

WHAT DOES PLYMOUTH CHURCH MEAN TO ME?

For architects, and I suppose all creative types, the creative process can invoke a spiritual connection - something akin to divine creation, but on a human scale. When the project is a church, the building is literally a spiritual undertaking. Seems grandiose? Perhaps, but monuments like ours record for posterity the shared ideals of their builders. When the bricks were laid for Plymouth's sanctuary, and for millennia before, classicism represented democracy. Sitting in a pew at Plymouth, those slender Corinthian columns and quiet classical details speak to me of the goals of equal rights and dignity for all people.

But we know the struggle for democratic ideals is not always uplifting. It is, at times, also frustrating and embittering. Plymouth's founders built from a desire to collect fellowship and faith, worship and works under one roof. They sacrificed to build a house for people and a house for God. No doubt, they also felt taken advantage of at times. There must have been days when they resented their commitments — moments when the church was lead more by human imperfections and less by divine grace.

I have empathy for them. I, too, have bled and sacrificed to glorify God through our buildings and grounds. And if we're being honest, laboring on behalf of this congregation has not always been spiritual and enlightening. Did I find God while arguing with Landmarks about the color of our roof? Not exactly. Was sparring with the Department of Buildings to secure that permit for our beer tent a spiritual journey? Um, no.

But grace is not easily recognized without a challenge. Working to preserve and perpetuate Plymouth's spiritual legacy has transformed me — the burden has strengthened me — has given me a mission and a community and a journey that has connected me to both the founders of our past and the stewards of Plymouth's future. Like our founders and like those of us who labor for a human house, we do it to honor the house of God.

Sacrifice is the seed we sow, and faith is the harvest. Plymouth taught me that.

James Koster