

Building Committee Report, 2004-2005

The Building Committee was reappointed by the Board of Trustees in September 2004 to work with our new architecture firm, Menders, Torrey, and Spencer (MTS), to develop plans to construct a new addition and preserve the meetinghouse.

The Building Committee met 23 times between September and April. We also held parish information meetings on November 21, February 6, and April 24, and a Special Parish Meeting on February 13.

The architect and committee members met several times with town officials and designers of the Old Center roundabout project to make their plans more compatible with ours. As a result, the state-funded project will provide several more on-street parking places than were originally planned, and a nicely landscaped entrance and pedestrian area in front of the church.

MTS also completed an assessment of existing conditions, consulting with our structural engineer, John Wathne, to develop meetinghouse preservation plans. Exterior work is expected to be bid shortly and to begin later this summer.

Developing a building plan within our \$1.5 million budget for new construction has been the committee's main challenge and preoccupation. Our initial program of needs, combined with circulation and support space required by building codes, totaled 14,000 square feet (sf) beyond the existing meetinghouse. After rejecting seven conceptual plans developed by the architect that were too expensive, and reducing our program by 3,400 sf, the committee endorsed a two-phase schematic design that was approved by the Parish on February 13.

However, concerns about the small size of the proposed parish hall, an enclosed sanctuary window, and a higher than expected cost estimate, led to the development of a somewhat simpler plan ("Plan L"), containing 8,000 sf of finished space. Thanks to creative sharing of religious education space, the new schematic plan includes a chapel and music rehearsal room, a youth room, a nursery dedicated to North Parish use, as well as new offices, class and meetings rooms, and daycare space. Plan L received favorable feedback at parish information meetings in April and is the basis for the next phase of design and development. Cost is an ongoing concern, and we plan to soon involve a builder or construction manager to value-engineer the design.

This year the Board of Trustees hired these consultants, upon the building committee's recommendations: Merrimack Engineering (completed topographic site survey), Nobis Engineering (completed geotechnical investigation), John Smolak (attorney for permitting and negotiations with town), D.G. Jones (cost estimator).

We all were shocked and saddened by the death of our fellow committee member Karl Kober on January 21. An experienced construction project manager, we relied on Karl's expertise in hiring the architect, coordinating with consultants, and in advising us on the building planning process. We were grateful for the time that Karl spent with us and for the many hours that he volunteered to the project.

For their perseverance I would also like to thank this year's building committee members: Carl Mellin, Clem Karl, Cathy Bakkensen, Peter Brady, Kurt Jelinek, Libby Strauss, Dan Luterman, Gary Adams, Dick Slade, Kathy Slade, Nancy Lennhoff, Gail Forsyth-Vail, and Rev. Lee Bluemel.

Respectfully submitted,
Harry Voorhees, Chair