



**FREEDOM BY DESIGN**

Illinois Institute of Technology

**Uptown Baptist Church**

**UBC Signage**

Fall 2017

# About Us

Freedom By Design is the service program of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) that utilizes the training and talents of architecture students to foster accessible design through collaborative, community-based effort. The program embraces efforts to provide both design-build and engagement solutions.

The Freedom By Design (FBD) program was a brand new addition to the AIAS Illinois Institute of Technology chapter in 2017-18 school year, making the signage featured in this document the first and inaugural project for our FBD team.

As with all FBD projects, all funds related to the project were raised by our team. For this project, fundraising was supplemented by a generous project grant from the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB).

This commitment to service helped form a meaningful relationship with our client, Uptown Baptist Church. Working with their organization, we were able to activate their spaces through signage, helping them to make the best use of their facilities.

# 02



**Blake Hageman**  
Director



**Eva Kultermann**  
Design Mentor



**Roland Knowlden**  
Project Manager



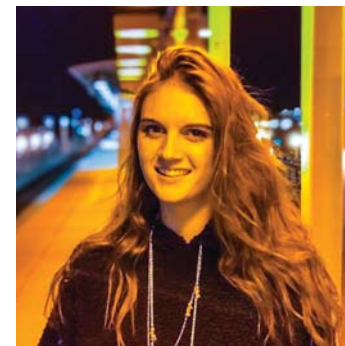
**Adam Fogel**  
Chair, FBD Advisory  
Group



**Allaa Abdelsaid**  
Fundraising



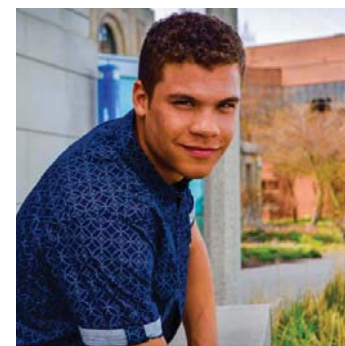
**Arlene Hayes**  
Chapter President



**Caitlyn Kenneally**  
Communications



**Joseph Fujinami**  
Chapter Secretary



**Daniel Allen**  
Treasurer



**Adam Rostek**  
Collaborator



# About Our Client



**Michael Allen**  
Senior Pastor, Uptown Baptist Church

*Primary Client Contact*

Throughout their rich and diverse history, the Uptown Baptist Church (UBC) has been a consistent beacon working tirelessly to improve their community (Chicago, IL). From its beginnings as a home Bible study to a flourishing inner-city church, the ministry of UBC stands as a symbol of hope and light in the midst of a seemingly dark and hopeless city.

The church offers its' spaces regularly for many community services, including meals for the homeless, services for single mothers and abused women, and community meetings.

The signage eases circulation in the building, allowing these services and many of the other church programs to happen more smoothly for the church staff and visitors. It improves accessibility for the less able, and makes the church building a more effective and inviting community landmark. We are excited that with the help of this improvement, UBC will continue to grow and be an effective organization for its community.

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Uptown Baptist Church, Chicago, IL



# SITE VISIT





# Outdated Signage

In the church's own words, "the physical facility has always presented a challenge." The UBC building itself is roughly one hundred years old, and has a fairly unusual floor plan for contemporary standards, which is why they asked for our help.

During our first visit to the Uptown Baptist Church, Pastor Allen gave us a tour of the facilities. He described the what each room was used for and how often the room was occupied. As we walked through the church, we photographed existing signs and formed basic ideas on how to improve the signage for the parish, its members, and the community.

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Existing Sanctuary Signage



View of Gymnasium and Upper level Offices







DESIGN





# Charrette



After visiting the site, we organized a charrette as a way to collect and organize our thoughts about potential design trajectories. Held on a Saturday afternoon, this brought the team back together as we began to discuss overall concepts, materiality, and construction.

By the end of the session, we narrowed down the many potentials for signs to three types, which helped us begin to estimate a budget for the several signs that we wanted to produce.

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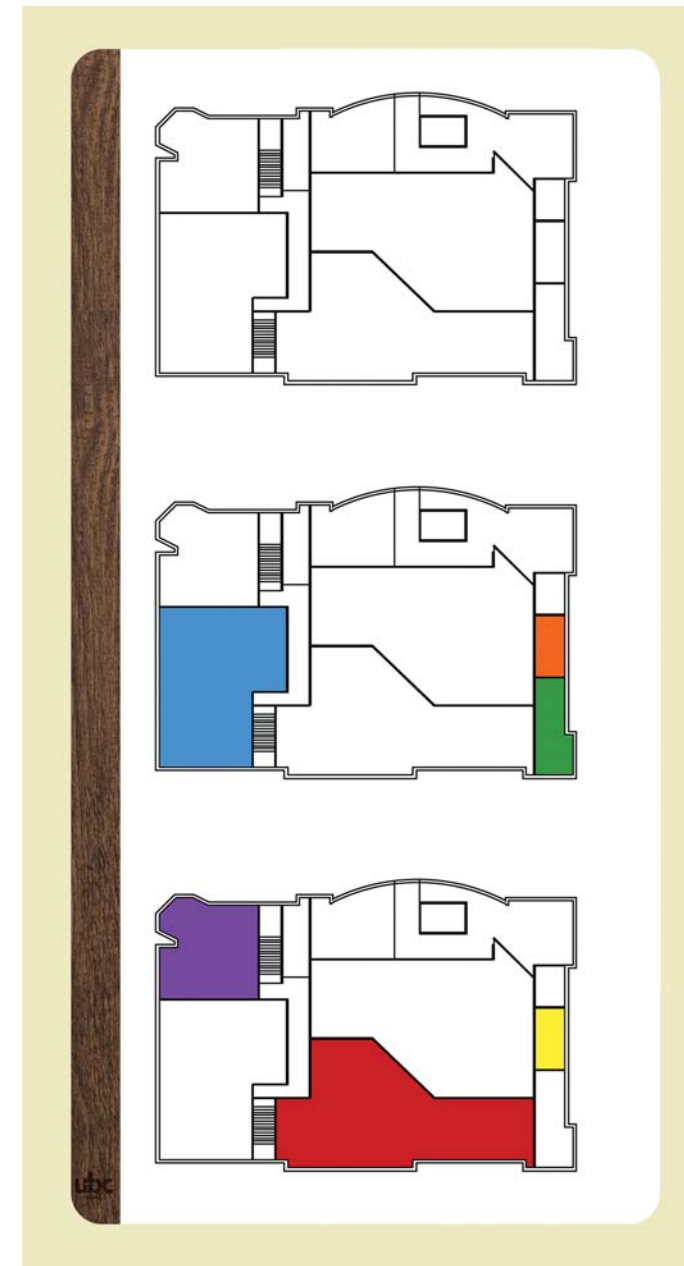
# Sign Types

Based on the tour of the facilities and the discussions that occurred during the charrette, the team defined three types that could be placed throughout the church. Each type of sign deals with how people circulate through the building.

Directory signs, located at the main entries, provide a map of the church which is color coded to help visitor quickly navigate to classrooms, restrooms, and gathering spaces.

Nodal signs are secondary to the directory signs. They are located along paths to guide occupants in the appropriate direction of the room they are seeking.

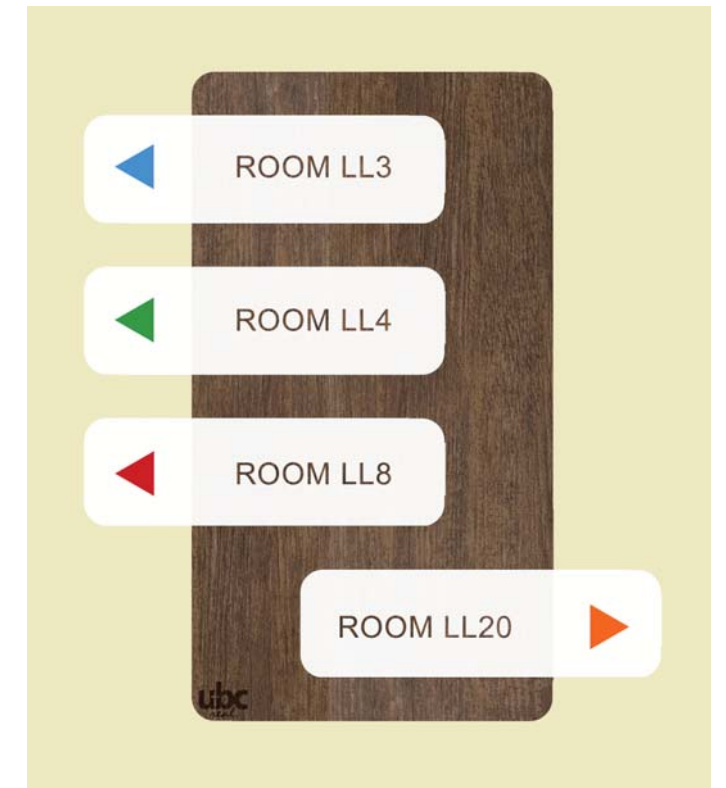
Location signs are placed next to each room throughout the building. Certain rooms have been color-coded on the directory, which is reflected on the corresponding location signs.



*Left:* Directory signs to be placed at main entrances

*Right (above):* Node signs for intersections and general wayfinding

*Right (below):* Location signs for destinations and classrooms





# Testing Sizes

Upon our second visit to the site, we presented our initial ideas to Pastor Allen who offered his feedback about the designs. He was extremely pleased with what we had created during the preceding weeks, and his thoughts were directly integrated into the final designs.

While on site, we used full scale cardboard mock-ups to check what sizes would work best with regard to visibility, cost of production, and ease of installations, among other factors.

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FABRICATION

Upp  
2022



# Cutting Components



All of the signs are backed with oak panels, stained a darker shade to contrast against the information-bearing white layers on top. Although most of the signs utilize white acrylic, the directory signs use a clear piece of acrylic to cover the plans printed on paper.

We split the wood backings out of dimensional cuts of lumber. The planks were then glued together before being laser cut and etched with the UBC logo. After the backings and acrylic sheets were properly cut, the oak panels were each given two coats of stain.

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# Assembly

To assemble all the cut components, the team gathered in our AIAS office and operated in an assembly line. One group peeled off the paper from the acrylic, another group removed the letters and numbers from the cuts, and a third group began to mount the acrylic to the wood backing using construction adhesive. As prefabrication was an integral aspect of our process, this construction session finalized many of the signs before installation.

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A pizza break on assembly day in the AIAS office



Roland finalizing the directory signs





Left Top: Location Sign



Left Middle: Classroom sign with placeholder sheet

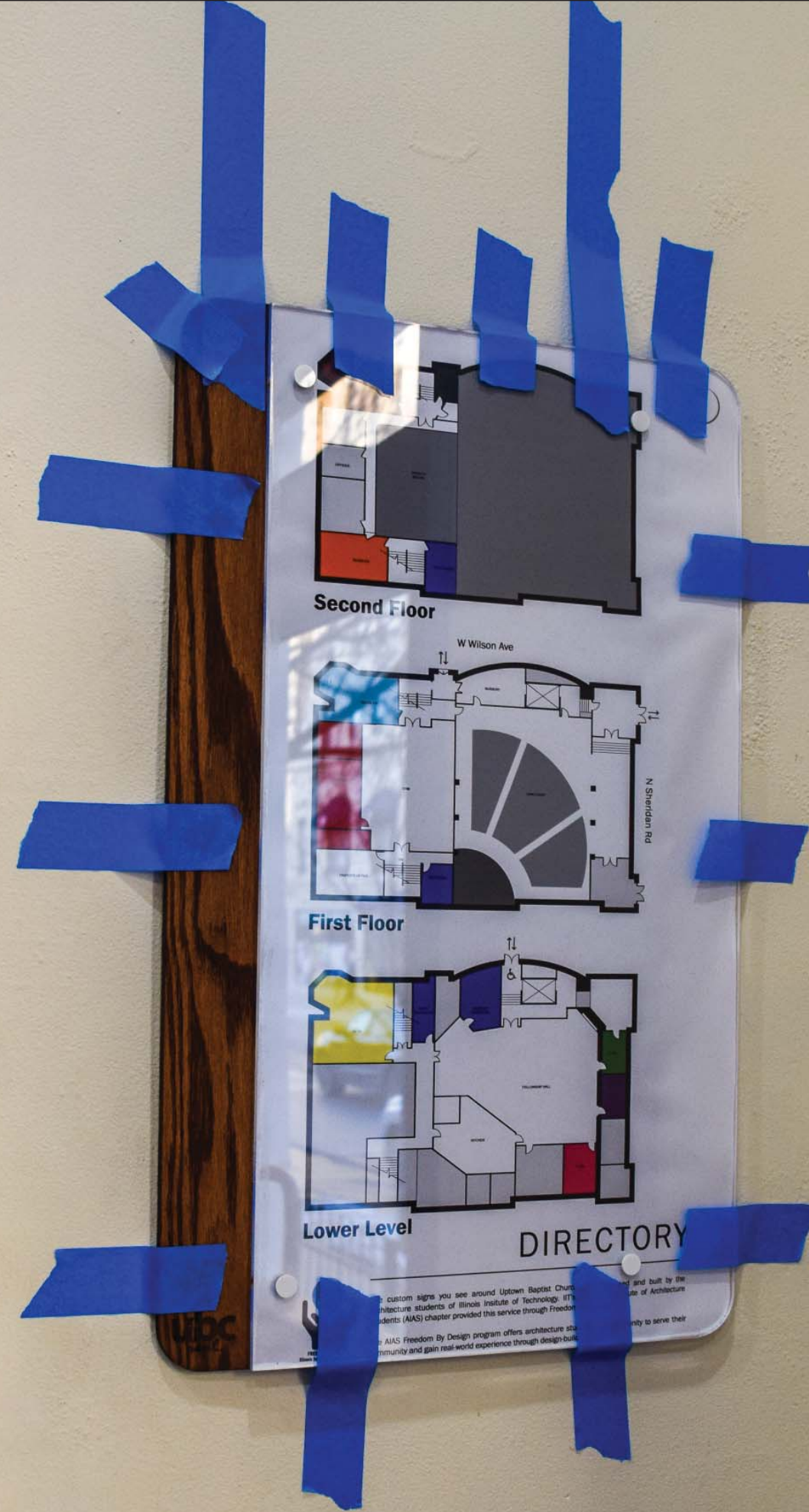
Left Bottom: Node Sign

Right: Directory Sign





# INSTALLATION





# APPLICATION

We installed the assembled signage at Uptown Baptist Church on a Saturday morning. To optimize the installation, we divided labor across the multi-step process.

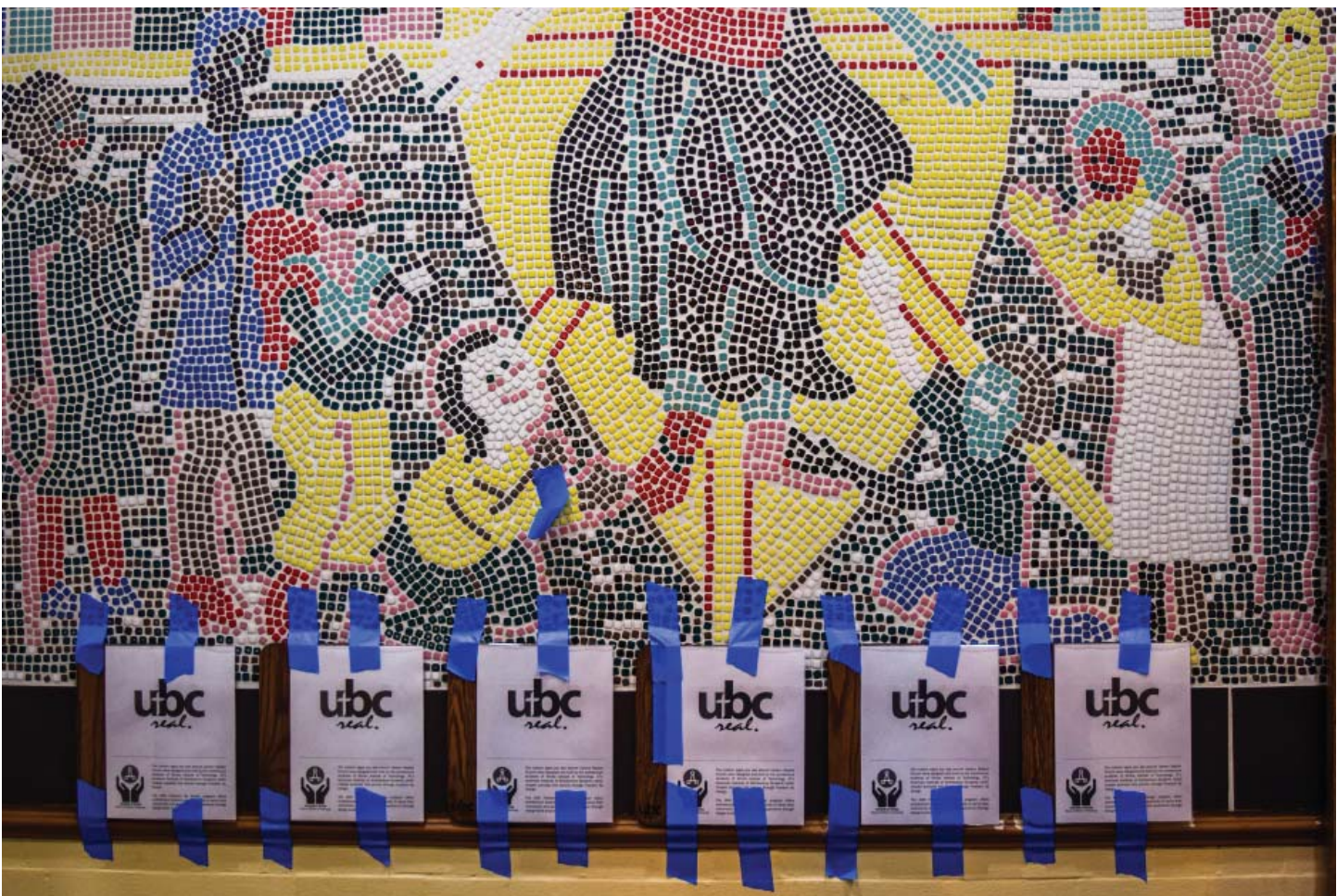
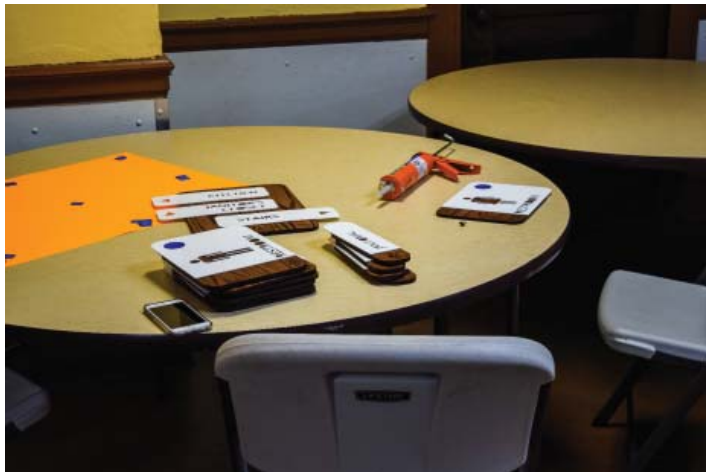
The first step was to separate the signs by floor and location on each floor. As this was happening, a group went around and removed the existing signage and cleaned the wall surfaces with a cleaner that would remove any remaining adhesive residue. The signs were mounted to the wall using construction strength mirror and counter-top adhesive and held in place with tape. The solvent is highly durable and long lasting, typically requiring 24 hours minimum to fully cure.

Thanks to our hardworking volunteers, we replaced all three floor of existing signs with our own in four hours, a total of almost 50 signs.



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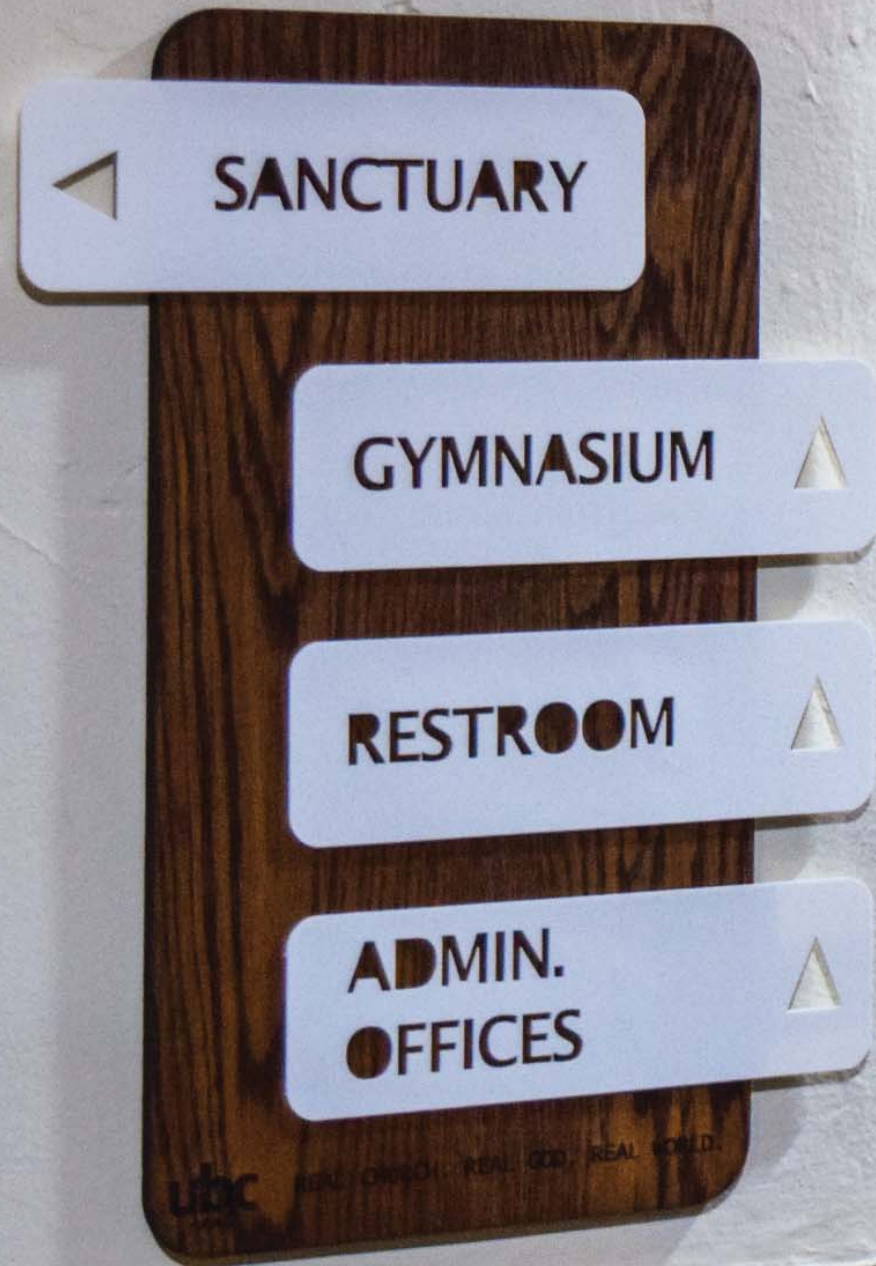


A departure from the standardized signs, the sign in front of this mosaic was designed uniquely to minimize the visual impact on the existing art. The mosaic spans the entire wall, so the sign attaches lower on the wall and location indicators are mounted onto a protruding sheet of clear acrylic.





FINAL IMAGES







After installing the project, our team was invited to a Sunday morning service to be recognized in front of the congregation. During this visit, we received a remarkably positive response from the church. With just a small set of signs, we opened a dialogue about using service to build relationships and communities. It became clear that designing and building something in service is a meaningful community investment.

Making something that everyone can enjoy requires a proper mix of design, leadership, and service that is core to our values in AIAS. This project is but a small example of how the Freedom By Design program can be used to further advance this mission. It was an absolute privilege to work with UBC and we hope to transfer the valuable experience to projects yet to come.

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◀ FELLOWSHIP  
HALL

◀ RESTROOMS

◀ CLASSROOMS

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