



Building and Renovating Churches *More Than Simply Bricks and Mortar*

Pg 10



YESTERDAY TODAY TOMORROW



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A MESSAGE TO OUR READERS



Welcome to the summer/fall 2007 issue of *Inside Nielsen*. This edition marks the fourth edition of the magazine. We would like to again thank our generous advertisers for their continuing support. We are pleased to share this publication with our employees, our clients and our community partners.

This issue focuses on churches and on the unique challenges and opportunities that congregations face when discerning God's vision for a building or renovation project. In this issue you will find feature articles on Mountain View Church of the Brethren and Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church.

Nielsen has a long history of partnering with churches in our communities. We have worked with numerous denominations, including Catholic, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Methodist, Church of the Brethren and Church of the Nazarene. Each church project presents an exciting opportunity for us to work closely with the congregation and assure them a finished product that not only meets their needs but also serves to glorify God through expanded ministry.

Our goal is always to deliver the best for our clients.

We hope you enjoy learning more about Nielsen. Please feel free to contact us with questions or comments.

John N. Neff
Chairman & CEO

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NIELSEN

Corporate Mission Statement

Our Vision

Nielsen will be recognized as a premier construction organization with a commitment toward optimal performance in serving clients within the Commonwealth of Virginia. We will achieve this by consistently “striving for excellence” in providing professional building services.

Our Values

People

Nielsen recognizes that our people are the critical element in achieving our vision. We will support a team approach through open communication among all employees. We will promote the growth and empowerment of our people and commit to human resource practices based on standards of excellence, safety awareness, fair treatment and equal opportunity.

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Leadership

Nielsen is committed to being a leader in the construction industry through innovative construction techniques and product development. We will strive to be a caring corporate citizen in enhancing the community and environment in which we do business.

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Nielsen Builders, Inc.'s commitment to quality assurance is based on responsible craftsmanship, leadership, innovation, safety awareness and employee satisfaction. Our guarantee to furnish our clients with a total quality product is the heart of our company's existence.

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It is the policy of Nielsen Builders, Inc. not to discriminate and to provide equal employment opportunity to all qualified persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, or Vietnam era veteran status. This policy is applied to all employment actions including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, upgrading, promotion, transfer, demotion, lay-off, recall, termination, rates of pay, or other forms of compensation and selection for training including apprenticeship.

Nielsen Builders, Inc. is committed to the principles of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. In order to ensure its dissemination and implementation throughout all levels of the company, Jean Hieber has been selected as Equal Employment Officer for Nielsen Builders, Inc.

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EMPLOYEE NEWS

Nielsen Announces Employee Award Winners



Jim DeLucas



Kevin Fry



John Ryman



Pee Wee Kite

At its annual Founders Day picnic in August, Nielsen announced the employee award winners, which are given each year to outstanding employees.

James DeLucas Jr., Chief Development Officer, was named recipient of the Joseph Nielsen Award. The Joseph Nielsen Award is given each year to an employee who demonstrates continuous dedication and commitment to Nielsen and service to the community. Mr. DeLucas has been with Nielsen for 19 years. He and his family live in Harrisonburg.

The Safety Excellence Award was given to **Kevin Fry**, superintendent. Mr. Fry is from Hot Springs, Virginia, and has been with Nielsen for three years. This award goes to an employee who is a leader in continuously promoting safety awareness on the job site.

John Ryman, Edinburg, Virginia, was named Hardworker of the Year. He is a carpenter and has been with Nielsen for 14 years. The Hardworker Award is given to an employee who consistently demonstrates an attitude of hard work and dedication to the job.

Carl "Pee Wee" Kite was named Employee of the Year. This prestigious award goes to an employee who demonstrates an attitude of performance excellence and consistently promotes teamwork on the job. Mr. Kite has been with Nielsen for 18 years. He is a superintendent and lives in Shenandoah, Virginia.

These four award winners were nominated by their fellow employees at Nielsen. Congratulations to all these gentlemen for their dedication and hard work.

Nielsen Builders, Inc. Announces Management Changes



John Neff



Tony Biller



Bill Fisher



Jim DeLucas



Thomas Moomaw



John Morsch



Don Hicklin



Gary McBride



Joe Miller



Monty Cox

Board members for 2007 were elected at the Nielsen Builders, Inc. annual stockholders meeting April 12. Immediately following the stockholders meeting, the board of directors met and elected the 2007 officers. Also announced was a process for succession of the Nielsen leadership team to ensure a smooth transition when John Neff retires in 2008. Named to the newly created Senior Management Team are the following:

- John N. Neff, Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer
- Tony E. Biller, President
- William J. Fisher, Senior Vice President
- James D. DeLucas, Chief Development Officer
- J. Thomas Moomaw, Chief Operations Officer
- John Morsch, Chief Financial Officer

Other officers elected include the following:

- Don A. Hicklin, Vice President
- Gary L. McBride, Vice President
- Joseph R. Miller, Vice President
- Monty H. Cox, Secretary

When making the announcement to superintendents and employees, Chairman Neff noted, "The tradition and heritage of the Nielsen organization are based upon our founder, Joseph Nielsen's, passion, commitment and relentless pursuit of quality in workmanship and services ... I have had the opportunity to work closely with and mentor the future leaders of this organization, who reflect the same passion, commitment and pursuit of quality that Mr. Nielsen instilled in his organization."

Nielsen Employees Help with Habitat House



Danny Kimble and Jason Blose team up.

Working side by side with other dedicated volunteers, Nielsen employees Jason Blose, John Demco, Jackie Howdyshell and Danny Kimble recently helped to build a Habitat for Humanity house in western Rockingham County. Nielsen donated a day of their labor to the project; the employees donated their own time the second day. The duplex was started in spring 2007, with the anticipated completion date in November 2007.

The Nielsen employees helped to complete the wood framing so the roofing system could be installed. Since it's a duplex, two

superintendents, Jason Blose and Jackie Howdyshell, were needed to oversee the work.

The house was built under the auspices of the Southwest Rockingham Housing Coalition, which includes eight member churches. The coalition was begun in order to share the Habitat project among the members of the eight churches. The coalition reports directly to the Central Valley Habitat for Humanity office.

Nielsen Vice President of Operations Joe Miller is a member of the coalition, representing Montezuma Church of the Brethren. Mr. Miller says, "Nielsen is committed to helping the communities in which our employees live and work. Habitat for Humanity directly impacts the lives of people in our community. Nielsen was proud to participate in this project."

Since its founding in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller, Habitat for Humanity International has built and rehabilitated more than 150,000 houses with families in need, becoming a true world leader in addressing the issues of poverty housing.



Jackie Howdyshell works on framing.

Nielsen Welcomes Blake Abplanalp, Seth Lind and Chris Shaver

Nielsen is pleased to welcome **Blake Abplanalp**, **Seth Lind** and **Chris Shaver** to the organization. Mr. Abplanalp will work as project manager in the Piedmont region. He is currently managing the Luray High School project. Mr. Abplanalp most recently worked for R.E. Lee & Son as a project manager in Charlottesville. Prior to that, he worked for Bancroft Construction Company in Wilmington, Delaware, as a project manager. Mr. Abplanalp graduated from Wilmington College, New Castle, Delaware, where he earned a bachelor of arts in communications. He and his family live in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Seth Lind has been hired as assistant project manager. He'll be working with Gary McBride on the Harrisonburg Combined Elementary and Middle School project initially. Mr. Lind most recently worked for New Vision Construction as framing/superintendent of the general contracting division. Prior to that, he worked for the Baker Group, Inc. as project manager working on high-end residential homes. Mr. Lind attended Ithaca College, where he earned a bachelor of science in business administration. He and his family live in Penn Laird, Virginia.



Blake Abplanalp



Seth Lind



Chris Shaver

New to the Nielsen Safety Department is Chris Shaver. Mr. Shaver, who will work as the safety associate, started his new position in July. He most recently worked for the Harrisonburg City Fire Department as a medic and firefighter. He also has experience with the Staunton Fire and Rescue Department as a part-time firefighter and medic. Mr. Shaver graduated from Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton, and he attended Pikes Peak Community College in Pikes Peak, Colorado. He and his family live in Staunton.



BUILDING AND RENOVATING CHURCHES

More Than Simply Bricks and Mortar



Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church Pastor George Evans muses that sometimes, when people notice construction activity at the church, they ask him, "Can't you be a church without a building?"

He reflects, "I think you can be more effective with a building. Jesus often taught and instructed people within the synagogue. He was raised in a synagogue where he learned the Hebrew scripture.

"Bricks and mortar represent a place to gather and learn. With this, we're enhancing our ability to understand scripture and be a faith community. For our family of faith, this is our home, it's where we're nurtured and fed, where we're equipped with what we need to handle experiences we face in life," Pastor Evans says.

Enhancing Fellowship

"When we have fellowship dinners and other meals together, we are learning more and experiencing more about each other. People tend to do this better over tables. We discover this throughout the Bible and this is something I believe we are called to do."

Pastor Evans emphasizes the significance of a welcoming church building. "When you have a home that you can invite people to, it's a benefit. If you have a nice facility, you're more inclined to invite people in."

Church Undergoing Renovation

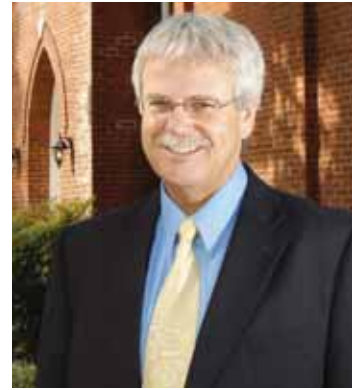
Cooks Creek Church is currently in the midst of a renovation project. "Architect Bob Winthrop was a godsend," Pastor Evans says. "He knew what we wanted and how we needed the new construction to blend in with the old." The renovation includes constructing a new fellowship hall, with additional restrooms,

offices and an elevator. The hall, which can seat up to 300 people, was designed with youth in mind. It includes a stage and an area for indoor volleyball. "We like to emphasize youth here and put them at the forefront," the pastor remarks.

In addition to the focus on youth, the congregation plans to offer programs to the community at large. With the new fellowship hall, Cooks Creek will have space for lectures, special events and concerts.

The renovation project will be completed this winter. The pastor is pleased with the project. He says, "I'm extremely happy with Nielsen. I couldn't have asked for a better contractor. Dick Holsinger (project manager) is here frequently checking on progress. He's been more than helpful. Jack Turner (superintendent) has been spectacular."

He sums up the "bricks and mortar" renovation by stating, "We hope we are equipping people with the skills, knowledge and tools to go out in the community and serve in the community environment in a way that reflects their faith and Christian beliefs."



George Evans



Richard Weaver, building committee chair, Jack Turner, superintendent, and Bob Winthrop, architect

Old Church Gets New Look

by Tom Mitchell

Long before America's founding fathers were preaching liberty to the masses, Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church members were hearing Sunday sermons.

And now, more than 250 years after it was founded, the Rockingham County church is aging gracefully. A project true to Cooks Creek's history of changing with the times is under way — one that will give the old church a new look. This year, the church is undergoing its most thorough physical change in 59 years with the construction of a new fellowship hall and other structural improvements.

With an area of 7,000 square feet, the new fellowship hall, said the Rev. George W. Evans, is 3 1/2 times as large as the old hall. The project, which Evans said costs \$2 million, includes refurbishing the whole church building.

Evans, Cooks Creek's pastor since 2001, said that his congregation simply "outgrew" the old fellowship hall, built in 1948. Membership at Cooks Creek, now at 340, has added 30 members in the last five years, and the old hall needed upgrades to make it safer from fires.

"We started planning [for the new fellowship hall] five years ago," Evans said. "We needed more space for our youth activities, plus our kitchen was inadequate."

Early Years

Cooks Creek Presbyterian, on Mount Clinton Pike just northwest of Harrisonburg, is named for a stream that ran by the original site of the church in Dayton. According to church records, Cooks Creek was formed in 1739 by residents of the area who met in each other's homes. In 1742, members of the fledgling congregation built a "meeting house" — at the time, English rule kept religious groups, other than those loyal to the Church of England, from becoming churches.

In 1783, Cooks Creek's members built a new structure near the original site. New buildings followed in 1834, 1912 and 1948. Other construction projects at Cooks Creek Presbyterian consisted of an addition of Sunday school rooms in 1927 and an education building in 1965.

The cost of the new construction dwarfs previous projects by many hundreds of thousands of dollars, said Francis Tapper Cunningham, 89, a World War II veteran, retired bricklayer and former elder of the church. But strong support from its members already has raised more than \$1 million, said Cunningham.

"The hall we built in '48 cost \$15,000," said Cunningham, a resident of Bridgewater known as "Tap" to his friends and neighbors. "But we won't have any trouble paying for this one. The addition we put in, in '65 cost \$1 million, and we paid for that in three years."

Eye on the Future

A focus on youth continues Cooks Creek's tradition of addressing spiritual needs of its young people: the church formed its first meeting group for young people in 1894, 20 years after the formation of a Women of the Church assembly and two years before the creation of a choir. All three associations still function at the church.

Cooks Creek's property displays much of America's past. A cemetery by the church bears remains of veterans from four key wars.

Work on the project began last November. An architectural company in Farmville, Winthrop and Associates, designed the new hall, which Nielsen Builders, Inc. from Harrisonburg is building. Evans expects the new hall to be finished by Christmas.

Said Evans: "Our members have great pride in the longevity of their church and in the fact that congregations at their church have thrived for all those years."

Contact Tom Mitchell at 574-6275 or mitchell@dnronline.com

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Tap readies a brick.

Tap Cunningham

Still Going Strong

by Patricia L. May

"Tap" is certainly an appropriate nickname for a bricklayer; however, Francis Tappey Cunningham got his nickname from "Tappey," a family name handed down over generations.

Tap started his career with Nielsen on April 1, 1946, after he finished serving in the Army during World War II. Nielsen President Sam Shrum hired Tap first as a laborer, then an apprentice bricklayer. After a four-year apprenticeship, from 1946 to 1950, Tap became a bricklayer. He learned the tricks of the trade from Eddie Kennedy, the brick foreman.

He worked on a wide variety of projects during his time at Nielsen, including Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church. Started in 1738, and organized in 1742, this church is widely regarded as one of the oldest churches in Rockingham County. The original church was built in 1912 and today has more than 300 members.

As a member of the congregation, Tap was proud to work on the church. In 1948, he helped to build a recreation hall adjacent to the church. Nielsen is currently constructing an addition to the church on the very spot of the original recreation hall.

Other churches he's worked on include the Episcopal Church on South Main

Street, First Presbyterian Church and Asbury Methodist. He also laid brick for many of the JMU dorms and Bridgewater College dorms.

Some of Tap's out-of-town work includes the Randolph Macon gym and St. Benedict's Catholic Monastery in Bristow, Virginia. For several years, he taught an adult masonry course at Massanutten Tech Center in the evenings.

Tap was born in Charleston, West Virginia, in 1918. His family of eight moved to Buena Vista during the Depression. He graduated from Perry McClure High School. Tap moved to the Harrisonburg area in 1939.

After retiring in 1995, Tap enjoys spending time with his daughters, Gail and Fran, and his two grandsons, Tyler and Adam Gustafson. He also spends time volunteering at Rockingham Memorial Hospital and has donated more than 13,000 hours to the organization. For many years he chaired the escort committee in the main hospital and often volunteered five days a week, 70 to 80 hours a week. He cur-



Tap applies mortar.

rently volunteers about six hours a week in the outpatient department. Going to softball games and reading the *Daily News Record* and *Richmond Times Dispatch* are favorite activities as well.

He says, "I enjoyed working for Nielsen." Although Tap hadn't laid any brick in more than 14 years, he readily pulled together his old tools for a photo at Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church. It must be like riding a bicycle; all his bricklaying skills came back to him.



Tap reaches for supplies.

Church Architecture

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Church architecture (also known as ecclesiastical architecture) refers to the buildings of Christian churches. It has evolved over the 2,000 years of the Christian religion, partly by innovation and partly by imitating other architectural styles as well as responding to changing beliefs, practices and local traditions.

Beginnings

The history of the church architecture divides itself into periods, into countries or regions and by religious affiliation.

The first period is that during which the Christian faith was illegal and, in principle, church building did not take place. In the very beginning Christians worshipped along with Jews in synagogues and in private houses. After the separation of Jews and Christians, the latter continued to worship in people's houses. Some of these were at the top of several-story houses; others were covered courtyards.

Early Christendom

During the period of Roman persecution of Christians, most regular worship took place privately in homes. With the victory of the Roman emperor Constantine at the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D., Christianity became lawful and then the privileged religion of the Roman Empire. The faith, already spread around the Mediterranean, now expressed itself in buildings. Their architecture was made to correspond to civic and imperial forms, and so the Basilica, a large rectangular meeting hall, became the general model for churches in the East and West, with a nave and aisles and sometimes galleries and clerestories. Pagan basilicas had as their focus a statue of the emperor; Christian basilicas replaced the emperor with God as king of heaven. At the east end was placed the altar, behind which sat the bishop and his presbyters in an apse.

A second stage was the remodeling of the Basilica to produce the porch church or *Vollwestwerk*. Over the presumed site of the Calvary, a church, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was built. At its east end was the presumed place of burial. At the west end was the Calvary. The procession would end with the pilgrims mounting the steps on one side of the west end of the Church to the place of crucifixion and then demounting on the other side. Two staircases, supported by

twin towers, thus became necessary for this form of worship. This pattern was widely imitated and twin west towers can be seen in many churches and cathedrals in Europe.

Medieval West

Participation in worship, which gave rise to the porch church, began to decline as the church became increasingly clericalized; with the rise of the monasteries, church buildings changed as well. The "two-room" church became, in Europe, the norm. The first "room," the nave, was used by the congregation; the second "room," the sanctuary, was the preserve of the clergy and in which the Mass was celebrated. This could then be only seen through the arch between the rooms, as from a distance, by the congregation, and the elevation of the host, the bread of the communion, became the focus of the celebration.

Apart from changes in the liturgy, the other major influence on church architecture was in the use of new materials and the development of new techniques. In northern Europe, early churches were often built of wood, for which reason almost none survive. With the wider use of stone by the Benedictine monks, in the 10th and 11th centuries, larger structures were erected.

The "two-room" church, particularly if it were an abbey or a cathedral, might acquire transepts, effectively arms of the cross that now made up the ground plan of the building. Sometimes this crossing, now the central focus of the church, would be surmounted by its own tower, in addition to the west end towers, or instead of them. Sanctuaries, now providing for the singing of the offices by monks or canons, grew longer and became chancels, separated from the nave by a screen. Practical function and symbolism were both at work in the process of development.

England

In England, Saxon churches still survive in some places, but with the Norman conquest, the new Romanesque churches, often called Norman in England, increasingly became the rule. These were massive in relation to the space they enclosed, their walls pierced by windows with semi-circular arches. Internal vaulting used the same shaped arch. Unsupported roofs were never very wide.

The next development was due to the mobility of the master masons whose work this was. They followed the Crusades and built their own churches in the Holy Land. However, they also noticed the local Muslim architecture deployed the much more flexible two-point, or Gothic, arch. The semi-circular arch was heavy and, in spite of this, resulted in weaknesses when two barrel vaults intersected. The Gothic arch, on the other hand, was stronger and could be used to make for wider unsupported spaces.

By the late 13th century, more daringly ornate styles of tracery were tried — the so-called Decorated, or curvilinear, period, dating from 1290-1350. Here, windows became larger, increasing the number of mullions (the vertical bars dividing the main part of the window) between the lights; above them, within the arch of the window, the tracery was formed using shapes styled "daggers" and "mouchettes," trefoils and quadrifoils; completely circular rose windows were made, incorporating all manner of shapes. Columns forming the arcades within churches of this period became more slender and elegant, the foliage of the capitals more flowing.

Finally, the Perpendicular style (so called because the mullions and transoms were vertical and horizontal) allowed huge windows, often filled with stained glass. The style so described runs from about 1350 until 1530. Another feature was that doorways were often enclosed by squared mouldings and the spaces between the moulding and the door arch — called spandrels — were decorated with quadrifoils, etc.

The period from the Norman Conquest to the advent of the Reformation in the 16th century saw an unequalled development in church architecture. Walls became thinner; solid buttresses became more elegant flying buttresses surmounted by pinnacles; towers, often surmounted by stone spires, became taller and more decorated, often castellated; internal pillars became more slender; unsupported spaces between them wider; roofs, formerly safely steeply pitched, became flatter, often decorated with carved wooden angels and a bestiary; windows occupied more and more of the wall space; decorative carving more freely flowing; figures multiplied, particularly on the west fronts of cathedrals and abbeys.

The interiors of mediaeval churches, apart from their many altars and stained glass (which, of course, can only be properly seen from inside) had their purpose made visually plain by the almost-universal presence of roods, huge figures of the crucified Christ, high above the congregation, mounted on a rood loft at the chancel arch — with steps to enable the priest to climb up; something no one could miss.

With the reign of Henry VIII, all of this was to be first put in question and then to come to a shuddering halt. Upon his death, and the ascension of Edward VI, almost all of the internal decoration was to be destroyed. The chantries and guilds that supported them became illegal or their functions taken from them. Images were removed, saints' days massively reduced. The churches echoed with the sound of hammer blows as stone altars and images were smashed, glass broken, font covers and roods and their screens torn down and burned.

Eastern Orthodoxy

East and West began to diverge from each other from an early date. Whereas the basilica, a long, aisled hall with an apse at one end, was the most common form in the West, a more compact, centralised style became predominant in the East. These churches were in origin "martyria," focused on the tombs of the saints who had died during the persecutions that only fully ended with the conversion of the emperor Constantine. They copied pagan tombs and were roofed over by a dome which symbolized heaven. The central dome was then often surrounded by structures at the four points of the compass, producing a cruciform shape — these were themselves often topped by towers or domes.

A variant form of the centralized church was developed in Russia and came to prominence in the 16th century. Here the dome was replaced by a much thinner and taller hipped or conical roof, which, it is said, originated from the need to prevent snow from remaining on roofs. One of the finest examples of these tented churches is St. Basil's in Red Square in Moscow.

The Renaissance

The cessation of church building in many Protestant countries was not paralleled in the Roman Catholic Church. On the contrary, a new phase of church design emerged, based upon classical culture. The temples of pagan Rome were to be the models for the new churches. These, instead of having long, vaulted naves and aisles, had a centralized plan.

The focus of the liturgy had traditionally been the elevation of the host at the Mass. If the church was a sort of theatre, then the rest of the building could emphasize this element of seeing. If this is coupled with the more and more exotic forms of architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries, known as Baroque, then we have a new kind of church, there to provide distant vistas, with a scenic progression along the horizontal axis.

The Auditory Church

In the 17th century, across Western Europe, a return was seen towards the single-room church in which everything could be seen. In Protestant countries, these were somewhat simple. Chancels were suppressed, screens were deemed unnecessary obstructions. Buildings had three defined centers: the font — by the door, the pulpit and reading desk, and the altar. Within Lutheranism, similar principles obtained. The Prinzipalstück ideal was of an oblong building without a chancel with a single space at the east end combining all liturgical acts: baptism, service of the word and communion.

Gothic Revival

The growth of cities in the 19th century necessitated a huge growth in church building. This was a period of interest in the history of the Church and a search for authenticity. Buildings based upon classical models were dismissed as pagan. Instead, looking at the medieval churches around them, it seemed plain that Gothic was the style.

The 19th century also saw the rebuilding of medieval churches and their alleged restoration to medieval purity. Since many

had been added to over the period from the Conquest to the Reformation, decisions had to be taken as to which was the right period. Thus, architects such as George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) replaced perpendicular windows with speculative lancets, often with slight justification. Stained glass, lost at the Reformation, was replaced by Victorian designers, often with biblical scenes. Churches, which had been once very light, became darker again. Only when the Liturgical Movement began to make its influence felt was there any relief from the conviction that there was only one style for churches.

Modernity

The idea that worship was a corporate activity and that the congregation should be in no way excluded from sight or participation is owed to the Liturgical Movement. Simple one-room plans are almost of the essence of modernity in architecture. In France and Germany between the first and second World Wars, some of the major developments took place. The church at Le Raincy near Paris by Auguste Perret is cited as the starting point of process, not only for its plan but also for the material used: reinforced concrete. More central to the development of the process was Schloss Rothenfels-am-Main in Germany, which was remodelled in 1928. Rudolf Schwartz, its architect, was hugely influential in later church building, not only on the continent of Europe but also in the United States of America. Schloss Rothenfels was a large rectangular space, with solid white walls, deep windows and a stone pavement. It had no decoration. The only furniture consisted of 100 little black cuboid moveable stools. For worship, an altar was set up and the faithful surrounded it on three sides.

A theological principle that resulted in change was the decree *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of the Second Vatican Council, issued in December 1963. This encouraged "active participation" by the faithful in the celebration of the liturgy by the people and required that new churches should be built with this in mind. Subsequently, rubrics and instructions encouraged the use of a freestanding altar with the priest facing the people.

Different principles and practical pressures produced other changes. Parish churches were inevitably built more modestly. Often, shortage of finances, as well as a "market-place" theology, suggested the building of multi-purpose churches, in which secular and sacred events might take place in the same space at different times.

Church Building Committees

Tips for Success

by Patricia L. May

Building Committee Basics



David Penrod

David Penrod chaired the Emmanuel Episcopal Church Building Committee during its recent expansion and renovation project, which was completed in fall 2002. He enjoyed the experience, even suggesting that he'd be willing to tackle that leadership role again in the future. "It was a good experience. I'd do it again."

Building committees can be successful if they follow a number of common-sense guidelines. The most important asset members should bring to the table is a sense of collaboration. "So many decisions need to be made that affect so many people," Mr. Penrod says. He compared, on a small scale, building a house to building or renovating a church. Even in building a house, numerous decisions that affect all the occupants must be made daily; this decision-making increases substantially when working on a church construction project, which affects hundreds of worshippers.

Committee members need to be able to work together and achieve consensus through compromise. If the building committee functions well as a team, the end product will be better. This team atmosphere will also make it easier to raise funds. The members must be flexible and willing to listen to other opinions and ideas.

"In fact," Mr. Penrod says, "the ability to be collaborative is more important for a building committee member than having a background in construction." If the committee members can't work together and reach agreement, it can spell trouble for the project.

His committee didn't make any decision unless a consensus was reached. If they approached a point where they simply couldn't

agree, Mr. Penrod says they invited in the contractor and architect to share more information and offer suggestions. Decision by consensus also meant the building committee could present a harmonious front to the congregation and the community, preventing potential pitfalls.

The building committee met every week, at a time convenient to everyone, during the planning and construction of the church addition. The purpose of the meetings was to review the project status, make the necessary immediate decisions and reflect upon decisions that needed to be made in the future.

Keep Congregation Informed

Keeping the congregation informed every step of the way was another key ingredient for success. The committee inserted a building project status report in the bulletin each Sunday, which included future construction activities. By informing and engaging the congregation, many potential problems were precluded. The weekly communications kept everyone excited and involved and also let people know what to expect so there were no surprises.

Most decisions were handled at the committee level. However, the committee directly engaged the congregation on decisions regarding any costly changes to the original design. For example, during the renovation project, one new idea was to enhance the lighting in the foyer. Some of the members liked the old lighting; others were eager for the new lighting. After polling the congregation, a compromise was reached in which the old lighting remained intact, and additional new lighting was installed.

Mr. Penrod cautions that only one person should serve as the contact person between the church and the contractor and architect. He served as that point person for the project. Having one contact person ensures that accurate information and appropriate deci-



David Penrod outside Emmanuel Episcopal Church

sions are shared. If many different people from the church try to relay information to the contractor, it could result in conflicting, inaccurate information being provided.

As contact person, he visited the site at least once every day and usually three times a day. It's important to have the contact person there frequently. Mr. Penrod remarks, "I liked visiting the site every day, but, more importantly, decisions had to be made every day." He also regularly attended the twice-monthly meeting held by the contractor, architect and subcontractors to review job progress.

The Emmanuel Episcopal Church building committee consisted of eight members from a wide variety of backgrounds, including a teacher, an attorney, an administrator and a homemaker. None of the members had background in the construction industry. The members were involved in the church and were well known and respected by the congregation.

Selecting Architect, Contractor

In searching for an architect for the Emmanuel Episcopal Church project, the building committee issued a request for proposal to about eight architects. They received proposals from and interviewed about half of them. They ultimately selected Bob Winthrop as the architect.

"Conceptually, he was wonderful. He knew exactly what we wanted. The new addition to the church blends into the old. Bob was a standout," Mr. Penrod remembers, adding, "He had designed graceful and magnificent structures before."

Emmanuel selected Nielsen as the contractor. Mr. Penrod explains, "Nielsen's strong reputation for doing good quality work at a fair price convinced us that we wanted Nielsen to do the work." He adds, "We were comfortable making this decision. Nielsen did a good job for us. I'd recommend them, and we would use them again."

Mr. Penrod says, "It would be wise to see if the architect has worked with the builder previously and to determine if there were any areas that may cause concern. You may also discover that the architect and contractor had built a longtime good working relationship."

Mr. Penrod notes that the congregation had seen the renovation at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, just a few blocks from Emmanuel. Blessed Sacrament was renovated, with the goal of maintaining its architectural integrity, all in an extremely limited space. The church members realized they faced much the same challenge at Emmanuel. The Nielsen-Bob Winthrop team seemed like the perfect choice for the project.

The Emmanuel Episcopal Church \$1.4 million project involved demolishing an existing addition and adding new additions consisting of classrooms, offices, a chapel, new street side entrances with connecting arcade and the relocation of the existing steeple from the sanctuary to a new bell tower. It was a challenging process that occurred while church functions carried on normally. Particular attention was given to the selection of materials to assure a compatible match with the existing structure.

Former building committee chair Mr. Penrod offers some sage advice: "These projects cost more than we hope, but it's a mistake to cut corners. You should do quality work. The building will be there a century or longer. If you cut corners now, you'll always look back with regret. When the building debt is gone, you will still have the building. You want a building that you'll be proud of and enjoy."

Tips for Success

1. Be collaborative
2. Be flexible
3. Listen well
4. Be a team player
5. Keep congregation informed
6. Designate one contact person
7. Contact person visit site regularly
8. Engage congregation for financial decisions
9. Keep committee small
10. Meet regularly



Dick Holsinger

SPOTLIGHT

on Dick Holsinger

by Patricia L. May

June 1964 marked the beginning of a longtime Nielsen career for Dick Holsinger. He started working for Nielsen part-time the spring before and came on board full-time in June. He was juggling school and work at the time, attending Bridgewater College in the morning, then heading over to Nielsen to work as a surveyor from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.

After graduating with a degree in biology that spring, Dick started a full-time position with Nielsen as a project manager. He and Jim Gilkeson were the only project managers on staff at the time.

He recalls that there was no estimating department, and everyone would work together to bid on jobs.

The N series of dorms at James Madison University were some of his first projects. He worked on nine dorms from 1965 to 1972.

More recently, Dick has spent his time managing church renovations. "I like the challenge of working on churches," he says. "You never know what you're going to run into with old historic buildings."

For instance, while working on the Episcopal Church in Staunton, his crew

removed the false ceiling in order to expose the beams and allow more light into the area. The team's challenge was to work around exposed Tiffany stained glass, which was both historic and expensive. It needed to be protected during the project. "It was complicated to work around the glass," he recalls.

Dick's list of church projects includes the following:

- Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church, Harrisonburg
- Covenant Presbyterian Church, Staunton
- Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Harrisonburg
- First Baptist Church, Waynesboro
- First Presbyterian Church, Harrisonburg
- Montezuma Church of the Brethren, Montezuma
- Muhlenberg Lutheran Church, Harrisonburg
- Trinity Episcopal Church, Staunton

- Trinity Presbyterian Church, Harrisonburg

He talks about the church work. "They're all different — they're all a challenge. I like to stand back and be proud of what we did and know that we made a difference," Dick says. "I like the flexibility of working on churches and the fact that I have more time to devote to these projects," he adds.

One of his more memorable projects was First Presbyterian Church, when the Nielsen team built the casework for the organ and fine interior woodwork (railings, etc.). After the casework was completed, an organ specialist installed the pipes. Dick is a member of First Presbyterian. He grew up just west of the church, and he remembers playing on the church grounds as a child.

He's seen many changes at Nielsen during the years. Probably the most

dramatic change he's seen is the transition from all manual labor to the use of power tools and automation. "There are no hand tools used anymore," Dick says. Most everything now is battery-powered or electric-powered. "We used to look at a site and determine the best place to build a ramp for pushing up a wheelbarrow full of concrete or brick. We didn't have concrete pumps then, and cranes were very expensive."

He adds, "The business itself hasn't really changed that much. It's an old business that still today gets down to the individual who actually lays the brick, frames the building or installs the drywall."

Dick has been with Nielsen for 43 years, but he actually started his first job at the age of 9. His father managed Friddles Restaurant, which was located at the site of the present day Jess' in Harrisonburg. Dick helped clean tables, wash dishes or do other jobs that needed to be done.

He worked his way through high school helping to build houses. "I mixed mortar, ran errands, did whatever was needed," he says.

Dick is happy to be living and working in the Shenandoah Valley. He says, "I like the Valley. I was born and raised here. I didn't have wanderlust to see the world. I spent three years in the Army and 14 months in Korea — that was enough."

Dick and his wife, Ginny, have three adult children: Lisa, DeAna and Linden, and seven grandchildren: Tyler, Shea, Avenlea, Micaela, John, Afton and Jadin. Dick is a history and archeology buff. He spends some of his spare time perusing antique sales and auctions. His favorite pastime, however, is spectator sports — watching his grandchildren play a variety of competitive sports.

Dick is currently managing a renovation project at Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church. He most recently finished remodeling Wilbur Pence Middle School in Dayton. His plan for the future is simple: "Take one job at a time."



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Joseph Nielsen and Muhlenberg Lutheran Church

A Lasting Partnership

by Patricia L. May

Construction Begins on Muhlenberg Lutheran Church

On June 26, 1949, ground was broken for Muhlenberg Lutheran Church in Harrisonburg. The third phase of the original building was completed in March 1960.

Nielsen Builders, Inc. Founder Joseph Nielsen was an active member of the congregation from the time he joined the church building committee in the '40s until his death in 1962. He coordinated the building project for the new church, which was built by the Nielsen Construction Company.

"The grey limestone from which the church is constructed came from a local rock quarry which Mr. Nielsen purchased

to insure a ready supply of the building material. His stone masons were considered the best craftsmen in the area at that time," according to a Muhlenberg Lutheran Church publication entitled "Tributes in Remembrance of Joseph Nielsen." The booklet was prepared to celebrate the fact that the church was debt-free and to recognize the contributions Mr. Nielsen made in creating the new church.

The publication goes on to say, "Even though the building contract with the Nielsen Construction Company for Muhlenberg Lutheran Church Building at 281 East Market Street was handled in a very business-like manner, Mr. Nielsen supervised its construction as if it were his own personal building. Every day after his workers had finished and gone home, Mr. Nielsen came to the site and scrutinized their work."





Mrs. Nielsen portrait



Joseph Nielsen



Muhlenberg Nielsen Room

Nielsen Room Dedicated

In order to thank Mr. Nielsen for his help and support, the church decided to dedicate a room in the building to honor his mother, Christine Nielsen of Denmark. The entire interior of the room was designed by Mr. Nielsen. The room, known as the "Nielsen Room," is currently used for meetings and fellowship activities. Joseph Nielsen commissioned an artist to travel to Denmark to paint a portrait of his mother. This portrait is prominently displayed in the Nielsen Room.

Mr. Nielsen attended to all the interior finish details in this special room. He arranged for the wooden mantel to be cut and shipped from Denmark according to his specifications. He also selected the beaded board paneling, made from western cedar. Nielsen craftsmen created the round beaded corner. The overhead encased beams with the same cedar wood were laid out by Mr. Nielsen, and he supervised the installation of this work. He designed the fireplace and supervised the construction. In order to ensure that the correct stain color was mixed, Mr. Nielsen would blend the colors himself. The unusual floor pattern and tile in the Nielsen Room were also designed by Mr. Nielsen. He was proud to donate all the finishes for the room.

W.P. Schwobel served on the building committee with Mr. Nielsen in 1952. He says, "When I think back and remember the deep foundation with the thick steel reinforcing bars and the thick stone walls, I know that Muhlenberg will stand for hundreds of years. It was erected by a dedicated man to the glory of God and in memory of his mother, whom he loved. Joe was a man on fire with the zeal and determination needed to build a great and beautiful church, and all of us benefit from it, and all of us are grateful to Joe for his effort."

"Throughout the entire building, his design and artistic ability are seen. This is not only evident in the Nielsen Room, but also in the sanctuary because the interior design, such as the wood used in paneling, the covering of the overhead trusses and interior design and finishes, were laid out by Mr. Nielsen on the drawing board. After his layout was completed and approved, he supervised the installation of every item. There were times when he would help with the actual finishing in order for the carpenters or painters to understand the completed effect he wanted to achieve," remembers former Nielsen president Sam Shrum in the Muhlenberg brochure. Mr. Nielsen donated his time for the construction of the church, supervising the entire building project down to the smallest detail.

Muhlenberg Today

The Muhlenberg Church today continues to change. Mark Byerly serves as chairman of the building committee. The church is planning an 8,000-square-foot addition, which will include a gathering area with a classroom underneath it. The \$2.2 million project will begin in November, with construction taking approximately 12 months. The church is working with Nielsen through a negotiated contract arrangement.

Mr. Byerly says, "This has a lot to do with John Neff's commitment to working with churches. We automatically call Nielsen; we don't bother with sending jobs out for bid anymore."

The Muhlenberg building committee includes seven members with substantial experience. Professions represented on the committee include a mechanical contractor, an electrical engineer, a facilities manager, a general contractor, a plant engineer and a lumber specialist. Mr. Byerly says, "The building committee members all have their skills and abilities. We like to delegate tasks so everyone can participate."

John Sease is the architect for the project. Muhlenberg has been working with Mr. Sease since he worked on a renovation project in the '80s.

The renovation is planned because the congregation has grown, and it is aging. The building is currently not very accessible; it needs to be upgraded. The steps are narrow and difficult to use, and the existing handicap ramp is not easily accessible.

The addition will include an elevator, which will provide easier access into the church. The new entrance will include lots of glass and will present a very welcoming environment. Additionally, the project will add three classrooms in the basement and convert the existing nursery to office space. The exterior of the addition will be constructed of native limestone, which will be "aged" to more closely match the existing exterior.

As head of the building committee, Mr. Byerly serves as the liaison between the architect and the building committee and also between Nielsen and the building committee. His job is to oversee the construction project, while Pastors David Nelson and Joe Vought focus on the fundraising for the addition and ministry for the congregation.

Muhlenberg Lutheran Church, which was formed in 1849, currently has about 1,200 people in the congregation. About 500 are very active in the church.



Designing Churches

It's a Dynamic Process

An Interview with
Robert Winthrop, A.I.A.

by Patricia L. May



Bob Winthrop, architect

Architect Bob Winthrop focuses his practice on church work. A sole proprietor, he's been in the business of designing new and renovated churches since 1971.

Mr. Winthrop has discovered during the years that renovating a church is not an easy matter to initiate. Each project is unique in its own right. There are no hard and fast rules by denomination either. Architectural styles, congregational needs and building committee goals vary church by church, community by community.

He says, "Church design is very diverse and challenging. From country churches to urban churches, from small ones to large ones, there is a wide range that's very interesting. For example, the Church of the Brethren has a different aesthetic view from other churches. The Word is the essence of this denomination. Symbolism doesn't count; it's the Bible that matters." In other churches, symbolism is an important part of the religious experience.

Listen to the Congregation

A successful renovation begins with data gathering. Consulting and communicating with the planning committee and the congregation initially helps to facilitate dialogue so all stakeholders have the opportunity to share their thoughts and discern God's vision for the project. It's important to reflect on the church as a whole and consider the needs of the entire congregation, not just special-interest groups within the congregation. Sensitivity to the needs and desires of the congregation is critical to the success of the project. Creating a master list of opportunities and needs is essential to ensure all the issues are addressed.

During one renovation project, Mr. Winthrop spent two days at the church in order to give the entire congregation — all 175 of them — an

opportunity to speak with him and share their opinions. In some Catholic churches, he's presented the project overview following each Mass. By engaging the congregation, he is able to gain fresh ideas and perspectives from the members. The project proceeds more smoothly when the congregation has been included in the decision-making process. Otherwise, they may resent a design they feel the building committee has simply foisted upon them.

Mr. Winthrop's expertise is working with existing facilities with serious physical problems, such as an unusable floor plan or lack of handicap accessibility. He recalls that one church he worked with felt they didn't need to have handicap-accessible entrances because there were no persons with these needs. Since there was no access for the handicapped, this was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Mr. Winthrop challenges the church to make their facility open and welcome to all persons, regardless of their needs.

Important Design Considerations

One of the key elements in church renovation is striving to blend the new construction to the existing church structure. Mr. Winthrop says, "I feel the project is successful if no one recognizes it's new. By blending with the original and working within those constraints, it brings a comfort level for the congregation." He used this principle of blending new to original with both Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church and Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Harrisonburg in order to create harmony. His focus is to "retain what they have, and enhance it with something new."

He says, "I like renovations and problem-solving. I like to work with a structure that has good architecture. For example, while working on the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, I took advantage of what was there and created a centerpiece on a modest budget."

The proof of a well-designed project is when the facility maximizes the amount of useable space with a minimum of wasted space. For example, Mr. Winthrop has designed several cross-shaped interiors. With this efficient design, more people can be closer to the altar, thus maximizing seating capacity while retaining intimacy. In fact, the church can be enlarged with triple the seating, bringing more people closer to the altar.

One central question that needs to be addressed initially is how you transform a church into a more welcoming place. Oftentimes, the small entrance and cramped foyer discourage people from fellowshiping. By creating an entrance that is more open, warm and welcoming, the church will attract new members as well as retain current members through its focus on the ministry of fellowship. Covered entrances are also friendlier and more inviting, particularly in inclement weather.

A welcoming atmosphere is inherently present in well-established country churches. A challenge comes when you try to create that same "sense of community" in suburban and metropolitan worship centers. For instance, Mr. Winthrop says, if you look at a "mighty-fortress-is-my-God" style church, how can you make that more welcome, friendly and accessible?

A glass entrance creates a feeling of welcome — of light and openness. He

also notes that many churches have their parking lots in the back, so church members park at the back and enter a small rear entrance. Transforming the rear entrance into the front entrance by glass, lighting and space makes people feel welcome to enter.

Once the entrance issue is addressed, it's time to take a look at the overall design of the interior of the space. Two of life's most stressful events typically occur in churches: weddings and funerals. Oftentimes, the rooms within the church are designed for Sunday school for young children. These small classrooms are really not comfortable for a bride to settle her nerves before walking down the aisle or for the family of the deceased to gather together before the funeral. Perhaps adding a parlor in the front of the church would create that needed serene space. He says, "Little things count a lot, like how to move a bride around."

Other design challenges include the incorporation of a kitchen within the church. Mr. Winthrop says some church members want to have a large kitchen with commercial equipment, but they don't think about how they really plan to use the kitchen. In some churches, cooking is a fellowship activity; but in many churches today, the kitchen is used to warm up previously prepared dishes. Some churches prefer using a double residential kitchen, which works better than an industrial-size kitchen.

He adds, "If your ministry changes, can your building change? Is it flexible enough to change?" It needs to be flexible and not designed around an individual personality or select group within the congregation.

The architect "needs to discover the aesthetic of each congregation and determine what they feel enhances their worship," Mr. Winthrop says. Some churches are clubs; and some are family churches and have grown because the families have grown. Churches with this culture may find it difficult to become an open, inviting church. In order to survive, churches need to be able to reach out and attract members. Churches should be welcoming places, where persons

can gather, meet each other and worship together.

Mr. Winthrop likes to develop multiple options for the church design. With an open, clear span in design and plan layouts, a building may be modified to meet evolving ministry programs. Perhaps the wave of the future in the ministry of churches may be adult day care. The church should be designed to accommodate changes that will occur over time.

Churches have an unusual facility-use pattern; they are typically used only one day out of seven. Some design elements, such as geothermal heat, are simply not practical for a church, as it would take 70 years to recoup the money spent on a geothermal heating system.

Mr. Winthrop says, "The architect can create design solutions to evoke feelings of a church being a comfortable place for worship and to experience ministries." During renovation projects, Mr. Winthrop often finds hidden church treasures in an attic or basement. For instance, while restoring the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Richmond, he discovered pieces of the original baptismal font scattered around the building. He had it reassembled and placed in a central part of the church. In another church, he uncovered a Della Robia of Mary and the infant Jesus behind the organ. It was moved to the front, with a soft light illuminating it, thus becoming the focal point of the nave. In another church, the stained glass was preserved and installed in the new church, which provided the parishioners the character of the original church in the new building.

Working with Building Committees

Working collaboratively with the church's building committee is a critical component for success. He's observed all types of committees over the years, from too small to too large, with the makeup varying widely from church to church. Since there are many different ways to approach a design challenge, Mr. Winthrop likes to present a primary design solution and gauge the reaction of the committee. Churches have dif-

ferent ideas of how they want to proceed. The architect's responsibility is to present the church's needs, even when needs are not evident.

In some congregations, the building committee is simply there to support the decisions of the minister or pastor who is empowered to make the decisions. Some clergy aren't "construction savvy," he says. It's important to understand the culture of the congregation to determine what's important and who is actually in charge.

It's helpful if the building committee is organized and has a strong leader. Otherwise, it may serve as only a discussion group. Mr. Winthrop's experience has been that the more insignificant the decision, the longer it may take. He's seen decisions such as the interior color of the rooms take six months or more to make, while critical architectural design decisions are made with little concern or thought. The building committee needs to be sensitive to the needs of the entire congregation during the planning, design and construction phases.

A good size for a committee is seven or eight people. They need to be committed to prayer, attending all meetings, listening and making decisions for the congregation. The members need to be focused on the task at hand. Everyone on the building committee, as well as a majority of the congregation, needs to support the project before it can proceed.

Hiring the Architect and Contractor

What about selecting and hiring an architect? First and foremost, the church should review the design firm's references. Select an architect who has a passion and a positive energy for working with churches and can interact with committees and congregations. Mr. Winthrop says, "It's important to look at the architect — does the architect like renovations?"

Selecting a contractor has additional challenges. Both the contractor and architect must realize the complexity of a project, and flexibility is required. Again, the contractor must be comfort-

able with renovation work. It's wise to select a contractor who is not surprised by unusual field changes, such as a doorframe grossly out of level that was handmade by the congregation. Some contractors may be overcome by the unexpected and may use that as an excuse to inflate costs. There are but a few contractors who specialize in commercial construction who are also proficient in building or renovating a custom church. Nielsen is one of those contractors. It's oftentimes helpful to have the architect be a part of the selection process of the contractor by participating in the interviews.

A partnership relationship among all stakeholders is extremely important, especially for a large renovation. Numerous challenges may emerge with a 100-year-old building. Working together and keeping the lines of communication open are critical.

Mr. Winthrop says that churches do a better job of constructing new buildings than maintaining current buildings. In light of this, his goal is to focus on designing low-maintenance buildings. During the planning process, he reviews the costs of maintenance and material replacement. He recalls one church in Richmond that had three different types of exterior on it since 1980. He likes slate roofs, with their long life spans. Metal roofs are more difficult to repair. Open, exposed wood in the interior never needs to be painted. The building committee needs to consider the local market and what support services are available for maintenance issues. It's important to consider what kinds of maintenance issues will arise over 20 years and plan now for the future.

The cost of initial construction for new buildings or renovation is an

important factor; however, it is not the primary factor. Quality is paramount; a church building must last 70 to 100 years. Fifty years old is relatively new for a church building.

Selecting the proper building committee, architect and contractor will help to ensure the success of any church construction or renovation project.

Bob Winthrop grew up in northern New York. He attended the University of Virginia, graduating in 1970. He works out of the corporate office in Farmville, Virginia, which is centrally located to his market area.

Nielsen Church Projects Designed by Robert Winthrop, Architect:

- *Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Harrisonburg*
- *Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church, Harrisonburg*
- *Covenant Presbyterian Church, Staunton*
- *Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Harrisonburg*
- *Mountain View Church of the Brethren, McGaheysville*



Mountain View Church of the Brethren Approaches One-Year Anniversary



Pastor
Wayne Pence

Pastor Wayne Pence is very pleased with the new church. "The Carpenters for Christ worked hard and got the building under roof, and Nielsen finished it quickly in an excellent fashion," he says, adding, "The working relationship between Nielsen and Carpenters for Christ was phenomenal."

The first worship service in the new church occurred on November 26, 2006, while the first "public" service was the following Sunday, December 3, 2006. Dedication for the new church was March 19, 2007, almost a year to the day after the groundbreaking on March 18, 2006.

Pastor Pence notes that the church has room for about 200 in the sanctuary and 50 in the balcony. "Everyone likes the building," he says. "I enjoy giving tours to visitors. When they see the view of Massanutten Mountain through the window, the universal reaction is 'Wow!' Everyone is extremely pleased with the building."

The pastor remembers that John Neff helped tremendously during the planning process. "John guided us in conducting a congregational and community survey, preparing an RFP for design services and selecting an architect," he says. The selection of the right architect was crucial to the success of the project. Mountain View interviewed eight architects, ultimately selecting Robert Winthrop.



Rockingham Male Chorus performs at the Mountain View Church dedication.

Church Sought Simple Design

The building committee and congregation wanted a simple, flexible design. Pastor Pence notes, "Bob Winthrop

heard us better than anyone. His design is unique, simple and functional." Thanks to the excellent design, it was universally supported by the congregation.

The community survey helped define several priorities, including youth and children, after-school programs, recreation and day care. With a number of elementary and middle schools nearby, the church is ideally suited for after-





Mountain View quilt

school programs. The building was designed with these priorities in mind. The congregation wanted the church to be used during the week, not simply for Sunday services.

Mountain View is currently partnering with Redeemer Classical School. Redeemer needed a home for approximately a year during the renovation of its future site, the old Keezletown Elementary School in Keezletown. Approximately 50 students attend classes at Mountain View.

The pastor is interested in more community partnerships. The congrega-

tion has visited nearby homes and neighborhoods, issuing an open invitation to visit the church. A special free community event offering music, munchies and movies was held for the community to introduce them to Mountain View.

He remembers how it all started. "The Carpenters for Christ volunteer effort was the piece that put it all together. If it hadn't been for them, I'm not sure we would've had the courage to move forward. We received moral support and publicity, which were sorely needed."

Mountain View Church of the Brethren is poised for the future. Pastor Pence says, "We've spent a year settling in. Now it's time to do something." With his leadership and enthusiasm, and the dedication and focus of the congregation, great dreams will be realized for this welcoming church nestled in the shadow of the Massanutten Mountain.

Mountain View Timeline

January 1998

First meeting to pray about new church

October 1998

Congregation had grown; twice-monthly services held in McGaheysville Town Hall

November 2000

Received fellowship status

January 2001

Began pastoral program and Sunday morning worship

May 2002

Purchased land, 4.6 acres

May 2004

First meeting with John Neff

November 2004

Received congregational status

2004-2005

Needs assessment, building design proposals, selection of architect

November 2005

Met with Carpenters for Christ

March 19, 2006

Groundbreaking

June 7-16, 2006

Carpenters for Christ erected shell of building

November 19, 2006

Final worship service in McGaheysville Town Hall

November 26, 2006

"Preview Worship Service" in new building

December 3, 2006

First official worship in new building

December 10, 2006

Open house in new building

March 17-18, 2007

Dedication Services for new building

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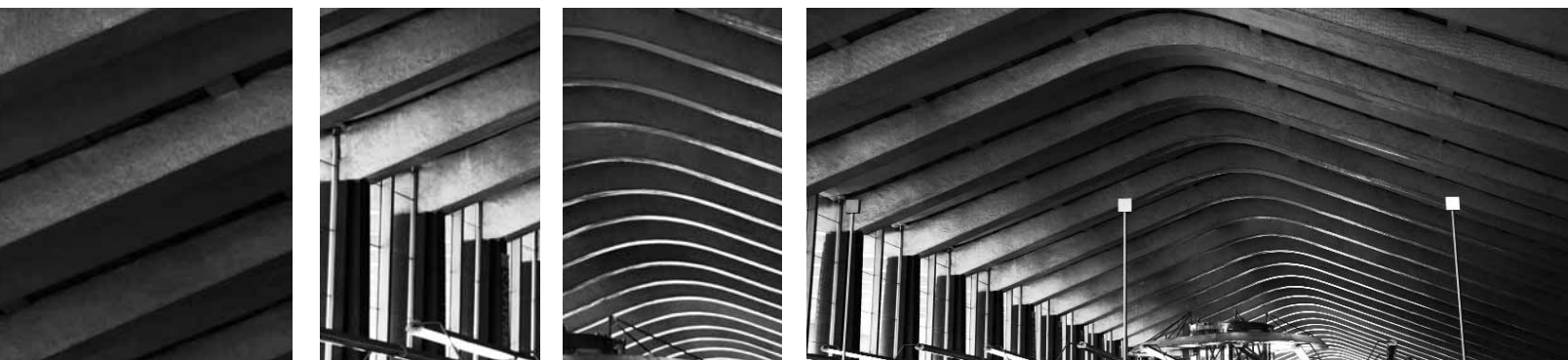


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CARPENTERS FOR CHRIST

by Patricia L. May



Mountain View Church of the Brethren in McGaheysville, Virginia, has a new home, thanks to the generosity of about 80 energetic volunteers from Alabama. Just like an old-fashioned barn raising, a new church miraculously appeared the second week of June 2006 in an open field. Carpenters for Christ, an all-volunteer outreach group from Alabama, worked with Nielsen in constructing the new Mountain View Church of the Brethren from June 8 through June 15.





Carpenters for Christ, a Southern Baptist ministry, is a group of laymen who get together every year and help build a new church for a congregation in need. The group looks at areas that are growing with a need for a new church. Their decision is based on two criteria: no church and not enough money. These volunteers donate their time and talents to construct a church in a very short time period. The volunteers take vacation time, as well as pay a small stipend, to join the ranks of the roving woodworkers.

Carpenters for Christ started outside Dallas, Texas, in 1996. This group initially grew out of a ministry from Golden Springs Baptist Church in Anniston, Alabama.

Carpenters Learn of Need for Church

Obie Fuller, project coordinator for Carpenters for Christ of East Alabama, learned of the need for the new church in McGaheysville while building a church in Joplin, Missouri. Pastor Wayne Pence notes, "A couple from our church learned about Carpenters for Christ while visiting family in Missouri and seeing the group working on a new church. They decided to take a chance and ask the Carpenters to build a church for us here in



McGaheysville. After discerning God's direction for a few months, the Carpenters felt the call to take on this project. I know God was involved in the process."

Mountain View already owned the land, 4.6 acres on McGaheysville Road, which they had purchased from a local Mennonite foundation. All they needed was the labor to build the church.

Mr. Fuller says he had never heard of the Church of the Brethren before. He researched their beliefs. It's important to the Carpenters that the church members believe in God's word. The Carpenters have a committee of nine men who meet with church groups requesting their help. They met with Pastor Pence in December to determine the extent of the need. Retired contractor and construction coordinator Emory Combs believes the McGaheysville project might be the only Church of the Brethren project ever done by the group. He makes the call on whether the volunteers can tackle the project.

Pastor Pence wants to offer an after-school program at the new church, as well as a ministry to persons with special needs. Families who take care of special-needs children could use an opportunity to worship and be involved in a church.

Mr. Fuller says, "If we don't reach kids, someone else does."

Church Met in Town Hall

The pastor says the church, which was founded in 1998, met in the McGaheysville Town Hall prior to the new construction. During his research on constructing a new church, Pastor Pence discovered that John Neff, chairman and CEO of Nielsen Builders, Inc., often consulted with local churches on various matters. Pastor Pence said Mr. Neff advised them on conducting a congregational and community survey, preparing a request for proposal and selecting an architect. He says, "We couldn't have done this without John Neff's help."

Nielsen Builders served as the project's general contractor and partnered with the volunteer workers and members of the local congregation to complete this project.

Pastor Pence adds, "These volunteers were remarkable. They each paid \$150 for the privilege of volunteering here for 10 days in June. They traveled far from their own homes and communities to help others. We are so grateful for the support of Carpenters for Christ."

Who Are the Carpenters?

Mr. Fuller explains that the Carpenters for Christ of East Alabama consists of about 100 volunteers who are members of 16 local Alabama churches. Originally part of another Carpenters for Christ group in Montgomery, the East Alabama chapter broke off about four years ago when the group became large enough to form an independent chapter.

Mr. Fuller says, "I do this because of what Christ did for me. He straightened out my life 10 years ago. I was neglecting my family and working all the time. I kept my family from going to church." He says Christ had a heart-to-heart talk with him, and he decided to join the group. About four years ago, Mr. Fuller accepted the role of project coordinator. Carpenters for Christ has become a true focal point in his life. "Two years ago, my father-in-law died. I knew I needed to go help build a church, and my wife understood why I needed to leave right after the funeral," he says. Both his son and grandson now volunteer.

He says, "We get such a blessing out of volunteering. Pastor Wayne thanked us for coming. We thanked him for giving us the chance to be a part of this project." The project almost didn't happen because of difficulties encountered while Pastor Pence tried to find a place for 80 men to stay overnight during the week of construction. The host community generally arranges overnight lodging for the volunteers.

The smaller group of men, who came in prior to the larger group, stayed at Brethren Woods Church Camp the first few days of the week. When the larger group came in, they camped out at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights, then moved to Spotswood High School for the remainder of the week. The Carpenters buy their own food and bring their own cooks. They use available cooking facilities in the host town. While working on the Mountain View church, they used a 4-H stove at the fairgrounds and the McGaheysville Town Hall kitchen facilities.

The group consists entirely of men from all walks of life, ages 9 to 70-plus, and includes college, high school and elementary students; retired folks; a factory supervisor; a schoolteacher; an engineer; and a few folks who own construction companies. Volunteering with the Carpenters takes first priority for many of the yeomen, as evidenced by volunteer William Martin, who drove from the project site in Virginia to Branson, Missouri, for a family reunion, then motored back to Virginia to help complete the project.

Out of the 80 volunteers at the Church of the Brethren, only about 10 are carpenters. These 10 men serve as crew chiefs, and help guide the activity of everyone else. Mr. Fuller notes that the group does quality work. If it's not right, they tear it down and start all over again. "We need to remember the folks who we are working for. We can't be perfect, but we try," he says.

The Carpenters have been all over the country building churches. They've traveled to Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Kentucky and Oklahoma. They go wherever God calls them. Mr. Fuller says, "This is the largest job we've ever done. It's about 10,000 square feet."

When not working as project coordinator for the Carpenters for Christ, Mr. Fuller is a diesel mechanic foreman who lives in Valley, Alabama. He and his wife, Jo Ellen, have three adult children: Amy, Regina and Casey.

The group completed the external work, and began the electrical and plumbing work during the week last June. Nielsen completed the remaining external and internal work on the church. Robert Winthrop and Associates, Farmville, Virginia, handled the design. The new church is 7,000 square feet and offers parking for 70 vehicles. Pastor Pence says the church saved a substantial amount on the project, thanks to the Carpenters and the generosity of several subcontractors who offered services at a greatly reduced fee.

"This is all very humbling," Pastor Pence says. "Just the fact that God has done it. We certainly do not have all the resources, and we're not smart enough to figure all of it out on our own. This just reaffirms that God has directed the whole process."



Obie Fuller





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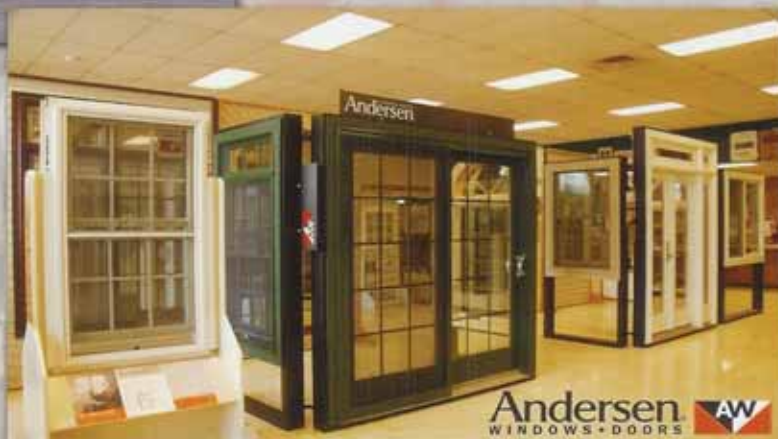


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