Encompassing Spirituality: An Exercise in Formal Gathering
Religion is a culmination of a specific set of beliefs developed from human spirituality which has established itself and created a bond among the people of the world who believe in a higher power and a granted, finite period of time, and by its nature demands decisions concerning how its followers gather.
Believers are bound by a higher power that is based in a certainty of a beginning, the present, and an inherent end to a given period of time.

Historical ties and human spirituality have given people the ability to establish and practice their own religions and faiths, many of which are recognized by others and accepted.

Religions, while different in practice are established on the similar belief that life and what follows is located in a higher power thus creating a bond amongst the different sects and denominations of the world.

The gathering spaces in which the believers of the world worship are therefore inherently related to one another.
Despite a people’s established religion, the places in which they gather can be adapted to serve a larger community of people because they are bound by the idea of a higher power and a continuum of time in relation to their lives.
The typology of this thesis project is to be a building/gathering space in which the different religions of the world gather. The space will encompass religion in a broad scope focusing on what it means to live and worship through the stages of life as a group of people who believe in a higher power regardless of one’s declared formal religion.
the progress of religion: the act of existing

While religion has no pure definition it embraces a group of people interacting with one another (Wade, 2009).

Religion is the practice of existing along a time continuum with a community of believers with the same ideals.
current religious belief

Seeing a strong movement from traditional, personal belief to a communal sharing of basic ideals.

Religion provides the framework for believers. Its intention is not to provide people with scientific answers, but rather to help us transcend and discover life as a group as we exist on the time continuum.
parliament of the world’s religions

forefront of current religious belief

establishment of common ideals

parliament of 1893
parliament of the world’s religions

a global ethic
religious dialogue
understanding origins
maintaining harmony

"People may pray alone, but religious services and rituals are communal."
Religious origins and traditions

importance of common understanding

differences

similarities

Islam
Judaism
Buddhism
Hinduism
Christianity
Shinto
Taoism
Sikhism
Confucianism

Religion
Islam is the dominant religion of non-Western religions. It follows the life of the prophet Muhammed who used his LIFE JOURNEY to proclaim the religion that God created (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

To first look at the religion of Islam, it is necessary to understand its roots and definition. The most basic understanding of Islam is derived from the Arab root s-l-m. This simple phrase breaks down to mean, “PEACE,” “SURRENDER,” and more completely, “the peace that comes when one’s life is surrendered to GOD.” The practice and rituals of the religion define the culture and nature of its followers (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

Islam, like other religions, is founded on the principles of a LIFE JOURNEY. Divided into sections, four ideals present themselves as the most important: god, CREATION, the HUMAN SELF, and the DAY OF JUDGEMENT (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

“God,” the term given to their higher power, is defined as a single divine entity. From God stems Creation, the second Islamic concept. Islam proclaims that everything was created under God, even the Human Self. The Human Self is brought into the world to interact with God’s creation and give gratitude for the TIME given as well as to surrender and believe in a higher power. The final principle is that of the Day of Judgement, which states that eventually the life granted to the believer will INHERENTLY END (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

Islam presents itself upon this time continuum, and rituals are held to celebrate the passing of each stage (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).
Judaism is a Western monotheistic religion. Its followers believe that a single, all-knowing power which they define as “GOD” created all things to have a purpose in a DIVINE ORDER. God grants CREATION, HUMAN EXISTANCE, and a REVIVAL of the Dead (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

The Jewish faith exists along a TIME continuum in which the believer seeks understanding of God through creation, human existence, history, morality, justice, suffering, and eventually an INHERENT END to life (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

Jews are BORN into the world by God. They are granted a period of time to seek the meaning of life and existence under a higher power. This path is defined as Human Existence through which they rely on one another for understanding (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

Their faith is defined through social interactions and understanding of one another in relation to the human condition and life cycle. The first stage is birth followed by two coming of age ceremonies. After these CEREMONIES, followers are believed to have an understanding of God and will follow his commandments on their own terms. The last stage of life is the return to God. It marks an inherent end to the life journey and a completion of understanding. It is embraced and the life of the follower is CELEBRATED as an asset to understanding the teachings of their higher power (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).
Buddhism is an Eastern Faith based in the WORSHIP of a man who had a divine spiritual awakening. Much like western faiths, Buddha was seen as infallible and provided a standard by which people should live their lives (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

Buddhists believe that the Buddha set forth a PATH defined by Four Noble Truths. The first is the most important in the series as it describes the journey and experiences that every human will go through. Broken into six parts, Buddhists define LIFE through the trauma of BIRTH, the PATHOLOGY of sickness, the morbidity of decrepitude, the phobia of DEATH, to be tied to what one dislikes, and finally the separation from what one loves (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

The path is set out to understand a higher power through human trials as a GROUP of people following the same doctrine. All are brought into the world, suffer together to find understanding, and are returned to that from which they came (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

Buddha defined humans as social creatures who need to be among people on the same JOURNEY as themselves. Together they define their path and problems (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

While Buddhism isn’t as driven by defined ideals as other religions, it still maintains a sense of life path by which people maintain their spirituality (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).
Hinduism is the main religion practiced in India. It is a more diverse religion worshiping the existence of multiple deities. However, the religion embraces the belief in Brahman, the life force that defines existence. This force defines a being in a karma life and death cycle (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

This karma cycle is defined by four main stages: student, marriage, retirement, and finally sannyasin. First, followers are born into the world and maintain themselves as students. The mind is surrendered to learning of their existence from teachers. Upon completion the students graduate into marriage where they are household owners. Here they define their own lives and choose their path. In retirement the followers turn inward in hopes of reaching the final stage of sannyasin. The final stage is not a physical transition, but rather a state of being. It is the ultimate goal of Hindus in which they are broken of the karma life cycle and return to that which they came (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).
Christianity has its roots in Judaism, and thus shares nearly identical characteristics. Christians believe in one HIGHER POWER named Jesus. Through him they define how they live their lives (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).

The Christian faith defines life as a journey through stages: BIRTH, EXISTENCE, and DEATH. Human life is shaped in the image of GOD. At birth people are brought into the world by God. They are cared for by their parents who use the teachings of the faith to raise their children until they are accepted into the faith COMMUNITY. They are then deemed responsible for their own actions and expected to follow the path that the church presents to them. Their journey concludes in death, through which they are returned to their creator (Smith, 1995; Wenner, 2001).
sacred path and spirituality
commonality in spaces

“The power of the golden section to create harmony arises from its unique capacity to unite different parts of a whole so that each preserves its own identity, and yet blends into the pattern of a greater whole” (p. 11-12).
shinto - ise complex

Religion
Religion

PROPORTION.
FORM.
LIGHT.
SITE POSITIONING.

TIME CONTINUUM.
parliament of the world’s religions and URI
Site

- man made land - prairie grasses
- parkway
- city scape - urban fabric
Site
historical importance

CHICAGO.
REDEVELOPMENT.
DANIEL BURNHAM.
WORLD'S FAIR.
IDEALS.

SPIRITUALITY.
historical importance

The concept for the design began as an exploration of the time continuum upon which religious believers exist and the chaos that the state of faith is currently in.

Formal religions are beginning to dissipate and organize as one larger body interacting with one another recognizing the need to mend the ruin and schism created through religious disagreements.
Concept 1

Concept 2

Concept 3

Concept
Concept
Concept
Concept
Concept
Concept
To explore the parti I created a series of spatial explorations in relation to the program set forth in the thesis book.

Discovering how the spaces related to one another with respects to the linear aspect of the site and parti allowed the design to move forward and be explored in three dimensions.
Design
Design
Utilizing the superstructure as a translation of the parti, I began to explore the intentions communicated through the arrangement and scale of the members eventually arriving at a solution which compliments the premise and human scale.
Midterm
Midterm
Midterm
Midterm
Midterm
Midterm
Midterm
Midterm
BIRTH
EXISTENCE
DEATH.
GATHERING.

SPIRITUALITY.
ENTRY.
MEMBER COLLECT.
MAIN GATHERING SPACE.
ANCILLARY GATHERING SPACE.
PREPARATION SPACE.
OFFICE.
CLASSROOM.
MEETING ROOM.

MEN'S RESTROOM.
WOMEN'S RESTROOM.
MECHANICAL SPACE.
MAIL ROOM / STORAGE.
ALTAR SPACE ONE.
ALTAR SPACE TWO.
EXTERIOR GATHERING ALTAR SPACE.
interior perspective - seating one
ENCORPASSING SPIRITUALITY : AN EXERCISE IN FORMAL GATHERING : FLEXIBLE WORSHIP SPACE FOR THE WORLD’S RELIGIONS

“Gathering displays the universal and transcendent truth to be found in religion, or perhaps in only one religion...

...one religious tradition.”

-Parliament of the World's Religions:
The East and West Encounter