

# First United Methodist Church Bennettsville, South Carolina



Renovation 2005-2006

## CHURCH RENOVATION

The congregation discussed a church renovation program for years. Plans were in place in 1975 when it was decided there was a greater need for a family center. This was constructed in 1976. After this building was paid for, discussions began again to renovate our 1925 education building.

In 1999 a building committee was appointed. The original committee was: Ron King, Beverly Hodges, Van Edwards, Tracy Kea, Ron Woodbery, Hubert Meggs, Ralph Kelly, and Mac McLaurin. Through the years, work responsibilities forced the last three to resign. Those added to the committee were: Rev. J. Leon Newton, Marion Carmichael and Louise Heriot.

The first job of the committee was to hire an architectural firm. They chose the firm of James, Dupont, Matthew, and Shelly from Sumter. This group began work in 1999.

Their next job was to determine the interior and exterior changes they wanted. Interior changes included:

- 1) Replacing all electrical wiring and additional lighting;
- 2) Replacing and improving AC and heating;
- 3) Improving existing plumbing and upgrading restrooms;
- 4) Improving administrative offices;
- 5) Renovating and enlarging day care and nursery facilities;
- 6) Installing an elevator to all floors;
- 7) Making the building handicap accessible;
- 8) Adding a parlor or gathering room;
- 9) Adding a brides' room;
- 10) Improving existing plumbing and upgrading restrooms;
- 11) Providing easy access from the family center and education building to the east narthex.

Improvements to the exterior were:

- 1) Removing asphalt and grading;
- 2) Constructing new rear entrances;
- 3) Concealing mechanical equipment;
- 4) Constructing new colonnade between family center and church;
- 5) Providing new stairs and passages to the storage area;
- 6) Replacing storm drains and gutters;
- 7) Closing the driveway between the family center and church;
- 8) Adding more handicapped parking places in the rear of the building;
- 9) Landscaping around the building.

The above recommendations were made by the congregation and given to the architects. Blueprints from the architects were presented to the congregation in the fall of 2004. These were on display in the church for several months, giving individuals the opportunity of attending meetings where they were discussed and also studied individually.

Most of the discussion revolved around the architects' recommendation of relocating the chapel and dividing the present chapel into two classrooms. After considerable discussion, the congregation voted to leave the chapel in its present location.

Final plans were presented and accepted by the congregation in February of 2005. By this time the projected costs presented in 1999 had risen considerably.

Bids were advertised on March 6, 2005 and returned on April 6, 2005. The bids ranged from \$1,498,700.00 to \$2,300,000. The building committee decided to go with Florence Builders, but before a contract was signed, the committee was approached by Southern Designs from Lexington. Their proposal was \$549,000 less, so the committee signed the contract with them.

Scott Spencer, project manager with Southern Design, began work July 1, 2005. Major Worley was named Project Superintendent. Their first work was locating subcontractors, so actual work began approximately six weeks later.

As with all construction, costs exceeded the first estimate. However, Southern Design projected that we would be able to add \$100,000 in additional improvements and still stay within our target range of \$1.5 million.

These additions included: replacing all windows, adding Lucite over existing stained glass windows, adding sound and dimmer systems, adding new interior and exterior doors in the Sanctuary and refinishing the pews. In order to meet the DHEC and fire marshal requirements, it was also necessary to cut exterior doors in each room used by nursery, daycare, and preschool children. Additional rest rooms were also needed.

The original plans did not include doing anything in the Sanctuary, which had been remodeled in 1955. However, the architects recommended placing air conditioning units in the attic above the chancel area, which involved tearing out the ceiling. Before the ceiling could be removed, it was necessary to remove the pews in order to protect them. When the pews were removed it was necessary to take out the carpet. By this time the opportunity to add additional lighting and changing the ceiling was too good to ignore. When the committee saw that the original center section of the 1900 beaded ceiling was intact, they saw the opportunity of having a vaulted ceiling, which would improve the acoustics of the Sanctuary. These changes, which also included plaster work, some carpentry, refinishing the floor and painting still stayed under the \$1.5 million.

When discussions began about the building project, of course, one of the first topics was finances. We were behind in meeting our present budget, so how could we project paying our enormous debt incurred by renovating? The answer that came to each of us was *prayer* and *faith*. There were days of discouragement followed by days of excitement. Everyone wanted the work to be done but some simply could not see the wisdom of borrowing money.

Finally, the congregation decided the only way the money could be raised was to hire a consulting firm specializing in helping churches raise money. Cargill Associates was hired. Unfortunately, the first person assigned to us did not work effectively, so the church requested a change. Mrs. Kerry Goldmeyer became our consultant and has done a wonderful job.

Cargill's approach involved a large number of the congregation in the planning process for a Capital Stewardship Campaign. The motto chosen was "Vision for Tomorrow—Faith for Today."

The Vision for Tomorrow is not just bricks and mortar, but a church reaching out in ministry and building the kingdom of God one life at a time.

It was necessary to create a Leadership Team. This group was appointed by the pastor and church officials. The work of this body entailed:

1. Looking at the past history of the church;
2. Reviewing the membership of the church;
3. Studying the Sunday School;
4. Geographical location of membership;
5. Age and gender of the congregation;
6. Community population by age and gender;
7. Financial profile of the congregation;
8. Possibility for growth.

Committees worked on each of the above areas. A program planning committee was also appointed. This group sent a questionnaire to all church members asking what they liked and disliked about all areas of the church and church programs, and what improvements they would like to see.

All of these groups reported back to the congregation before calling for a vote on whether to proceed with the building program. When the vote was taken, a great majority voted in favor of proceeding.

Cargill recommended that the money be raised in two phases. The first phase would ask for pledges to be paid in a three year period. The drive for this was in conjunction with the regular annual budget campaign.

Commitment Sunday was well attended. The annual budget giving exceeded previous years, and \$750,000 was pledged for the renovations during a three-year period.

At this point actual work began and it was necessary to start contacting lending agencies. The proper authorities contacted local banks and those in surrounding towns. The best offer came from First Citizens Bank. The money is withdrawn as needed and our payments will begin only after work has been completed.

Pledges made at the beginning of Phase 1 have been paid consistently and most are up-to-date. We are now ready to begin Phase II.