Analysing religious space: an exploratory exercise for individuals and groups

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1. Either individually or in a group select a religious place/space which is familiar to you.

2. Obtain permission (if necessary) to explore the building/place.

3. Each person should then carry out the following exercise individually.

4. Produce an annotated diagram of the space, noting everything of significance.

5. If class members have visited different places the discussion can focus on various aspects of space/place, comparing e.g.
   a) floor plan
   b) height
   c) materials used
   d) variations in height of both floor (are some areas raised up?) and ceiling (is it higher in some parts of the building than in others?)
   e) seating
   f) ‘religious’ objects/symbols
   g) ‘secular’ objects/symbols
   h) lighting
   i) music-making facilities
   j) architectural genre
   k) function of rooms
   l) the design of entrances

6. If spaces have been visited in groups then individuals should compare and contrast the notes they have made, examining differences in their accounts.

7. In each case, students can discuss the various possible meanings of what they have observed and noted. What have they discovered about those who use the building (their faith and practice, organisational structure, aesthetics, etc)?