

ARCHITECTURE, BUILDING & FAITH

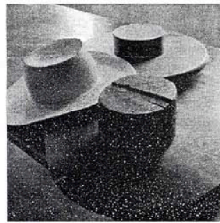
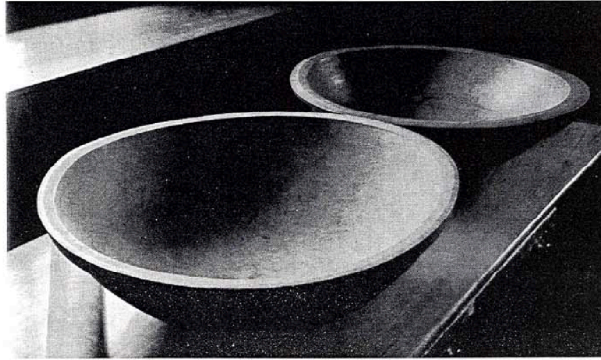
"UNDERSTANDING WHY AND HOW WE BUILD FOR OUR CONGREGATION"
a publication of bruce r. wardell architects, p.c.

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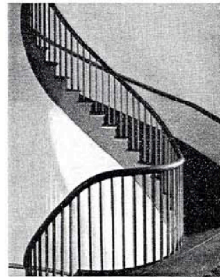
Photographs by Linda Butler

SHAKER STYLE

INTEGRATING FAITH AND BUILDING

"At first, all appears perfectly plain. There is care in the proportions. The drawers decrease slightly in height as they rise. The wall pegs are handsomely turned, when mere sticks would have satisfied utility. The room is a fine equation: it possesses a simplicity that is not lightly achieved, the sum of wood and plaster, plus light, which endlessly alters the look of the place. As the earth turns toward late afternoon the room fills with light until it can hold no more, and in this fullness is transfigured. For this moment and a short while longer, there seems to be more than wood and plaster, line and plane. There is harmony, radiance, and a glimpse of something like grace. It has happened this way for some fifty thousand days since this room was new in 1831.

June Sprigg, "Inner Light": The Shaker Legacy



This description of a room at Hancock Shaker Village in Massachusetts communicates how the Shaker dedication to simplicity of expression can transform a simple room to a profound symbol of faith. Mother Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers, encouraged her followers to "Put your hands to work and your hearts to God." This simple principle guided the way in which Shakers worked, cooked, crafted furniture, and constructed their buildings. The idea that the content of their faith is exhibited in the quality of their work has created a legacy

for more influential and enduring than their modest numbers and their small communities would suggest.

The United Society of Believers, or Shakers as we know them, began in 1774, when Ann Lee brought eight followers to New York from Manchester, England. As dissidents from the Anglican Church they had been persecuted for their unique response to the presence of the Holy Spirit, in which they trembled and danced. This response led to

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THE BUILDING COMMITTEE: CONTINUED

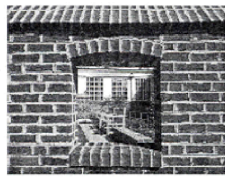


Often members of the building committee will need to resolve differing visions of a project.

architect for the project. They will also assist the architect in developing the program, budget, and scheduling of the project. An important responsibility of the building committee will be to coordinate the design with the funding of the building. This means working in conjunction with both the finance committee and perhaps a capital campaign committee. There should be some member of the building committee who insures that these various committees stay in close contact with each other. It is critical that the architect and building committee develop a project that the congregation will be able to afford. Finally, during construction, the building committee will monitor the progress of construction, work with the architect to select finish materials and colors, and coordinate payment to the builder. It is often the building committee that has the privilege of overseeing the opening of the new facility and presenting it to the congregation.¹

shown that a committee of 5 or 6 members makes decisions much more efficiently than one having 10-15 members. Each member of the team will have important roles to play during different times of the work, and these roles should be clearly defined. This will allow each member to know what is expected of them and how they can most efficiently contribute to the success of the project. Members of the committee should be good decision makers, with a talent for creating consensus within a group decision making setting. It will also be important to maintain an open communication with the congregation while continuing to give them a sense of involvement in and ownership of the process. This may mean that there are times in the process of the building program when efficiency is sacrificed for the purpose of reinforcing the sense of community in the congregation. With many different interests involved there will inevitably be competing priorities that need to be worked through. It will be important to remember in this process that the congregation is more important than the facility and unity of purpose is more important than efficiency.

There are a number of characteristics that contribute to a successful building committee. One simple principle relates to the size of the committee. Experience has



A carefully placed opening in the garden wall provides a framed vista to the interior landscape.

THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL GARDEN



The memory wall surrounds and shelters a garden space for quiet reflection or small gatherings.

Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church has recently constructed a memory garden that connects the original structure with the new social hall addition completed in 1994. The memory garden draws on a rich history that American churches have that joins the current congregation with those that have gone on before them. In this particular case the goal was to create the sense of a 'church yard' within a walled garden serving both as a place of memory and a refuge for meditation. The design solution creates a garden wall that encloses an intimately scaled square lawn surrounded by the memory wall.² The memory wall has a recessed horizontal band that holds small slate memorial plaques engraved with the names. This horizontal band surrounds the garden in the same manner that the former members surround current and future

congregations. At the center of the memorial wall is a 'crease' that connects the sky and the earth. At this crease water flows over polished soapstone from the top to a basin at the garden level, creating a peaceful sound within the garden. Around the perimeter of the lawn will be planted perennial flowers and ivy that will cover the brick wall with a blanket of greenery. Ornamental trees will provide brilliant colors throughout the year. The garden will also provide a setting for 'ceremonial' events at the church, including memorial services, receptions, coffee hours, and group presentations. It will become an area of refuge on a site that fronts on a busy neighborhood street while providing a profound statement to the congregation that they are a part of a history that goes far beyond their current membership.

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A. B & F

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

Architecture, Building, and Faith is a publication of BRUCE R. WARDELL ARCHITECTS, P.C. that is dedicated to providing information about the building and planning process for churches and synagogues. Building for communities of faith is a unique process that must both be dedicated to symbolizing the faith as well as building for the needs of the congregation. Each issue addresses particular areas of the design and building process that are important to consider when building, renovating, or restoring religious facilities. AB&F introduces resources that specialize in assisting congregations in preparing, planning, designing, constructing and owning their facilities. From the initial research phases to the responsible management and ownership of a facility AB&F provides congregations with information to help prepare for the building process.

BRUCE R. WARDELL ARCHITECTS, P.C. has worked with many congregations to plan and construct their facilities. In addition the firm leads seminars for long range planning committees, building committees, and clergy to provide the insight and understanding necessary to develop a successful building program.

ating the church and creating a facility that is both a symbol and a tool. It will involve articulating the most eternal and spiritual aspects of faith as well as the most practical and down to earth details of how the church functions. The planning process will involve collecting information and developing a PROGRAM for the building. The program will be a comprehensive description of what the building will be, how it will function, and what it should "communicate" to the community. With a PROGRAM in hand the architect can begin the design process for the facility. In conjunction with various consultants, a design will be developed that responds to the program. The Build-

ing for the church is a process that starts with the vision of a few, is communicated to others in the community of faith and results in greater service to the community around us. We all have worshipped in places that have inspired us or given us ideas of what we would like when our church builds. Fundamentally, we understand that our building will be a tool for the work of the church in worship, fellowship, ministry and service. The first question we find that we ask is:

"How do we take our ideas about the vision of our congregation and turn them into a building?"

In providing an overview of the process of planning and building a facility for the church, we will focus on four areas:

- A. PREPARATION
- B. PLANNING
- C. CONSTRUCTION
- D. OWNERSHIP

The process of building a facility for the church provides both opportunities and dangers for each congregation. Building a facility can be dangerous if the pro-

ing Committee will have numerous opportunities to respond to the designs that are developed and provide their input. Often times the congregation as a whole will have opportunity to give input and respond to the designs. Over a period of time the design will be refined to the point where it best represents a solution to the program developed. During this time it is important to monitor the budget for the project to balance the desires of the congregation and the resources available. After producing a thorough set of drawings and documents for the facility, the architect will be ready to assist the congregation in selecting a builder.

CONSTRUCTING THE BUILDING

There are various methods for having a facility constructed. The best method for each individual congregation must be determined by taking into account many factors at the time of construction. The two most common methods of selecting a builder are:

- A. COMPETITIVE BIDDING
- B. NEGOTIATION

In competitively bidding a project, the drawings and specifications are given to a number of contractors who then provide their best price for constructing the facility. Most of the time the bidder with the lowest price is selected to build the project. In negotiating a contract, the Building Committee in consultation with the architect will select a contractor who

cess is poorly planned. The strengths of the congregation can get lost in the focus on the facility. Alternatively, the building process can also become an opportunity to evaluate and clarify the vision of the church, strengthen relationships within the congregation, and expand the mission of the church into areas that were impossible before the new facility. The new building becomes a tool for ministry and a symbol of faith. Building a facility for the church is more than simply planning spaces, building walls, moving in, and paying for it. The building process involves mobilizing people and creating a sense of ownership in each member of the congregation. It is by careful planning, wise decision making, and experienced counsel that this process can become the best expression of the vision for the church. With a well organized team the building process can create a beautiful facility that will help fulfill the vision of the church.

PLANNING THE BUILDING

Planning the building involves the process of taking both the philosophy of the church and the practical needs for oper-

has a particularly good reputation in similar buildings. Based on the drawings that the architect has developed the contractor will prepare a cost for the work. Once construction begins, the Building Committee will have performed 90% of their work, the architect will be 80% complete, and the contractor will just be beginning.

OWNING THE BUILDING

While planning and constructing a new facility may seem like a monumental task for a congregation and a building committee, it is actually only a small portion of the time and expense that is involved in owning the building. The costs of building are in fact only about 20% of owning and operating the facility over the life of the congregation. As the congregation enjoys the first services and dedication of the building, it will be necessary to have in place long term strategies for using and maintaining the facility. This will involve preparing for the responsibilities of building maintenance, energy management, security, financing and debt retirement, and of course, future expansion.

As the congregation settles into the facility and begins to use it for worship and ministry, it becomes important to emphasize that the facility must set the backdrop for the real activity of the church: worship, fellowship, service, and ministry. If a building supports all of these activities and allows the congregation to do the work of the faith, the building program will have been a success.

