

Craig Janssen – Strategic Dimensions

What design factors should we consider for our new sanctuary?

Let's start off by considering how communication occurs in a room. Consider how a triangle might describe this. If you take a triangle and assume at the peak of the triangle, right at the top, you have the pulpit. Then you go down to the bottom and you have on either corner of the triangle, the people; the congregation. You have in the top of the triangle, presenting down from the pulpit presentational communication out to the congregation members. And then the alternative to that is from the congregation back up to the pulpit. It will be a reactionary or responsive communication. The third set of communication would be from the congregation to each other. Now there is a horizontal connectivity – a bi-directional sense of community.

Those are the three directions of communication that you have in any room. That's not just in a congregational setting. It's in a theatre. It's in a congregational meeting. It's in a meeting room. Now you can change that dynamic pretty easily. I could do it by moving toward you. I change the dynamic of the room. And you can change that by the design of the space that you're in. If you're in a space where you wrap the seats around you, you create a greater sense of community. If you move back from there, you create a space that is more presentational. If you darken the space, you make it more presentational. If you brighten it up, you create a higher sense of community. These are all the kinds of things we know intuitively, but which the design of the environment creates the experience.