

## VISITOR GUIDE

### THIRD CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST, WASHINGTON, DC

The church, plaza and office building were built as a single project in 1971.

This octagonal edifice is Third Church. The seven-story office building houses (among other tenants) the Washington Bureau of The Christian Science Monitor; it is owned by The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts, of which this church is a branch.

The complex was designed by Araldo Cosutta, while a partner in the firm of I. M. Pei. This firm, a leader in the use of architectural concrete, also designed L'Enfant Plaza and the East Building of the National Gallery of Art here in Washington, as well as the Christian Science Center in Boston.

The strength and simplicity of the concept are evident in the church lobby, its travertine wall complements the natural concrete textures. Wide stairs at each side lead up to the auditorium. Here more exposed building materials are softened by green carpeting and the natural wood tones of the golden oak platform and pews. The stairways are flooded with sun from large skylights.

The pleasing proportions of the auditorium are best seen from the balcony. The 30 rank, 33 stop, three-manual organ console, to the right of the Readers' desk, was built by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, Connecticut. Its more than 1600 pipes are behind the wooden grillwork above the platform.

Through the east window may be glimpsed the exterior carillon of 20 bronze bells, cast in Belgium and installed by the Bergen Bellfoundries of Greenwood, South Carolina. They are programmed to ring at 9 and 10 in the morning and 4 o'clock in the afternoon every day except Saturday.

The Sunday School and children's room occupy the top level. Here floor-to-ceiling sliding glass panels open onto sunny terraces where flowering plants bloom in season, sheltered by the top of the octagonal exterior walls.

An automatic elevator in the front lobby serves all levels, from the top floor Sunday School to the garage underlying the entire site. You may also reach the Sunday School and balcony by stairs behind the doors at the rear of the auditorium.

The Church complex was cited for architectural excellence by the Washington Board of Trade, calling it "A small jewel-like church and companion office structure." The Capitol's chapter of the American Institute of Architects rated it "perhaps the most satisfying new complex in the city" shortly after its completion. The concrete and carpentry work also was honored in craftsmanship competition by the Washington Building Congress. The general contractor was the George Hyman Construction Company of Bethesda, Maryland