



## *Interfaith Airport Meditation Room of Milwaukee*

### **History of Interfaith Airport Meditation Room of Milwaukee St. Stephen's Church Move**

Prior to 2009, many travelers would stop at St. Stephen's Church located adjacent to Mitchell International Airport to pray or meditate before or after a flight. In 2009, the church decided to move to a larger building in Oak Creek, WI. The 163 year old church building was demolished. That left no place for travelers or airport employees to stop to pray or meditate. One of the parishioners from St. Stephen's visited the Lay Ministry Program at Cardinal Strich University and learned that there are 150 airport interfaith chapels worldwide, including 43 in the U.S., but none at Mitchell International Airport. She contacted Rev. Richard Liska, the Pastor of St. Stephen's, and he wrote a letter supporting the airport chapel to the members of the Milwaukee County Board. Contact was also made with the airport administration and leaders of various faiths to seek their support.

### **Board of Directors Formed**

A formal Board of Directors for the then named Interfaith Airport Chapel of Milwaukee, Inc. was formed in December, 2009 with representatives of several major faith traditions. The current Board of Directors has eight members. An Advisory Board was created in the Summer of 2010. Additional members will be added as the scope of the project grows and the chapel is built. The project has since been renamed "Interfaith Airport Meditation Room of Milwaukee."

### **Review of Other U.S. and Overseas Interfaith Airport Chapels**

The board realized the benefit of being part of a larger aviation organization and joined the International Association of Civil Aviation Chaplains. They enlisted their support and their informational resources.

### **The Need for a Meditation Room**

The number of travelers through Mitchell International Airport has seen a 24.11% increase in 2010. Records set for the increased number of air travelers are being broken monthly. In order to meet the needs of these additional travelers and employees, a place has been selected for a moment of quiet. The traveler's experience will be enhanced by the airport offering this opportunity to rest in an area set apart from the busy pace of the airport. The area is ideally located for optimal convenience. In May of 2009 Mr. Barry Bateman, Director of the Airport, selected a site in the north skywalk annex area.

### **Appearance of the Meditation Room**

In the Fall of 2010, the Chapel Board asked four local architectural firms to submit preliminary sketches of an Airport Chapel. The Board voted and selected the design proposed by Plunkett Raysich, LLC Architects. Their design welcomes travelers into a space balanced with contemporary and traditional features, which was the intent of those involved from the start. The sketches were presented to Mr. Bateman for approval.

### **Moving Forward**

The Meditation Room project will consist of two phases: Construction of the room and implementing a Chaplaincy Program.

Construction is scheduled to begin in February, 2012 with a target completion date of May, 2012.

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*Interfaith Airport Meditation Room  
of Milwaukee*

*PO Box 402, So. Milwaukee, WI 53172-0402*

## Interfaith Airport Meditation Room of Milwaukee is scheduled to Open in May, 2012



Exterior View from Concourse



Interior View

### Once Operational

- All religious faiths will be welcome.
- The Meditation Room will be open 24 hours a day.
- Scheduled services will be in future plans.
- The Meditation Room will be subject to the needs of the airport and will work closely with Administration.

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Meditation Room is to provide designated space at Mitchell International Airport for private meditation, prayer and public worship for travelers and employees or interested persons of all faiths.

### Make a Donation

Please support this project by donating generously. As many donations as possible are needed by February, 2012 to allow for the four months of construction. All donations and memorials are gratefully accepted and are tax-deductible. Send your donations to:

**Interfaith Airport Meditation Room of Milwaukee (IAMRM), PO Box 402, So. Milwaukee, WI 53172-0402**

### For More Information

Please e-mail: [Agrusa3@wi.rr.com](mailto:Agrusa3@wi.rr.com) or [smckinneyrn94@wi.rr.com](mailto:smckinneyrn94@wi.rr.com)

### Comments Taken from Other Airport Chapel Registers

*"Peace and love. Thanks for the service."*

*"Pray for my mission calling."*

*"Thank you for being a refuge in the storm."*

*"May God bless all who enter here."*

*"Thanks for providing sanctuary."*

*"Glad to have run into this here."*

*"Thank you for offering me the opportunity of having a moment of peace."*

*"Thank you for offering this for week-end travelers."*

*"Thank you for having a chapel! It was a real surprise."*

*"Thanks for having a place for me to speak to God."*

*"Lord, bless America, bless my family."*

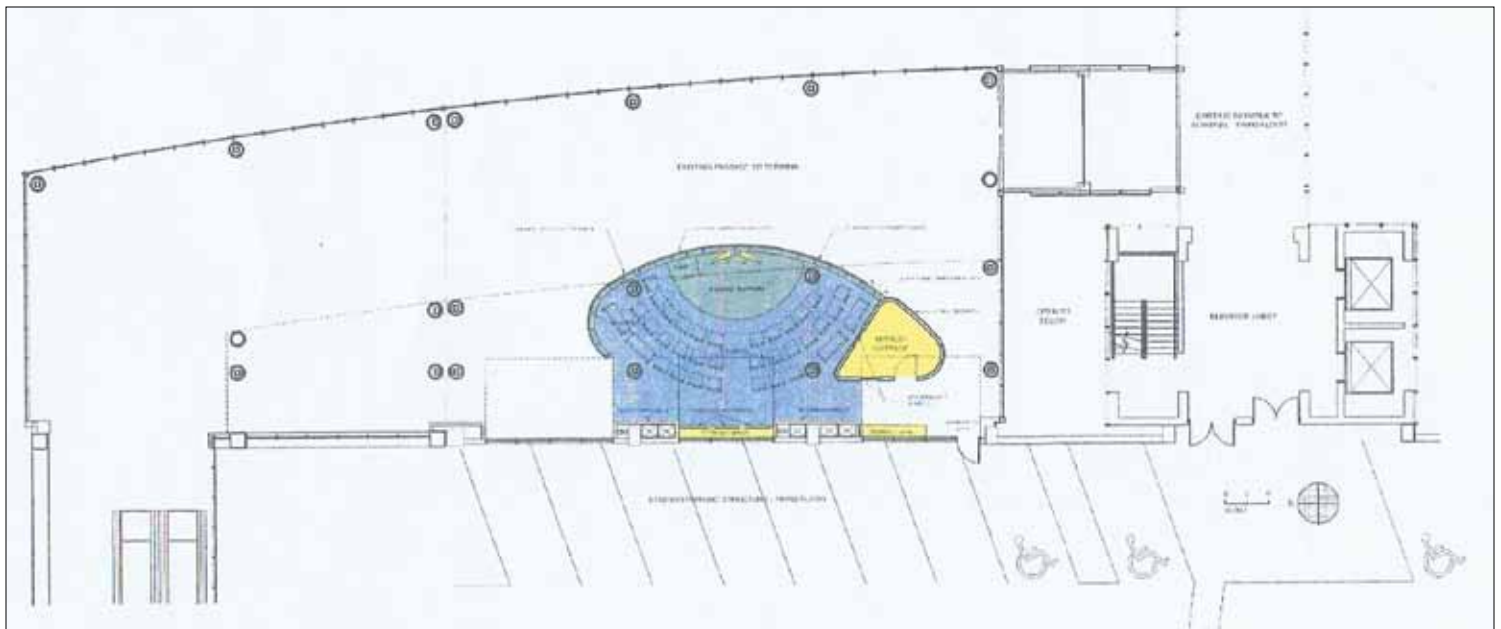
*"Timely - Thanks!"*

*"...Peace at last!"*

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Interfaith Airport Meditation Room Of Milwaukee Expanded Floor Plan

RELIGION

Journal Sentinel Article 5-4-11

# A great addition

The Freedom From Religion Foundation shouldn't be fighting a proposal for a meditation room at Mitchell International Airport.

In another standard knee-jerk reaction to any proposal that offers even a whiff of spirituality, the Madison-based Freedom From Religion Foundation challenged a proposed meditation room at Milwaukee's Mitchell International Airport. The anti-God squad said the room would be an improper public subsidy of religion.

Nonsense.

The room would occupy "kind of a dead corner" of the airport that had been used mainly for storage, according to Airport Manager C. Barry Bateman. John Jorgensen, the county's acting corporation counsel, said the plan didn't appear to violate church-state restrictions and that it would be "just a quiet place for people to sit."

Seems to us that airports could use more such spaces.

The interfaith group pushing for the room is seeking donations to cover the estimated \$300,000 cost to furnish the chapel, including a lavender-and-blue glass panel to decorate the wall facing the airport concourse. The group — put together by Suzanne McKinney, a Cudahy nurse and parishioner of St. Stephen's Catholic Church — is also seeking funding

for additional operational costs. The room would include chairs and benches and an open area for those who want to use prayer rugs.

In other words, a lot of private money would be used in an area of the airport that doesn't get much use now. That's not an improper public subsidy of anything.

Religious services could be held there, and McKinney is recruiting chaplains to staff the room. But the important thing is that the design of the room would seek to meet everyone's needs.

So visitors could participate in a nondenominational service, ponder words of wisdom from a great book or books, offer a prayer that your flight will land safely, contemplate the universe. The Freedom From Religion Foundation could even hold meditation sessions on the folly of religion. Those are all legitimate uses and don't violate any church-state barrier.

The County Board has approved the measure, and new County Executive Chris Abele signed it. The foundation should drop any objection.

As Supervisor Peggy West put it, "This is a wonderful addition to the airport."

*Does a meditation room at Mitchell International Airport violate the wall between church and state? Email your opinion to [jsedit@journaisentinel.com](mailto:jsedit@journaisentinel.com) to be considered for publication as a letter to the editor. Please see letters guidelines.*



# *Milwaukee County*

Supervisor Michael Mayo, Sr., 7<sup>th</sup> District  
Chairman, Transportation, Public Works & Transit Committee

Supervisor Patricia Jursik, 8<sup>th</sup> District

For Immediate Release April 6, 2011  
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## **COMMITTEE APPROVES INTERFAITH CHAPEL AT MITCHELL AIRPORT**

**Milwaukee, WI** – The County Board’s Committee on Transportation, Public Works & Transit unanimously voted this morning to approve the development of an interfaith chapel and meditation room at General Mitchell International Airport.

Residents speaking in favor of the resolution included chapel organizer Suzanne McKinney who has been the driving force behind the planning of the chapel for over five years. Pending approval from the full County Board, the chapel will be located in the lobby area of the main airport parking structure, immediately adjacent to the sailboat art display.

“Many travelers saw the steeple of St. Stephen’s just south of the Airport and, according to the pastor, the travelers often stopped, particularly those traveling for funerals,” Supervisor Jursik told the Committee. “Now that St. Stephen’s has relocated, it’s important to provide a non-denominational space at our Airport.”

“I’m pleased we are able to provide this option at Mitchell,” said Supervisor Michael Mayo, Sr., Chairman of the Transportation, Public Works & Transit Committee. “Not only will the chapel give travelers a place to worship and meditate, it will hopefully make their traveling experience a little more relaxing as well.”

The full County Board will take up the resolution at a meeting on Thursday, April 21, 2011.



*(Chapel supporters, including organizer Suzanne McKinney (center, in green) were greeted by Sup. Jursik following testimony)*

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