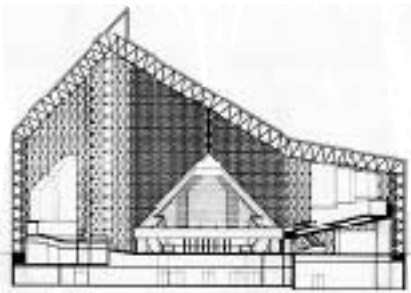
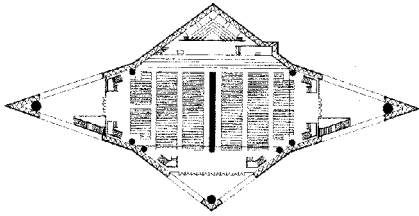


# CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL

Garden Grove Community Church  
Garden Grove, California

PHILIP JOHNSON • ALAN RITCHIE  
ARCHITECTS



Client: Garden Grove Community Church  
Completion Date: 1980/1992  
Area: 3,000 seats  
Associate Architect: Albert C. Martin and Associates

The Reverend Dr. Robert Schuller commissioned this church to help transmit his message through architecture. It was to inspire and bond the experience of religion with the experience of nature. Dr. Schuller said that he felt God should be enjoyed in the presence of the sky and the surrounding world, not in a forbidding stone environment. In response to this Johnson produced an extraordinary glass structure.

From the outside, the huge church, sheathed entirely in glass, appears as a gigantic crystalline form along the freeway, earning it its popular name, the Crystal Cathedral. White-painted space trusses contrast with the glass on the interior, a muscular counterpoint to the sharp angles and fragility.

In order to focus the interior on the chancel, the typical Latin cross plan of Christian churches is adjusted to bring every seat as close to the stage as possible. The nave is shortened, the transept widened, and the plan transformed into a four-pointed star. The congregation enters from three points, under the balconies, into the immense space. The center aisle is lined with splashing fountains that die down just before the reverend is about to speak.

A pair of "Cape Kennedy doors", a mere 90 feet high, sit on one side of the chancel and may be opened by hand-held remote control, allowing Schuller's address to reach those worshippers in the parking lot listening to his message on car radios. The church is not air-conditioned but is shielded from sunlight by its reflective glass and ventilated through motorized windows. The design of these makes the windows indistinguishable from inoperable panes when closed, giving the "crystal" an uninterrupted surface.

In 1990 the Reverend Dr. Schuller commissioned Philip Johnson to design a new campanile, or bell tower. The 240 foot tall steel tower, clad in stainless steel prisms, has a marble chapel at the base.



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