a picturesque country-Gothic assemblage of rusticated granite perched on a knoll amid carefully tended grounds. By the early 1950s it had become a parish church whose broader activities spurred the building of a second wing to serve as parish hall. Joined to the rear of the church at crypt level, the resulting flat-topped box of concrete block was ungainly and "unfinished" in appearance from the start. By the late 1980s it was outgrown as well.

Although another large meeting space and adequate church offices headed the building program, the parish hoped to expand its social and educational domain without forfeiting domestic character: the choice of an architect known best for modest but seemingly houses was no happenstance. Welcome was to be extended in two ways. As a practical matter, the revamped parish hall was to ease access to a sanctuary then reachable only via daunting stairs inside or out. Symbolically, it was to replace the perfunctory entrance and pinched vestibule with an inviting portal.

The principal element of the addition is a multipurpose room placed directly over the existing assembly room (plans page 128). The congregation calls the new space "the ballroom" for its generous size and gracious proportions, which were enhanced by framing the roof with a scissor truss that complements the steeply pitched roofs of the church on the exterior but shapes a gentler slope inside. At one gable end a fireplace offers a hospitable hearth. At the other a broad custom window crowned by a shallow splayed arch balances the lancet window fronting the upper floor of the earlier wing, which, freed of other uses, provides the rector a handsome and spacious study.

In the crossing between the two, the new second story finds space behind a low, dormerlike front for a sacristy, an office for parish staff, and a much-needed elevator. Moving and widening the stair relieved congestion in circulation areas on both floors, while a new outer vestibule released space within for a generous downstairs lobby and larger kitchen. Bathrooms and closets burgeoned. ("No house," Dickinson observes, "can have too many closets.")

The restraint of the interiors and their seamless merger with the church give way to bravura, however, at the new entry, where a larger-than-life porch of wood, stone, and stucco introduces this big comfortable house for the church family. *Margaret Gaskie*

• Mick Hahn photos

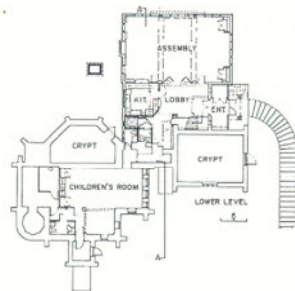
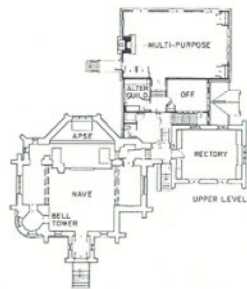
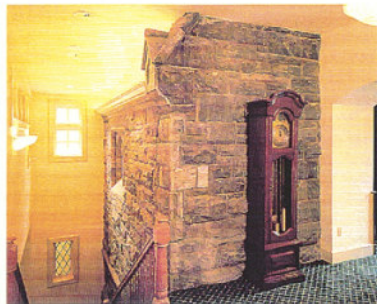


*Tucked into the sloping site, the expanded parish hall is all but hidden from the approach to the church, but a walk across level ground to its entry (opposite) and elevator provides a new, stairfree route to the sanctuary. The second-floor "ballroom" built atop the original assembly hall (above) affords a second egress to grade. Sympathetic roofscapes and window treatments unify hall and church despite the contrasting materials—crisp stucco and muted wood trim—that reinforce the domestic character of the addition.*

Erin Goliard drawing







Jennifer Huestis drawings

Although new construction comprised only the multipurpose room (top left), sacristy, and office on the second floor, subtle alterations made the most of existing space as well. Key to improving circulation was the relocation and widening of the stair (above left and opposite), which also exposed the once-buried stone wall of the adjoining ell. The detailing of the stairwell includes a lighting cove at the eave of the old building and an interior window to the adjacent office. The big arched window in the gable end of the new room is framed by closets.

**Credits**  
**Parish Hall Addition**  
**Church of St. Joseph of**  
**Armathea**  
**Elmsford, New York**  
**Owner:** Church of St. Joseph of  
 Armathea  
**Architect:** Duo Dickinson,  
 Architect—Duo Dickinson,  
 principal; David Basilone,  
 project architect; William  
 Egan, staff; Leigh Basilone,  
 administrative assistant  
**Engineer:** Martin Gehner  
**General Contractor:** Indorf  
 Construction

