

Helen Hills Hills Chapel at Reunion - May 2012

Empty
No hymnals or prayer books in the pew racks
No numbers on the hymn boards
Empty lecterns
No brocaded hangings
The screen covering the cross
Window shades drawn over the tops of the 20 by 20 windows
 the setting sun pouring through the filmy panes beneath
Dust on the piano
Empty

How many hours did we spend here
 rehearsing and singing services -
 ecumenical Christian, Catholic, Jewish?
How many Masses did I play?
 And choir rehearsals?
 And preludes and postludes?
And hours of practice
 when we joked about
 how big my “practice room” was?
The organ is the only breathing presence left

More memories
Singing and crying through Beth's memorial service
 in fall of '81
And rejoicing at my wedding the next June
My scalloped train - chapel-length, of course -
 against the deep red carpet
Fully alive then

Now
Silence
Not of anticipation
 but of stasis

At the base of the winter-flowering cherry we planted beside the chapel for Beth
Is an empty beer bottle
Sacrilege
I clear it away
Restoring at least her tree as sacred space