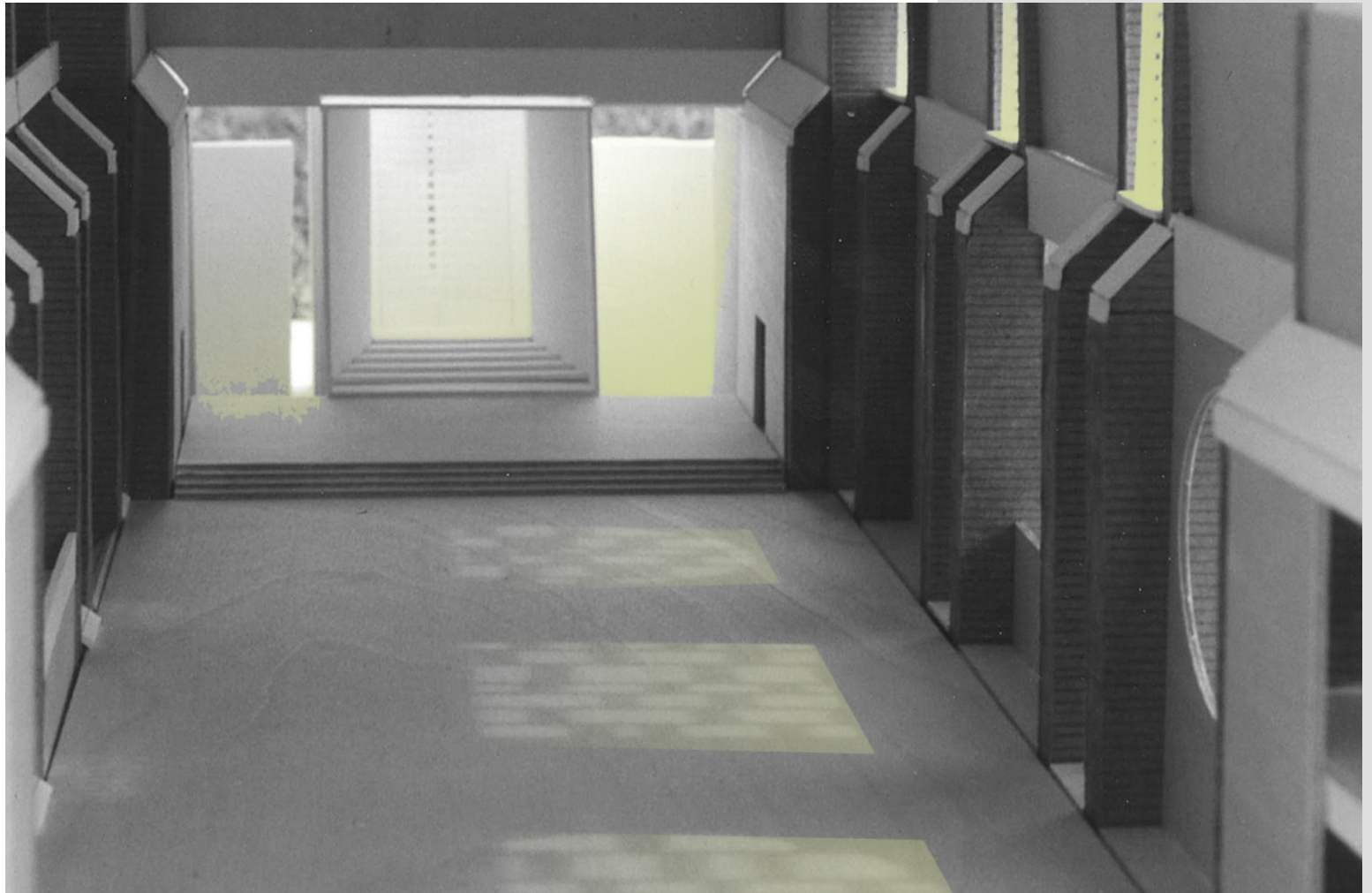


Site Plan

Site

Located in Reston, Virginia just south of the intersection of Route 7 and Reston Parkway lies a man made pond, a storm water retention pond. It is bordered on the East by Reston Parkway and on the other sides by untamed forest. The water has no specific form to it. Many times I have passed by this serene setting in the middle of a hectic city. I have witnessed the early morning sun cresting the trees and mirrored off of the glassy water. Its proximity to the city and yet natural surroundings first attracted me to the site. It is a site comprised of edges, the edge of the trees, the edge of the water, the edge of the road. People are attracted to edges. From an edge a person may have contact with multiple states of matter, or experience views otherwise hidden. My desire was then to take this site, this water, these trees and to make something architectural out of it. To create a sacred place within the profaneness of the site and allow the existing road to provide passers by a glimpse into such a place.



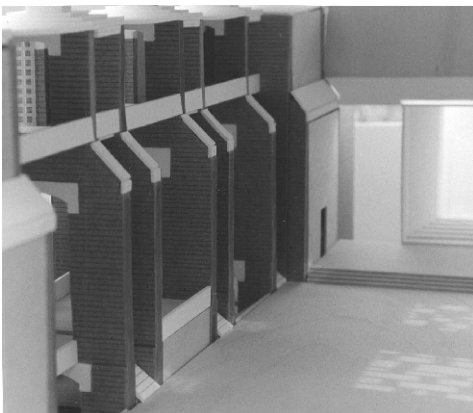
C o n c e p t

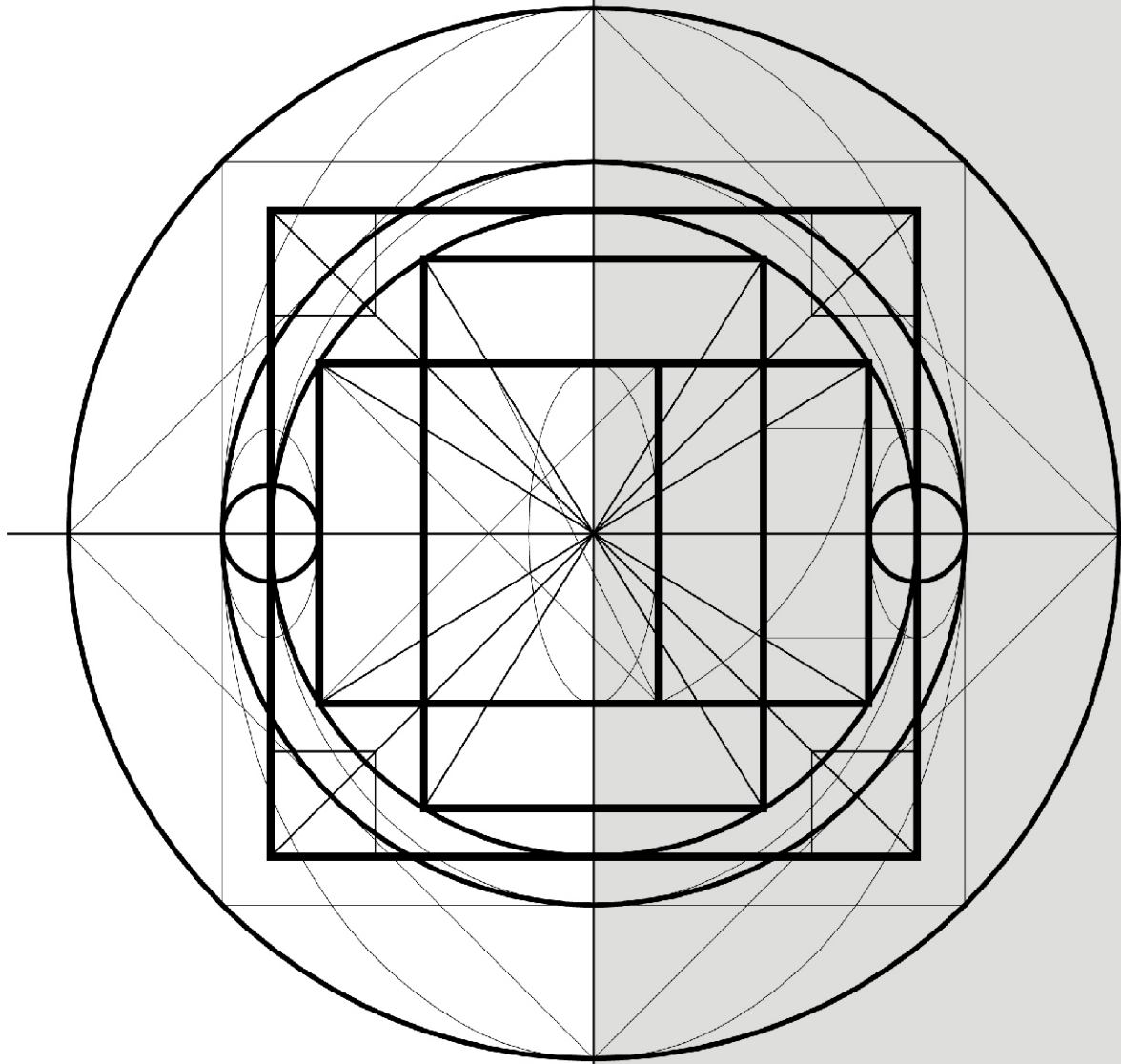
The elements and location of the site lend themselves to the creation of a place of worship. The elements being water, trees, nature, light, all elements not made by man but by a source higher than ourselves, beckon us to give praise to the creator of them. The location being in the middle of a busy metropolitan suburb, beckons a place where one can escape from the business of everyday life. And so it seemed appropriate to create a place of worship and retreat where one can take account of the creation, light, earth, water, trees in order to blur the daily burdens of life and focus on the eternal rewards of a life thereafter.

How then to create a place of worship which takes in all the elements of this site? If we are to create a place for the worship of the creator of these natural elements, then the structure itself should embody the most magnificent and elemental qualities of God's creation. These elements should be shaped to nurture one's own spiritual journey. So I began with the idea that the structure should be made of the most fundamental of building materials; stone, wood, water and light. But what one element should be the defining element? What one design element will unify the entire composition? The one thing that can be found anywhere in the world. The thing that in many ways unifies even the entire universe, light.



Light is the most sacred phenomenon and the presence of it in a place of worship is the greatest manifestation of God himself. Man can manufacture all the building materials needed to erect the greatest of structures, but only God can fill it with the light of the sun and make the materials come alive. Through the interplay of light and structure the building can seem to be alive. Through the proper execution of structure and material the building can sculpt light and define the time of day and season of the year. This then became the genesis of the project; to sculpt light through natural materials and structure in order to bring glory to the creator and provide a sacred retreat for the weary.

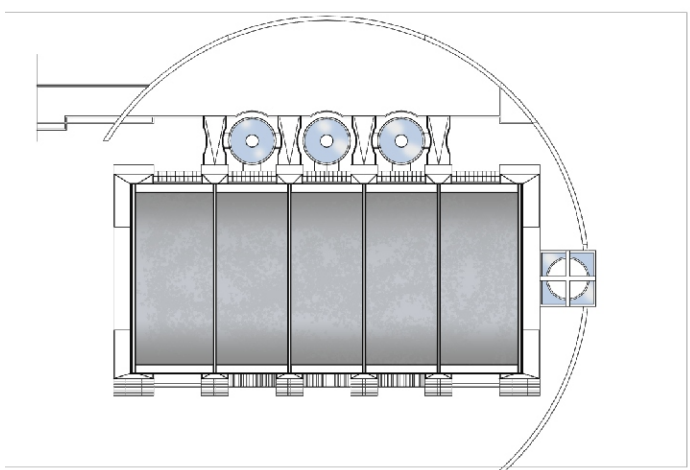


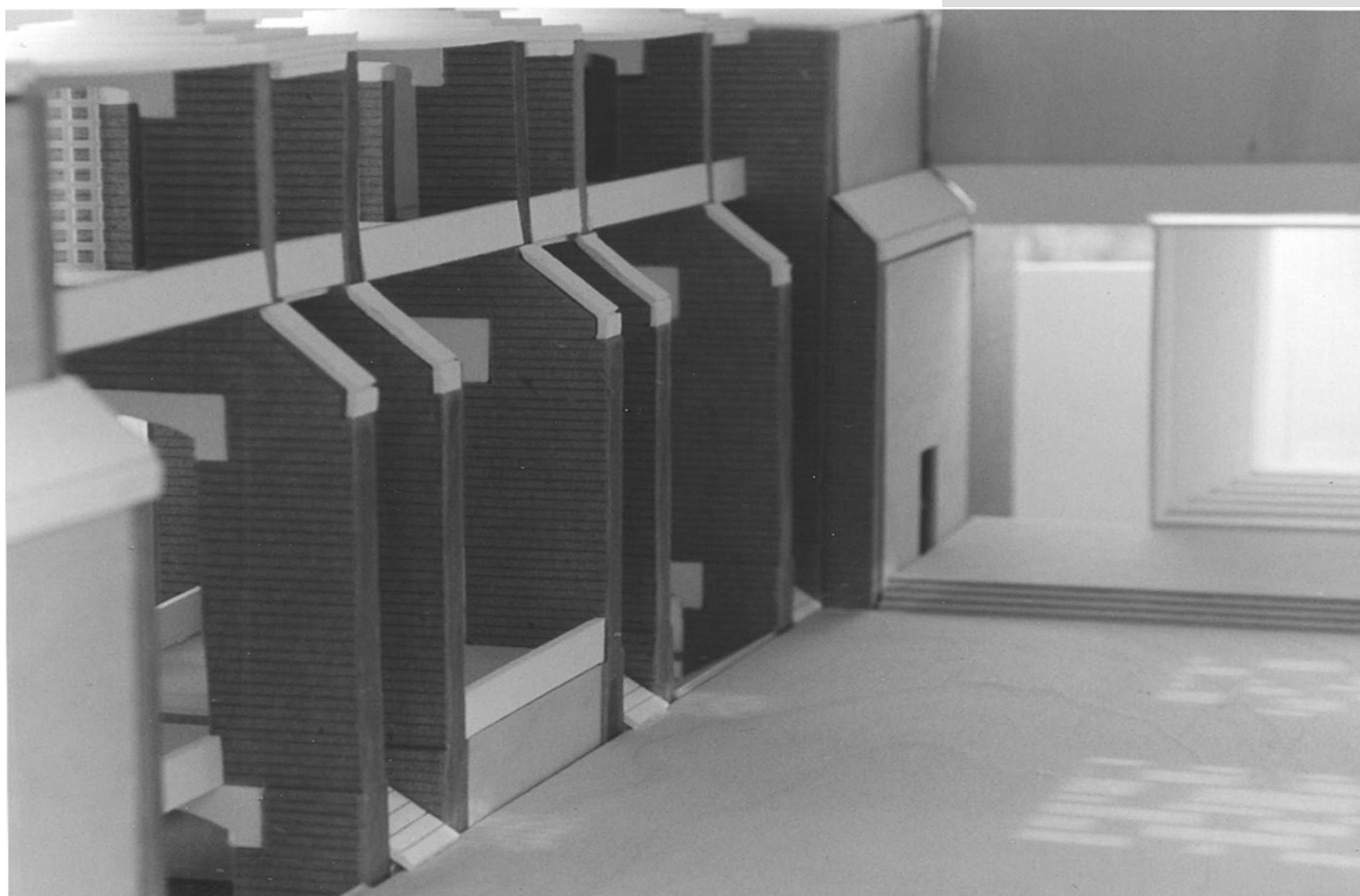


Early study on proportional harmony of the building's plan.

F o r m

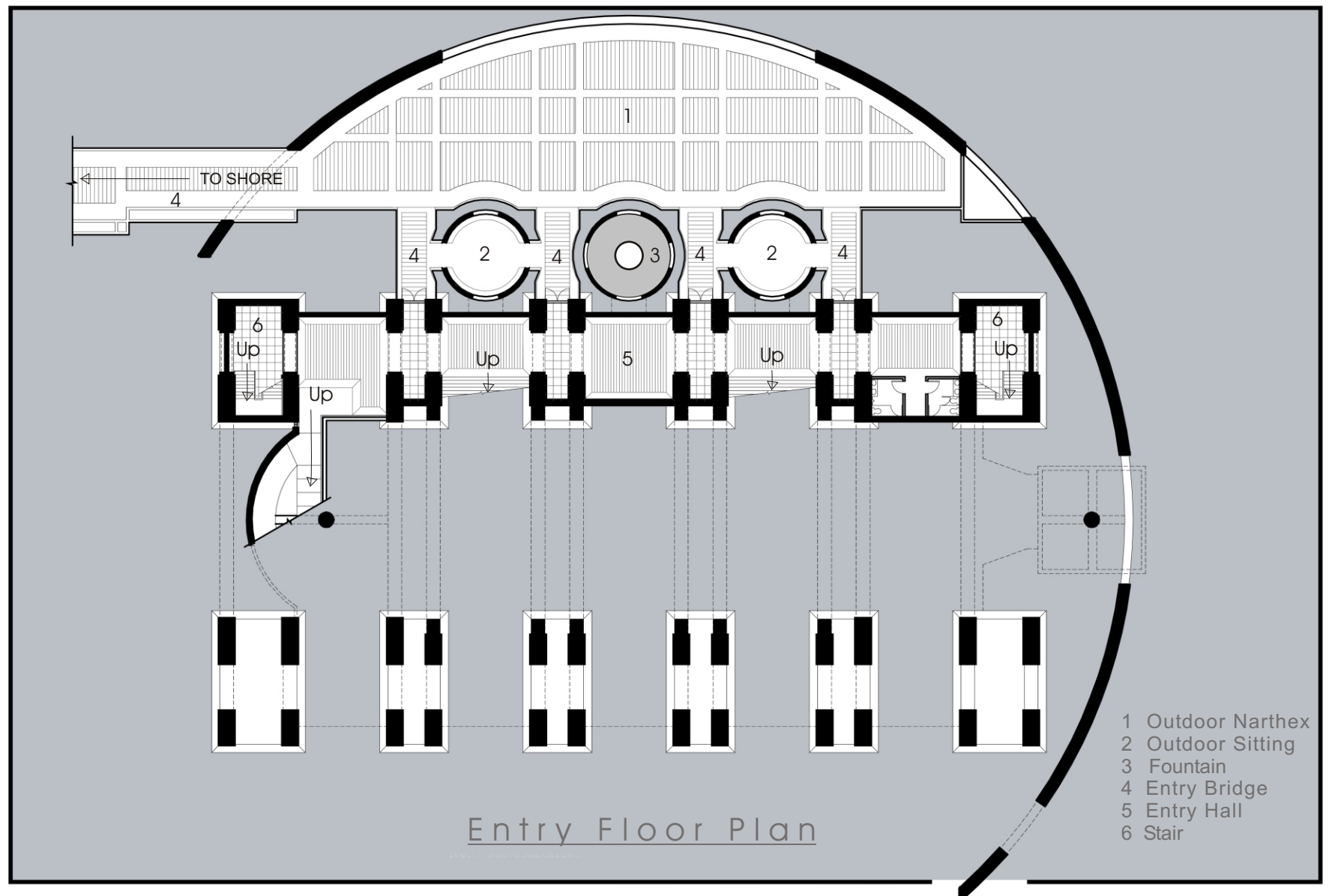
The design of such a building should not be fragmented or chaotic. People's lives are chaotic enough and it is human nature to desire order. The creation of a sacred place is to provide order in an otherwise order-less environment. When a person's life is in order one may find rest and solitude. It is the profane and disarray that causes one to take their focus off of the act of worship and place it on the surrounding chaos. Therefore the forms chosen should be birthed out of a sense of order. They should be pure with little tension and proportions should be balanced and easy. The entire form should connote expressions of completeness.





E x p e r i e n c e

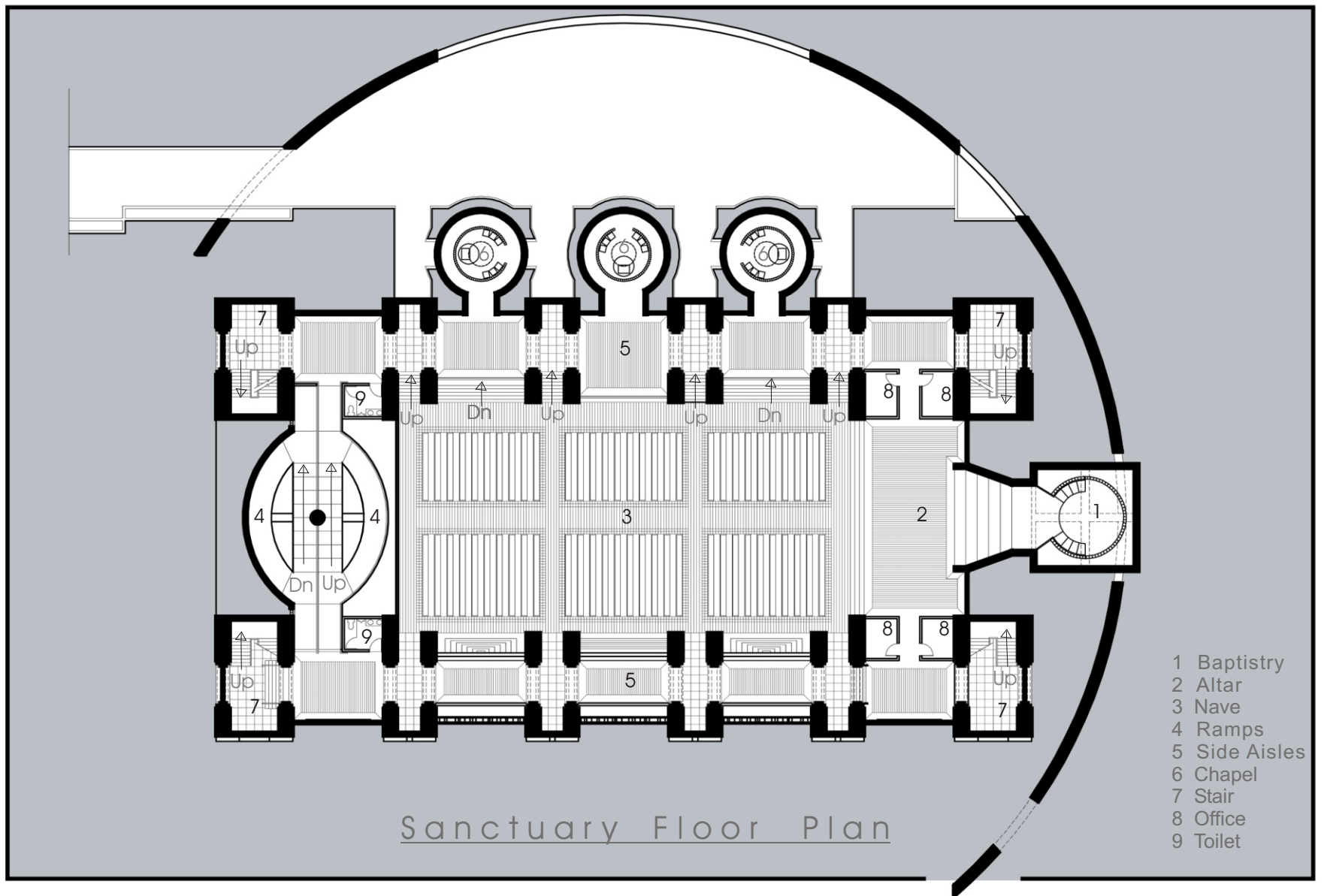
As one participates in the worship service he is surrounded by a rich interplay of light and material coming together to enrich the experience. The light differs depending on the time of day and time of year making one more aware of himself and his place. Morning sun illuminates the cross and the east chapel. Noon sun illuminates the three chapels and the baptistery and evening sun illuminates the west chapel. All during the day the south wall provides an intricate display of light and shadow. More light is emitted during the winter than during the summer. The interplay of light through out the day and seasons gives life to the building. The building sculpts light in many ways giving one a heightened awareness of the light and his existence within it. For the Christian such an experience causes one to contemplate his existence and purpose here on earth. Such contemplation leads us to the worship of our creator and the creator of this light which we depend on and which gives life to the world.



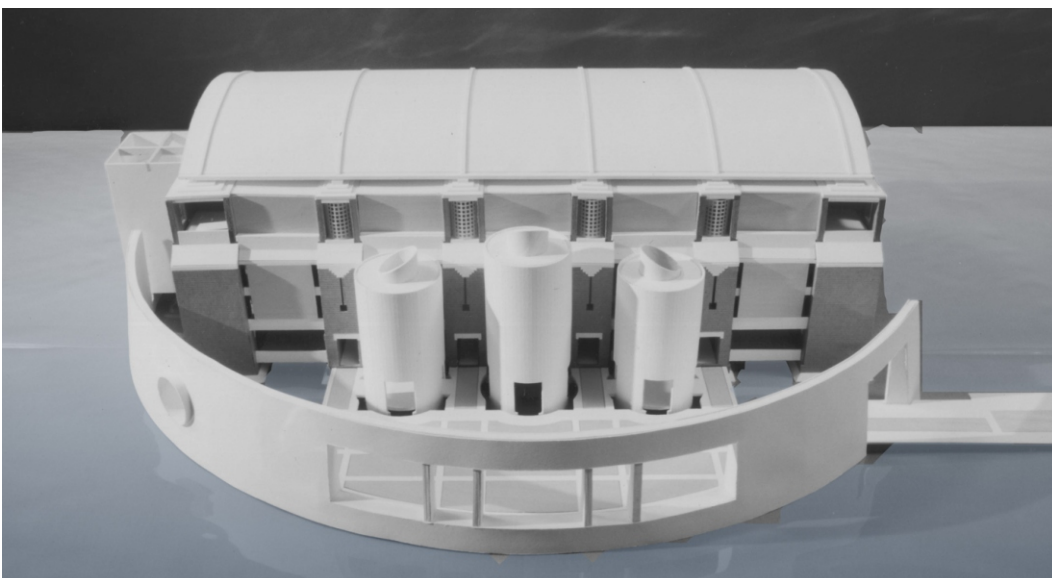
Design

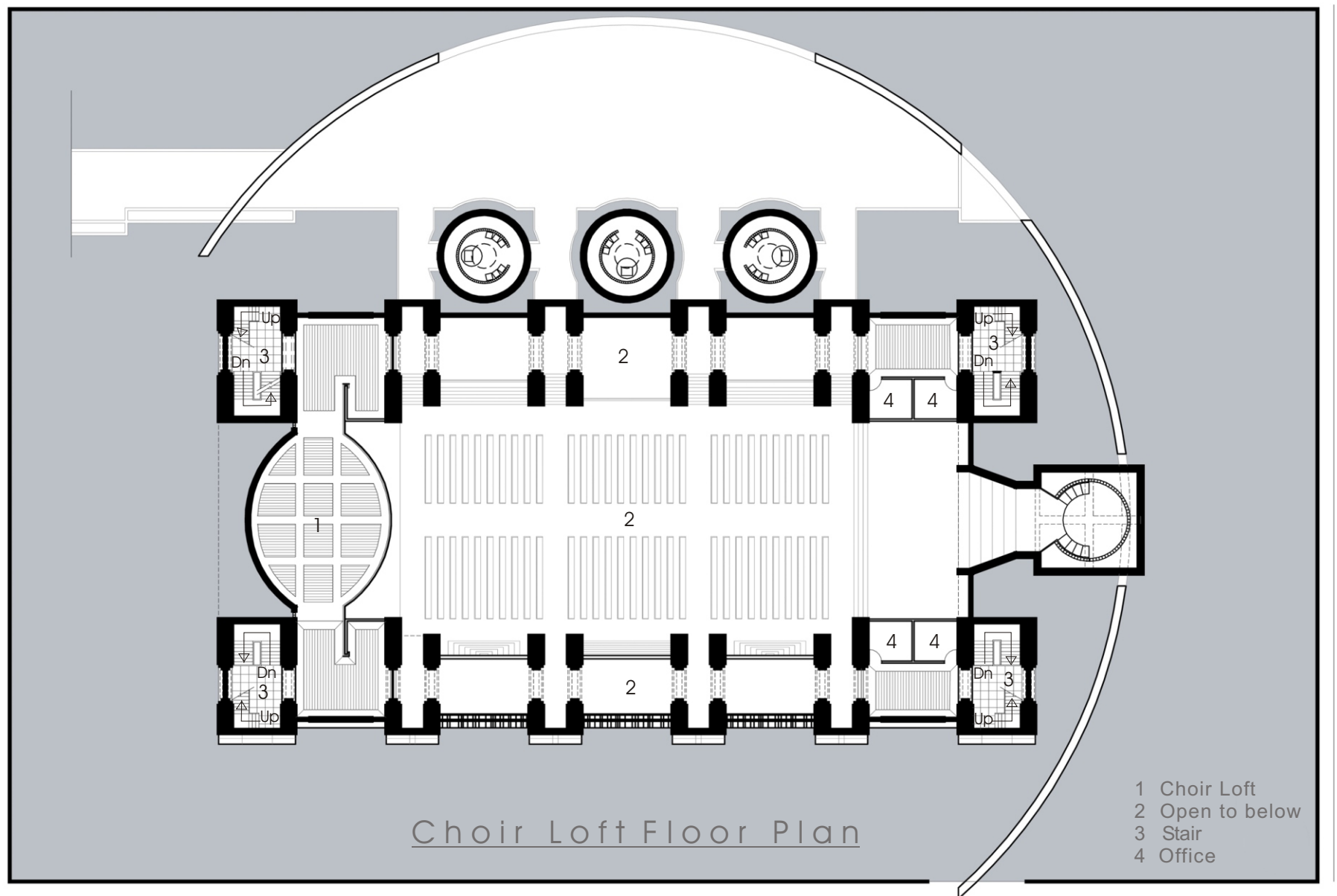
The journey into the place of worship begins outside as one enters the site. The entry road affords the visitor a view of the building placed out in the water and sheltered behind a shear wall rising out of the water. From the entry to the site the south facing wall is observed which has an intricate array of mullion patterns woven into large expanses of glass bridging between six masonry piers rising out of the water.

Upon leaving the car one traverses the site by foot and makes his way through a formal garden down to the waters edge which is sculpted with a wall and walk. This then is the edge of the sacred place. One then comes to the east west axis. At this time he may chose to turn west and go into a private outdoor chapel in the woods or turn east begin a journey across the water to the main church building. The bridge taking one there consists of precast concrete framing with decking planks between giving a slight view of the water below.



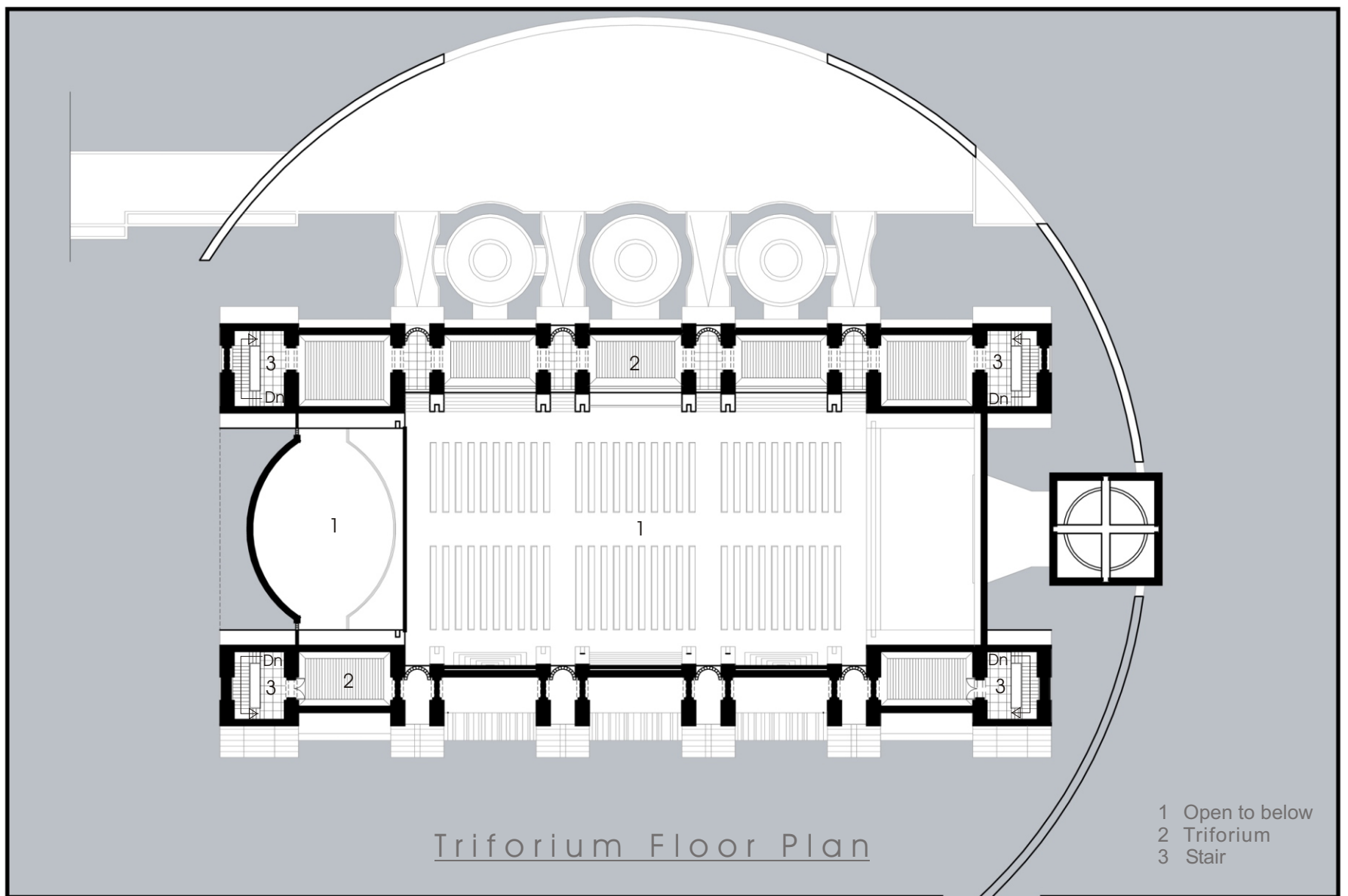
Ahead one sees an opening, a doorway in the encircling wall and beyond that is a cross set in an opening. The wall's purpose is trifold. First it creates a large outside gathering area for fellowship and preparation for worship. Secondly it is a shield. Shielding the road from the view of the participants within and concealing a portion of the building from the passers by. Only one participating is able to fully understand the building making the worship experience more special. Lastly it provides a visual connection of the inside to the outside and with the water to the building. The wall is of the water and belongs to the water more than to the building. Crossing through the doorway signifying arrival.





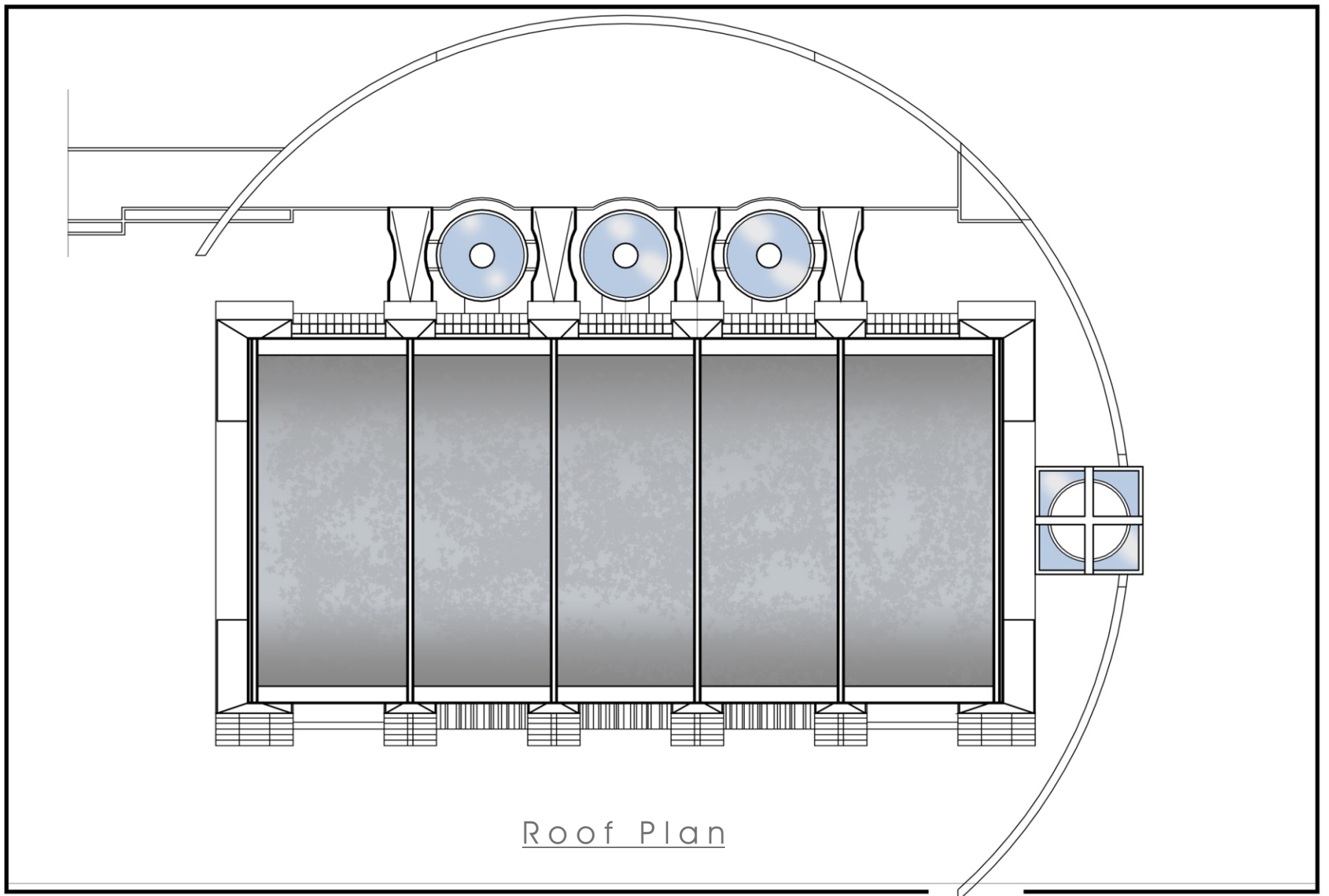
Entry is provided at four locations between three large concrete cylinders. At this level the east and west cylinders are open beneath with pathway access into them and benches for resting and contemplation. The center cylinder is not accessible at this level but a statue and fountain can be seen in the center of it.

The main building is placed at the center of the sacred place created by the circle of water. The main purpose of a chapel or church building is to shelter a worship service, a gathering of believers. This pragmatic need then calls for a large open floor space. In order to create such a space over water would then require a bridge like structure. Large piers would rise up out of the water and carry connecting beams spanning between them. On these beams would rest the floor structure. The piers may then continue up to carry the roof structure. Since the piers are the solid connection to the earth, transferring the weight of the building to the earth below the water, it was decided that they should be made of a rough masonry material resting on top of a concrete base. These piers are then split apart to create rooms within them.



As one enters the building through one of the piers he is first encountered with a transition space, a narthex with low ceilings and a low level of natural light. The space acts as a threshold to the great room which lies ahead. From this area two very wide and inviting stair cases lead up a half level to the main sanctuary floor. Directly in front of the points are large circular openings in the sanctuary wall signifying completeness and ones arrival. Through the circular openings the south facing wall is revealed. The deep mullions are spaced in an intricate pattern to create a play of light and shadow on the floor, much like walking through a forest. The length of the shadows on the floor will be determined by the time of year and angle of the sun.





Across the floor the north wall is treated very different from the south wall as it receives a very different kind of light. Here three large windows span between the four center piers. Each of these windows contains a view of one of the cylinders and an entrance to a chapel contained inside. The soft northern light filters around the cylinder shapes while the inside of the cylinders are brightly illuminated at different times of the day. Atop each chapel is a scoop to catch direct light at different times of the day enhancing one's sense of time and place. The light is captured inside by a glass block cylinder providing privacy for the worshipers inside and diffusing the light in a water like pattern.

