**EPISCOPAL ACADEMY CHAPEL**


*Location: Newtown Square, PA*

*Client: Episcopal Academy*

*Area: 15,000 sf*

*Construction Cost: $8,500,000*

*Completion: 2008*

*Distinctions: Design Award of Honor, Pennsylvania Council Society of American Registered Architects, 2009*

The Episcopal Academy was founded in Philadelphia in 1795 and subsequently established campuses outside the city in Devon and Merion. In 2001, they acquired land to relocate both campuses to a single parcel in Newtown Square - 123 acres of woods, wetlands, and former farmland.

The new campus is to consist of seven new structures and three renovated buildings arranged around a central green commons. The focus of this “school village” will be a new Chapel, which VSBA was selected to design. (Curiously enough, as the subject of his 1950 Master’s Thesis at Princeton, Robert Venturi designed a chapel for the Episcopal Academy’s Merion campus.)

VSBA designed the Chapel to be an iconic campus landmark -- immediately identifiable and symbolic of the new campus, yet also a well-used and highly-functional school facility.

Its distinctive form is composed of many layers -- of masonry walls and soaring clerestories. The spaces between these layers allow circulation and light. The impressive and gently monumental scale of the building is softened by striped patterns at pedestrian-level.

Inside, the Chapel’s fan-shaped plan allows worshipers to face each other as well as the altar, nurturing a sense of togetherness and community. This was a configuration endorsed by the chaplain at the beginning of the design process -- and as we like to say, we get our best ideas from our clients.

The interior is lit by means of 2 levels of clerestory windows and from the interstices between over-lapping layers of walls, which allow indirect light to create aura.

The Chapel will serve as an important facet of life at Episcopal Academy. Upper and middle school students attend Chapel three days a week, lower school students attend once a week. While the service celebrates the Episcopalian heritage, it serves and welcomes students of all faiths.