

# Engagement Session III - Intent and Form

MASS DESIGN GROUP | SYNOPSIS

The meeting began with an introduction by the King's Chapel Memorial Committee and MASS gave a brief overview presentation of the Session 2 Engagement about Audiences. MASS then described the agenda for an intent and form based discussion in the Zoom Breakout Rooms.

The MASS team presented a series of introductory comparative slides to guide the discussions in the breakout rooms about the various approaches to a formal memorial design. The comparisons are as follows:

- **Didactic versus Contemplative**

*Visualizations:*

- *Didactic: a row of bronze panels with list of names acknowledges those lost to WWI*
- *Contemplative: a circular skylight has water pouring through it into a shallow pool below. It is surrounded by benches for people to take respite.*

- **Introspective versus Participatory**

*Visualizations:*

- *Introspective: person with their back to the camera, gazing at a reflective installation that arches around them*
- *Participatory: the AIDS quilt, made up of thousands of squares sewn by individuals, covering the National Mall*

- **Personal versus Communal**

*Visualizations:*

- *Personal: person gazes into a small mirror embedded into a wall, which reflects a floral landscape*
- *Communal: crowd gathers around a large mirrored sculpture in a public square*

- **Multiple versus Singular**

*Visualizations:*

- *Multiple: person stands in a room, surrounded by many, small, images of waterfalls*
- *Singular: a large, bronze, steel pyramid, from whose apex an inverted obelisk rises like a beam of light in a museum setting*

- **Destination versus Journey**

*Visualizations:*

- *Destination: several people sit around a globe surrounded by screens, listening to an audio experience.*
- *Journey: a large sculptural crack in the wall guides visitors along a geography, with a virtual screen depicting images within the crack*

- **Open Participation versus Prescribed Participation**

*Visualizations:*

- *Open Participation: person finger paints a wall covered in paint strokes made by others*
- *Guided Participation: wall covered in cards with visitor's answers to an emotive prompt*

- **Literal versus Symbolic**

*Visualizations:*

- *Literal: cast metal shoes arranged along a cobbled path signify loss*
- *Symbolic: a cloud of mirrored boxes are hung in a grid above a person walking below*

Following the introductory presentation, 34 attendees were divided into three Zoom Breakout Rooms, each of which included a MASS facilitator and at least one member from the King's Chapel Committee. In the Breakout Rooms, the groups began by identifying memorial experiences that resonated with everyone. Discussion in the breakout rooms were guided by the following questions:

- What is a memorable memorial experience you've had that resonates with you?
  - What elements of that experience would you like to recreate or avoid at KC?
- How might the audiences prioritized in session two connect with the approaches presented earlier?
- How might this memorial be situated in the church?

The facilitators prompted Breakout Room comments and discussions and took notes, which have been edited for clarity, but not for content. The notes are intended to reflect the full range of opinions expressed in the Breakout Rooms. Notes from the breakout sessions are as follows:

## Table of Contents

1. Full, Poll Responses
2. Summary of Recurring Themes
3. Key Takeaways & Questions Raised
4. Group 1 Overview
5. Group 2 Overview
6. Group 3 Overview

---

## Poll Responses

**34 respondents answered the poll as follows:**

Question 1, Do you envision this memorial to be more didactic or more contemplative?

- 0 responded "very didactic"
- 6 responded "both, but more didactic"
- 7 responded "equal balance"
- 17 responded "both, but more contemplative"
- 4 responded "very contemplative"

Question 2, Do you envision this memorial to be more introspective or more participatory?

- 8 responded "very introspective"
- 14 responded "both, but more introspective"
- 7 responded "equal balance"
- 3 responded "both, but more participatory"
- 2 responded "very participatory"

Question 3, Do you envision this memorial to be more personal or more communal?

- 7 responded "very personal"
- 11 responded "both, but more personal"
- 8 responded "equal balance"
- 4 responded "both, but more communal"

- 4 responded “very communal”

Question 4, Do you envision this memorial to have multiple focal points or one singular?

- 6 responded “multiple focal points”
- 15 responded “man, but one primary focal point”
- 13 responded “singular focal point”

Question 5, Do you envision this memorial to feel more like a destination or a journey?

- 15 responded “destination”
- 5 responded “both, but more like a destination”
- 2 responded “equal balance”
- 6 responded “both but more like a journey”
- 6 responded “journey”

Question 6, Do you envision this memorial to incorporate open participation or prescribed?

- 3 responded “open participation”
- 5 responded “both, but more open participation”
- 9 responded “equal balance of both”
- 8 responded “both, but more prescribed participation”
- 9 responded “prescribed participation”

Question 7, Do you envision this memorial to be more literal or more symbolic?

- 3 responded “very literal”
- 12 responded “both, but more literal”
- 3 responded “equal balance”
- 8 responded “both, but more symbolic”
- 8 responded “very symbolic”

**Based on the poll survey the following can be concluded:**

- The memorial should focus on contemplative elements but balanced by some accompanying didactic elements.
- The memorial should be mainly introspective.
- The memorial should focus mainly on the personal experience, but possibly tied to a communal or collective experience (the intimate and the infinite)
- The memorial should have a primary focal point.
- The memorial should be more of a destination – although following the poll, there was great discussion about the value/power of incorporating a journey experience.
- The memorial should invite both open and prescribed participation but the main experience should be prescribed.
- The memorial should be more literal with some symbolic elements.

---

## Summary of Recurring Themes

The following is a compiled list of memorials mentioned across all groups as one that resonated with at least one member:

- Holocaust Museum in DC
- MLK Memorial in DC
- Vietnam Memorial
- King's Chapel (described as a memorial-like experience in its entirety)
- Memorial to Unitarian Universalists
- National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, AL
- Great Spirit indigenous statue in front of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston
- A plaque remembering victims of WWII in Treviso, Italy
- Oklahoma City bombing memorial
- 9/11 Memorial in NYC
- New England Holocaust Memorial
- Civil War Memorial at King's Chapel
- Ben Franklin House in Philadelphia

Why the memorial experiences that were shared resonated:

- They implemented a participatory design process
- The memorial was real, tangible, yet symbolic
- The memorial was able to depict individual and collective tragedy
- The memorial was grounded in history
- The memorial evoked emotion and a bodily experience
- The memorial intensified the experience by tapping into a plurality of sensations
- The memorial was educational, contemplative
- The memorial connected to faith

How the future memorial may engage the priority audiences and be situated in the church:

- "Prescribed Participation" – an element inspired by ritual could reflect the culture and spiritual practices of KC
- A participatory element that is cumulative could reflect visitor engagement over time, while also engaging different audiences on equal footing
- Many congregates highlighted the need for both an interior and exterior component to the memorial and the potential for a journey between them
- An element that engages light and its immersive qualities could reflect a journey, while connecting to both the personal and the collective.

---

## Group 1 Overview

FACILITATORS: Morgan O'Hara, Kathe German, Dean Denniston

### What is a memorable memorial experience you've had that resonates with you? What elements of that experience would you like to recreate or avoid at KC?

- Holocaust Museum in DC
  - The passport experience was very moving, able to connect the persona with someone she knew. Coincidental but designed for **personal impact** - how could we do this?
- Reflections of the suggestions of a "journey" element
  - KC has always been on a journey. From Tory Anglican to UU is quite a journey
  - Faye's exhibit was inspiring...journey there about women's recognition
  - Slavery...also a long journey to the present re: recognition etc
  - Journey element could be a very powerful reflection of these!
  - How can we be more active in serving underserved communities? How can this journey *continue*?
- MLK Memorial in DC
  - Moved by SIZE
  - TOUCH, texture - universal design to see with hands
- Vietnam Memorial
  - Moving underground...journey element is experiential
  - Combo of didactic and impressionistic, very powerful
- King's Chapel itself provides a memorial experience in many ways
  - Tells a story, living memorial
  - How can there be a separate story that tells one piece of history when the whole place tells a story?
  - How does this memorial become a part of the whole?

### How might the audiences prioritized in session two connect with the approaches presented earlier?

- Participation element is already in place when Congregants hear/speak the names of the enslaved at services during Lent.
- Participation and showing participation over time would be very powerful to put **different groups on an equal footing**.
- Visual evidence and felt **over time can show cumulative encounters**.
- Prescribed vs. open – a distinctive quality of KC is how close we are with our liturgy... **prescribed would be fitting to the character of KC as a community**
- Power of RITUAL, which is prescribed...visitors **know what to do**. Knowing that you are participating in something meaningful over time.

- Personal vs. communal...leaning towards personal because if the goal is for inspiring action and conversation, want to have an experience that **feels personal**...something personal may be most space-efficient, unless we use the sanctuary in a clever way to invite all.

### How might this memorial be situated in the church?

- **LIGHT!** Possibility of light as a form, a medium. Would connect to the whole... **immersive, Light travels!**
- Crypt would be difficult.
- **Outdoors** connections to more folks, more **accessible**, folks external to the church...
  - Visible leadership, thousands of people would see it...congregants and others
  - We need an attractor, public messaging
- **Windows** at chancel and above provide so much light. One window in the center we open on Easter, stained glass depiction of Christ, resurrection. Light in the sanctuary and the space created within the light – comes in through the windows. This space might provide an opportunity as we think of something aspirational, a **journey** begun hundreds of years ago...a future that is hopeful and uplifting and something we can all look up towards and that others will see as well.
- Artists and architects could imagine a possibility that has **both interior and exterior**... and that can tell a story about our past where we weren't as welcoming as we should be.
- Crypt could be a memorial HALL where social justice activities could occur... perhaps **sanctuary can host memorial and be recognized at gatherings** for social justice...living memorial AND physical
- **Names could be inscribed in the steps** to the altar
- Possible to make a 2-layer memorial? **Obvious communicative aspect and then a deeper engagement for individual or ritual layer**
- A new memorial should **not fade into the field of existing memorials**.

---

## Group 2 Overview

FACILITATORS: Alejandra Cervantes, David Waters, Miguel Gomez-Ibanez

### What is a memorable memorial experience you've had that resonates with you? What elements of that experience would you like to recreate or avoid at KC?

- Memorial to Unitarian Universalists who died in the Civil Rights struggle
  - Used to be located inside chapel at UUA headquarters
  - It provided space for contemplation and remembrance, education, and sharing of personal stories
  - Participating in this process with KC feels parallel to how the UU memorial came about.
  - The experience resonates in its similarity to KC's memorial participatory design process
- Memorial Sculptor from Ghana featured on PBS's Enslaved
  - Kwame Akoto-Bamfo sculpted hundreds of individual faces representing those who were stolen from their homes
  - His work is also at EJI — 'Nkyinkyim'

- The experience of learning about this memorial resonates in its sense of individuality and scope of tragedy
- National Memorial to Peace and Justice in Montgomery [mentioned by multiple participants]
  - There is an abstractness to it, yet conveyed a sense of the magnitude by the numbers
  - You got the sense of the appalling history, volume, and numbers.
  - The volunteers made a difference, eager to reach out and share and have a dialogue
  - The experience of being immersed in this memorial resonated in its combination of individual and collective tragedy
- Photo of shoes Holocaust Museum [mentioned by multiple participants]
  - Realistic, symbolic, representative, individuality in a collective tragedy
  - It made those memorialized more real
- Memorials at King's Chapel
  - The names of those memorialized are mentioned in sermons and annals. It is an important part of KC's history.
  - It is deeply moving/meaningful when understood in context
  - The Civil War memorial depicts 14 names, mentioned in sermon by HW Foote
  - Louis Cornish spoke of these memorials at KC's 250 th anniversary. He also made comments about all the people who aren't remembered in those memorials, meaning all those who have passed through KC and are not remembered in the same way, yet they still contributed.
  - The experience of this memorial resonates in how its deeply grounded in KC's history
- Great Spirit indigenous statue in front of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston
  - It holds an evocative, full body pose
  - Memorial should provoke emotion
- A plaque remembering victims of WWII in Treviso, Italy
  - The site engaged local people and visitors
  - The memorial experience resonates because during the visit, a cellist was performing there, it drew you right in the whole experience.
  - The interplay of memorial and live action drew you in
  - Site for gathering

### **How might the audiences prioritized in session two connect with the approaches presented earlier?**

- The only way to capture all four audiences is to have the memorial be **located inside and outside** [mentioned by multiple participants]
- The exterior:
  - It should invite people inside for more
  - Names should be listed outside; perhaps carved in the exterior of the building
- The interior:
  - Should be a memorial to the unnamed enslaved, located where it could inform our personal prayer and our communal lives
- The memorial should arise from and inform our lives of faith [mentioned by multiple participants]
- The memorial should be simple, immersive, less is more. The revelation of KC's slavery past should not be a shocking revelation.

- Try to educate people who don't know. Have a place for contemplation for those that do know about slavery.
- Precedent: The Long Wharf port marker is instructive re: providing historical context (i.e. stories of the enslaved and those who enslaved them)
- There is general doubt on how or why names inscribed on the exterior would draw people in, since there are so many other things that would draw people in to KC.

### **How might this memorial be situated in the church?**

- Group did not get to Question 3 in discussion

---

## **Group 3 Overview**

FACILITATORS: Chris Scovel, Joy Fallon, Faye Charpentier

### **What is a memorable memorial experience you've had that resonates with you? What elements of that experience would you like to recreate or avoid at KC?**

- Oklahoma City bombing memorial
  - beautiful, contemplative,
  - Stopped there while driving across the country, and made a point to visit
  - Reflective
  - A lot of water involved
  - Was a newspaper reporter at the time of the bombing and remembers getting the AP alert; the water was a big deal to her; in the middle of downtown Oklahoma City; found it to be soothing
- Vietnam Memorial
- 9/11 Memorial in NYC
  - You are in the space where the towers were
  - Personal stories were being told
  - Had a friend on flight 11, was moved to connect with the personal stories
  - Remembering the drama of the events of the day
  - Impactful New Yorker cover of the memorial as well
- New England Holocaust Memorial
  - Not where event happen, but captured stories
- Our memorial is not just limited to the 219 people at the church
- Evoking the scale as well as the individual suffering
- Interested in seeing amalgamation of something like the Vietnam Memorial
  - Include names and leave space as further research may lead to additional names
  - Memorials have great power not only with what they are, but with what they say - ex: Lincoln Memorial - imposing structure, but includes meaningful quotations that continue to inspire people today
- Memorials that have most made an impact on this person doesn't feel that was most impactful translates to the church
  - Most impactful - Vicksburg Battlefield; cemetery
    - Circular walk/drive. State by state monuments
    - Something about moving through a pastoral space while also moving through a site of mass death
    - The vast space was impactful as well

- KC Civil War Memorial
  - Seeing names makes a difference
- Names are powerful
  - And powerful seeing names on enslaved people as handwritten in the church records
- Even “anonymous” describes an individual
- Does not like Roosevelt Island memorial - contemplative but
- Holocaust Museum
  - Both didactic and overwhelming
  - Use of darkness; feeling of oppression in atmosphere
- Ben Franklin House in Philadelphia - outline of a house
  - Makes you think of the environment of where he lived

**How might the audiences prioritized in session two connect with the approaches presented earlier?**

- Reach has to expand beyond social media
- We’re a national landmark and have a national reach; national entity in and of itself - push for us to own that a little bit more
- Limited space - digital component in space?
  - Static memorial as well as something interactive in the space?
  - Additional information on website
- St. Michaels in South Carolina - church is a historic space from the 1750s, parish house next door - window-sized video screen in parish house with stories of what the church is doing - increased visibility; point to parish activities, community partners, etc.
- Hadn’t previously thought about crypt as an asset before mentioned tonight
  - Wouldn’t have to be “finished” space to incorporate something contemplative
- Opposition to idea to “high tech” memorial
  - Ongoing and rapid changes in technology
  - We want something to stand the ages and with gravitas
  - Restoring lost dignity
  - Interested in physical vocabulary that speaks to existing memorials
- Drawn to the concept of “journey”
- Excited by prospect of a journey beginning outside the chapel and bringing people inside the church
- Love the gallery of the church, interested in contemplative and/or abstract aspect of memorial within that space
- Interest in transforming the dark space of crypt into a place for learning (about things other than the crypt itself!)
- Simplifying the walls of the sanctuary; should be a serene place of worship
- Strong dislike of Vassall memorial
  - Side note from Faye - yes, the people memorialized on it were not members. But it is important to remember it was given to the church by a donor to the chapel’s construction and by a member of a family deeply involved in the church. So while the memorial is to a member or given by a member, it is as deeply interwoven into the church’s history as any other memorial.
- The form of an obelisk at the exterior would be consistent with the existing obelisk and give stature to the new memorial.
- Sustainability of the memorial - how relevant will it be 10, 25 years from now?

- How much of the memorial do we emphasize in the church? How much do we emphasize it if its spread out in the church?
- Rothko Chapel in Huston, Texas - broken obelisk
  - Powerful in its silence
- Something with the chancel windows
  - Open, giving light, with a message in it

**How might this memorial be situated in the church?**

- Group did not get to Question 3 in discussion