

Marlon Blackwell Architect in Springdale, Arkansas

2013-03-22



The new St. Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church, designed by [Marlon Blackwell Architect](#). Photo: © Timothy Hursley

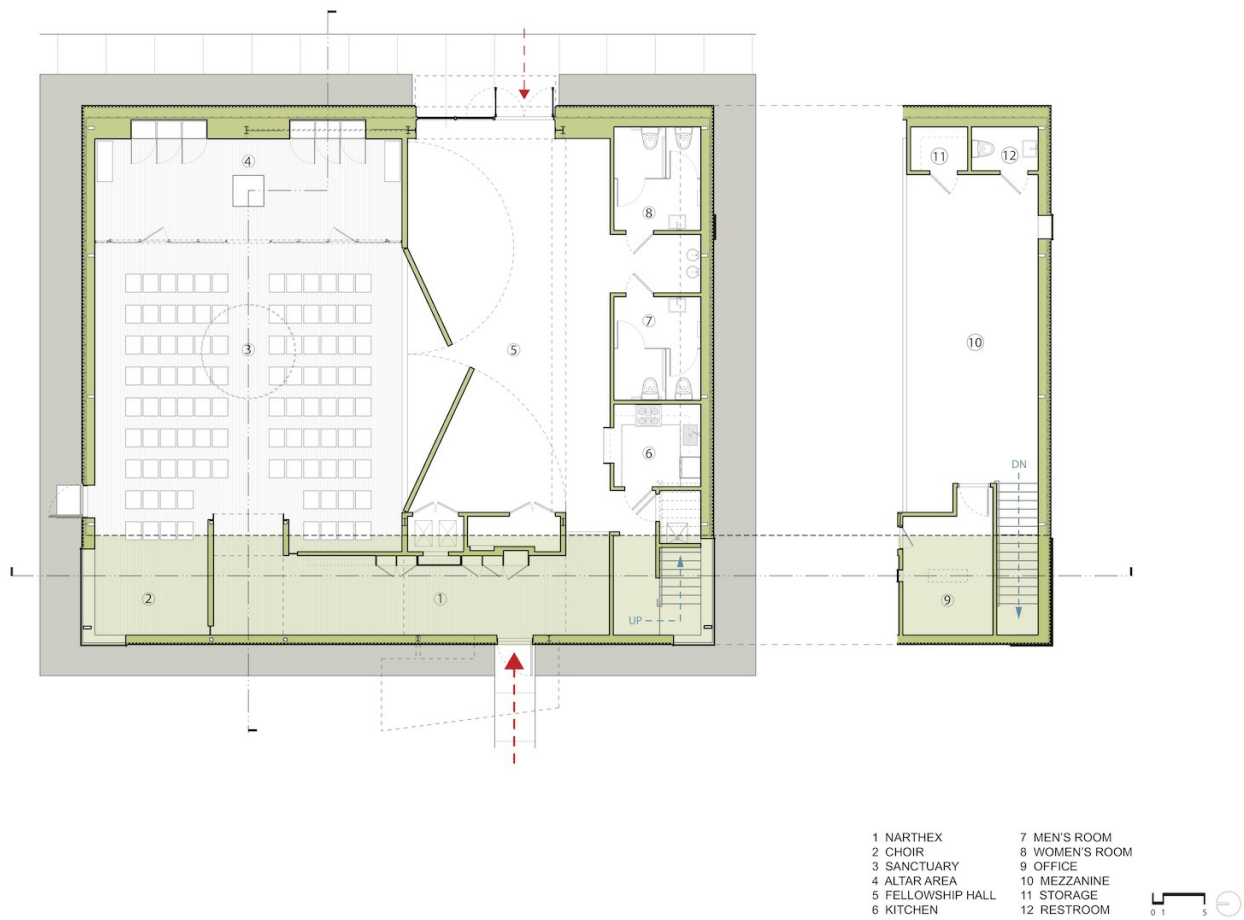
A former shop building has been transformed into a beautifully minimalist modern church building for a small Eastern Orthodox congregation in Springdale, Arkansas. The St. Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church was designed by [Marlon Blackwell Architect](#) of Fayetteville.

The building's new corrugated siding echoes its industrial origins, and its steel structure was largely preserved, but this is where the similarities end. A deceptively simple western front facade recalls [Le Corbusier](#): a slightly off-center entrance with cantilevered awning, a church tower, and carefully arranged window openings at either corner.



Under the skylit tower, with vestibule (right) and sanctuary (left) in view. Photo: © Timothy Hursley

The glazing is tinted to hint at stained glass. The two corner windows are tinted blue and yellow respectively. And in the tower, narrow ribbons of red glass form a blazing Latin cross, marking the church. The tower is also a skylit lightwell that stands at the point where the slender vestibule—oriented at 90 degrees to the entry sidewalk—makes a right-angle turn on the center line of the 100-seat sanctuary.



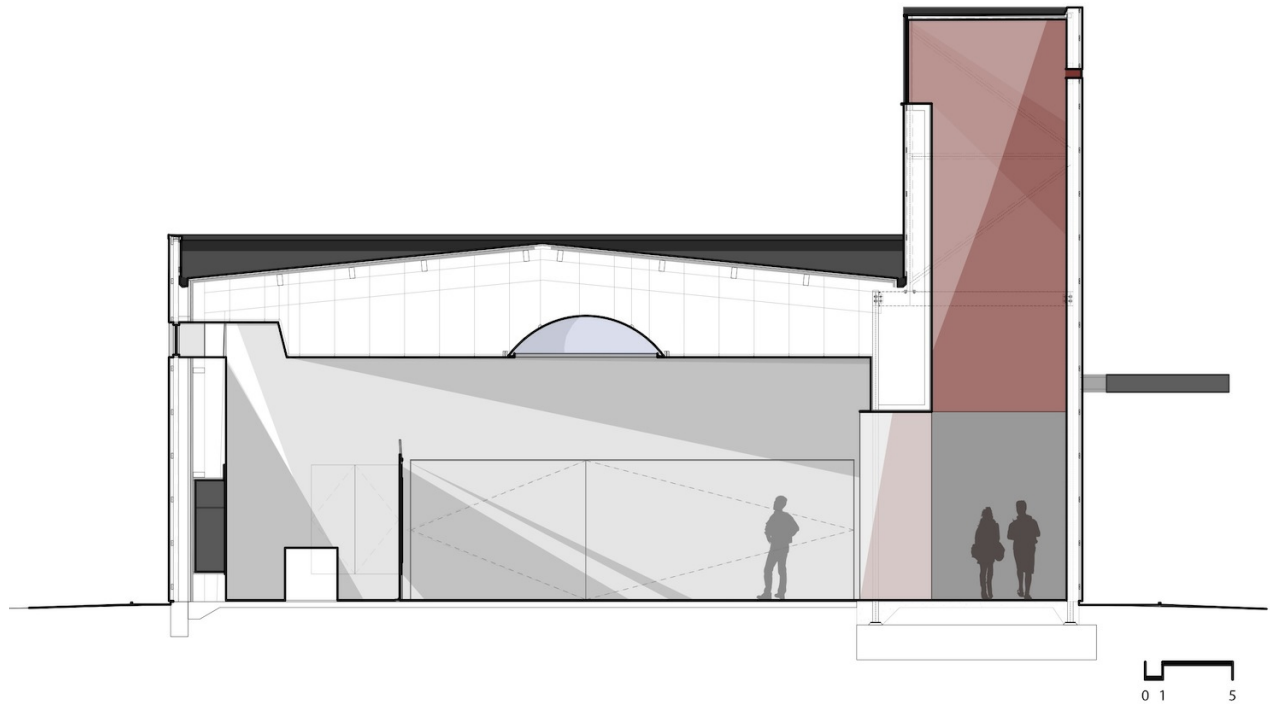
Floor plan drawings. Image: Marlon Blackwell Architect

The large rectangular worship space occupies the north half of the church, with a screened altar area opposite the main entrance. A choir space is located at its rear, adjacent to the center-axis entry. One long interior wall of the sanctuary is split in two unequal pieces; each portion is hinged and swings out to join the sanctuary with the adjacent fellowship hall, whose eastern end wall is a large glazed opening.



Sanctuary space. Photo: © Timothy Hursley

Support spaces, including restrooms, office, kitchen, and stairs are arrayed in two levels along the southern wall, the upper portion of which is dominated by an open mezzanine space that overlooks the fellowship hall.



Section drawing through sanctuary and tower, looking south. Image: Marlon Blackwell Architect

Jury Comments

This transformation of a humble former welding shop into an elegant work of religious architecture is an inspiring example for our profession and especially for small practitioners.

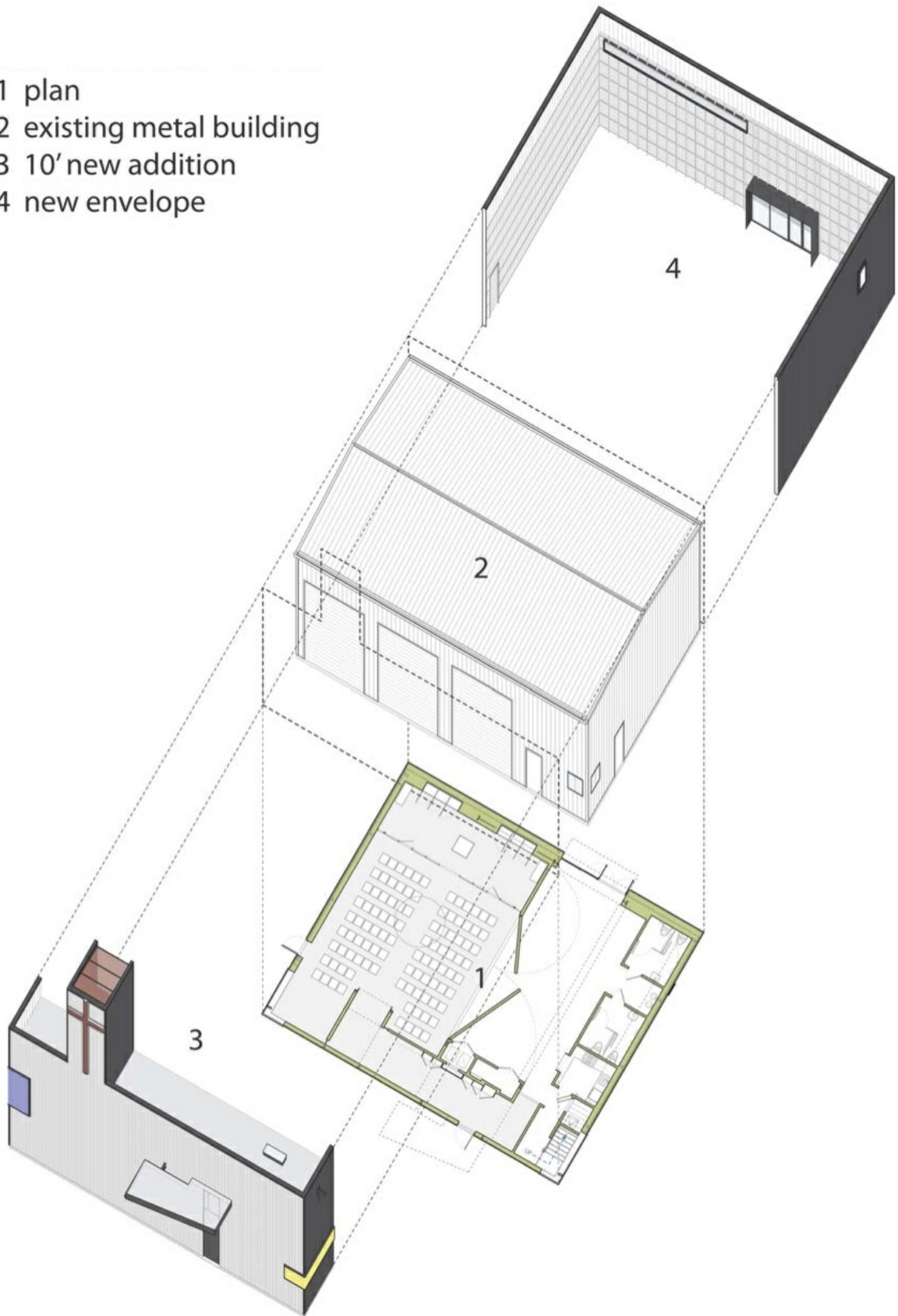
The project makes the most with the least, displaying deep resource efficiency as an integral part of its design ethos—something more architects should be thinking about and practicing.

The continued development of flexible space by creating a maneuverable wall between the worship and fellowship spaces is great.

The ability to maintain the sacredness of the space with strategic use of color and light is inspiring.

St. Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church has received an Honor Award in the Architecture category of the [2013 AIA National Design Awards](#).

- 1 plan
- 2 existing metal building
- 3 10' new addition
- 4 new envelope



Exploded axonometric drawing. Image: Marlon Blackwell Architect

Project Credits

- **Client:** Saint Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church
- **Architect:** Marlon Blackwell Architect
- **Civil Engineer:** Bates & Associates
- **Structural Engineer:** Myers Beatty Engineering, Inc.
- **General Contractor:** Lourie Construction LLC



View from the northwest. Photo: © Timothy Hursley

Project Details

- **Name:** Saint Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church
- **Location:** Springdale, Arkansas
- **Energy Use Intensity:** not available
- **Year Complete:** 2010
- **Stories:** 1

Source: Architecture Week People & Places Blog