

House Analogies: Resting and Nurturing

The home is where we grow as children; later we nurture one another and our kids. The homes that we have occupied in the past hold a significant place in our memories. In Australia the current TV show, “Julia Zemiro’s Home Delivery”, takes celebrities back to their childhood home and school which they recall with some clarity.

So what value do our church buildings have in our memory? Have they been a place of nurture, were kind people have helped us to understand faith? Were we mentored by seniors and if so, were there spaces that suited that interaction? Could it have been better provided for and should we be thinking differently about creating natural environments in which this can occur in the future church?

I certainly recall the church barbecue garden that we built as enthusiastic teenagers, and our youth club building, which we repainted internally several times as a youth activity. We felt ownership and valued by the church.

Space for contemplation is rare today. To use such spaces we would have to have our smart phones “surgically removed”. But I still remember the weekend retreat, 30 years ago at a wonderful art-deco house which was an annex to a monastery. In the house was a small chapel with seating for no more than four people. I needed space for a time and I was normally alone but felt God’s presence.

There is a move to establish quiet gardens alongside some churches and these are some times shared with an adjoining school. Some US Catholic churches are creating reconciliation gardens as places for prayer and refuge.

We should give much more attention to the surrounds of our church buildings. They can be much more than a “landscape buffer” between the boundary and the building. Creating spaces for outside gathering might only cost 10% of the cost of building internal space. They can be invitational, laid out with seating for contemplation, as a barbecue garden for socialising over food, made for sports, for children’s play or as a secluded place for prayer. Tending a useful garden can be a great ministry for an enthusiastic gardener.



A small garden can be a valuable place for reflection and prayer

My new book, **“Making Property Serve Mission - Rethinking the Church’s buildings for the 21st Century”** is available in paperback at [Book Depository](#) [Koorong](#) [Blackwell’s UK](#) [Amazon US](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#) and as an e-book at [Apple iBooks Store](#) [Amazon Aus \(kindle\)](#) [Barnes & Noble](#) and [ebookMall](#)
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