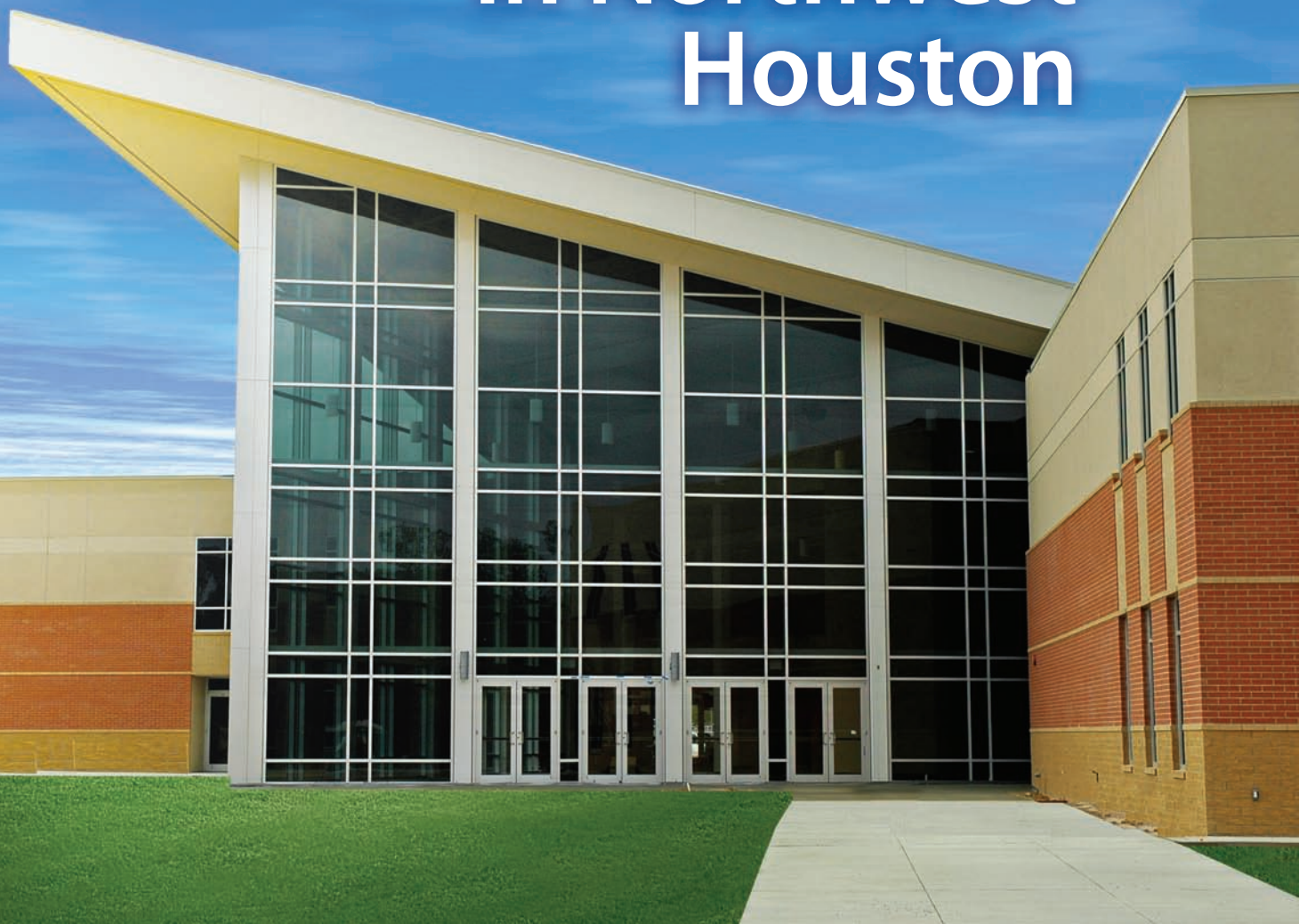


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Building a Bridge of Faith in Northwest Houston





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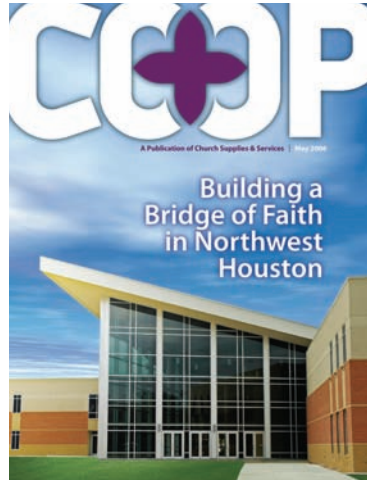


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CONTENTS



MAY 2006

COVER STORY

Building a Bridge of Faith | P14

Even though the congregation had experienced tremendous growth, it was handcuffed in its ability to conduct programs throughout the week.



Rethinking The Construction Process

It has often been said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results.



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We've Got You Covered

Religious institutions can no longer consider themselves safe from potential litigation.

Departments

Bank Notes

The Balance Sheet is a critical component of the entire financial picture of any faith-based organization. Page 6

More Power To You

Natural Gas, the fuel that drives a considerable portion of electricity generation in Texas, has been fluctuating the past 3 months. Page 24

Keep your Contact Information Current. The lifeline of communication to our members is through correct contact information, i.e. key contact names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. All updates should promptly be sent to danbishop@churchco-op.org. Help us keep you informed of the latest in savings and events from our vendors.

Editors Note For submitting articles, artwork or comments about this publication, please contact: Dan Bishop P.O. Box 821243 Houston, TX 77282-8243 . 888.350.3264



Church Supplies & Services, Inc CO+OP
Issue Dates: Nov, Feb, May, Aug

AUTHORIZED ORGANIZATION Church Supplies & Services, Inc.

LOCATION 1880 S. Dairy Ashford, Suite 208, Houston, TX 77077 TELEPHONE 281.531.5629 INTERNET www.churchco-op.org
Issue Number: 3 Subscription Price \$0.00

Another Depot For You...

But before I tell you about the new vendor, let me take a moment to celebrate the success of our recent Church Staff Conference. Patti Malott and her devoted committee orchestrated a grand success, if the evaluations are to be believed. More than 200 of the attendees turned in kind kudos on their evaluations.

Many thanks to Patti and Dianne Giroir, Houston NACBA Chapter President and Kay Irvine, NACBA Regional Vice President and all the NACBA members for their help with the planning and the day. While we are passing out appreciation, we also want to thank Carol Kelly, and all the staff at Houston's First Baptist Church. Thank you every one!

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While you're reflecting on vendors, don't forget to take a look at our new format **Vendor Listing** on the last page....including a new, easy-to-read alphabetical listing for the vendors with page numbers for their ads. Our vendor list has grown in recent months. We want you to be able to easily find them and their ads.

We're CO+OP. The concept works because you belong and because our Vendors want to work with you. Thanks. Thank you every one.

Blessings,

Dan Bishop
Executive Director

P.S. If you are going to **NACBA in Chicago**, plan to stop by our booth in the Exhibit Hall and we'll celebrate the 50th Anniversary of NACBA with you.



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Charles Dowden



Charles Dowden joined the Business Lending Group at Comerica Bank three years ago. Before Comerica, he served two years with Wells Fargo in Business Banking and four years with Allied Capital in Asset Based Lending. Charles is married with one son, Charles, Jr., at LSU. He resides in the Dallas area.

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Ken Werlein is founding pastor of Faithbridge (www.faithbridge.org) a United Methodist "church of small groups" in northwest Houston. The church began in October 1998 with 7 people and today averages well over 1,400 on Sundays with more than 140 small groups. Guided by a congregation-wide prayer campaign, Faithbridge purchased the 80 acres of land on which their new church home stands. Ken graduated from Vanderbilt University. He received a master's and doctorate from Asbury Theological Seminary (Beeson Pastor Fellowship). Ken and his wife Suzanne had their first child, Wesley, in September 2004.

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Insurance One in The Woodlands, Texas is owned and operated by 20-year insurance professional Gary Benson. Throughout his career, Gary has consistently earned his company's recognition of top agents and has developed a successful and profitable agency through his unique dedication to serving and

helping people and organizations. A Texas native, Gary and his wife have three daughters ages 26, 23, and 19 and one grandson.

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The Balance Sheet:

What it doesn't tell you that you should know!

The balance sheet is a critical component of the entire financial picture of any faith-based organization. Whoever makes up the finance committee, complete and accurate information is essential to good financial management.

The balance sheet is important to the organization's operations in general. It should provide a snapshot of what the organization owns and what they owe to outside sources. The balance sheet provides great insight into an organization's holdings.

To clarify, a balance sheet shows how much money the organization has, how much property they own, and most importantly, how much money they owe. This is beneficial for outside sources to view, such as bankers.

The balance sheet is broken down into several sections. Each section is grouped by liquidity – that is, how easily the particular asset can be converted into cash. The first section is short-term assets. Within this category, cash is listed first, followed by near cash assets. Near cash assets are assets that can be easily converted into cash. Accounts receivable, money that people owe the organization, is also listed in this category.

The next category is the long-term assets. These would include equipment, property, and buildings, along with long-term notes receivable. Generally, long-term assets are assets that cannot be easily converted to cash within a year's time.

After long-term assets comes the liabilities category. This category is also divided into short and long term – that is, short and long-term liabilities. In this case, time is generally defined in years – less than a year for short term, and more than a year for long term.

Short-term liabilities would include items such as mortgage payments for the next year, along with utilities and equipment leases. In addition, short-term liabilities include employee wages, usually listed as wages payable. Long-term liabilities would include items such as the remainder of the mortgage for future years, along with equipment leases. Items here overlap, as time is the separator, not the specific item.

Listed below are typical sections within a balance sheet that can be misleading or inaccurate.

1. **Assets.** Buildings or land should be listed on the balance sheet at cost. It's surprising how many times I see a balance

sheet that doesn't list property. Even if the debt is paid, you should list the asset. It will remind you of what should be insured and reflect the value of the property owned by the organization. Real estate is almost always the most significant asset and it should be on the balance sheet.

What really looks strange is a balance sheet that only lists the mortgage in long-term debt. The balance sheet ends up with a negative Fund Balance, which makes the organization look like it's spending more money than it is taking in.

2. **Restricted balances.** Typically, "restricted" is used to identify a donation that is to be used for a specific purpose. The donor may have specified that it be used only for debt pay-down, a certain mission or church program or so on. This restriction takes the money out of the available cash and restricts it to that particular use only. Only the donor can make the change from restricted to general.
3. **Restricted vs. budget reserves.** Organizations will decide to "restrict" funds for a particular use. Maybe it's to replace the HVAC or "rainy day" emergency fund. It may be described as restricted, but only for budget purposes has it been set aside. It's technically still part of the general fund. It's a budget reserve, not really a restricted reserve.
4. **Cash vs. accrual.** One of the most common difficulties emerging nonprofits face is the need to determine how to present its financial position. While accrual basis accounting is the best way to present your organizations financial position, most nonprofits start with cash basis accounting.

For accounting purposes, the best method is accrual-based. A cash-based system can distort the true financial condition of the organization.

- **Income:** The recognition of income for faith-based organizations is essentially the same. When you receive money, unless restricted, it's income. There are not receivables, per se. Members do make pledges or commitments, but that's not a receivable.
- **Expenses:** Under the cash method, an expense is recognized when it's paid. Under the accrual method, an expense is recognized when it is obligated to be paid. Under the accrual method, the expense goes against the appropriate expense category and is then

added to accounts payable. When it is finally paid, it comes out of accounts payable.

Use of the accrual method clearly reflects the financial condition of the organization. All debts, both current and long-term, are on the balance sheet.

5. **Designated Funds.** Designated Funds are either Donor Restricted or Church Restricted and should be listed in the Equity section of the Balance Sheet. Here, the balances due to specific missions, projects or groups are detailed. The money may come through the general fund or may be restricted for a certain purpose. In this section, you should be able to see how much funds have been designated and for what. Money raised for specific purposes should be shown here. Unless restricted, they are all still part of the general fund and, as such, can be used for any purpose as determined by the organization.

An accurate balance sheet is a critical part of the financial reporting of any faith-based organization. It is an important guide in the decision making of the organization; it's important to outsiders who rely on its completeness and accuracy such as bankers, insurance underwriters, etc.

Charles Dowden, Comerica Bank
Contributor: Dan Williams, CPA

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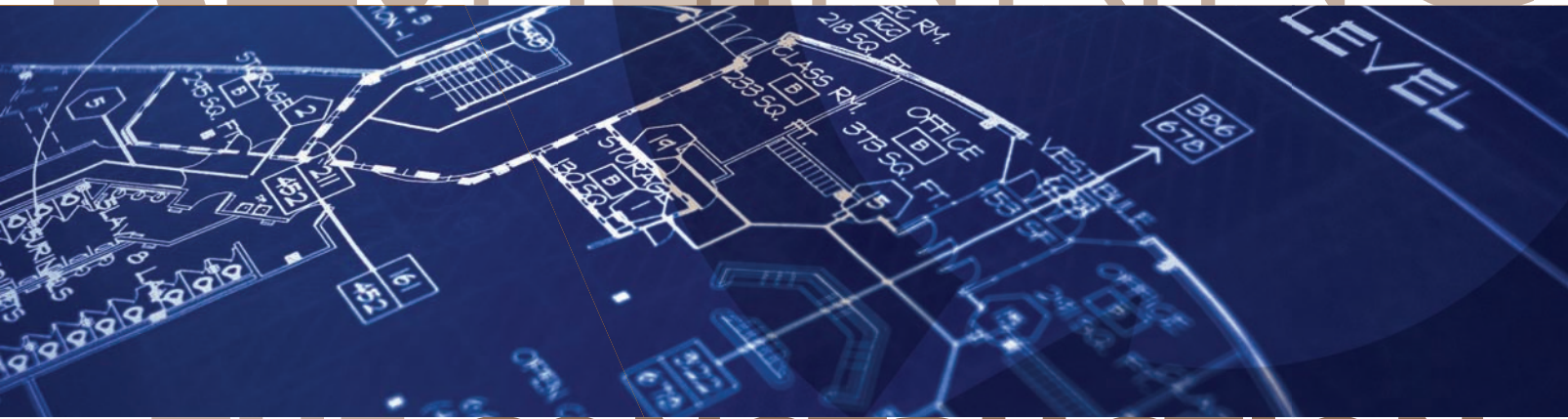


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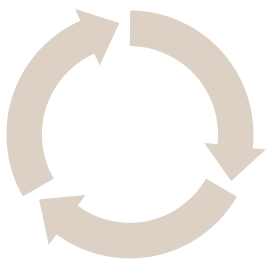
50TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE JULY 25-29, 2006

By Thomas Greer

RE:THINKING



THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS



It has often been said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. Churches need to consider this statement when they get ready to plan future building projects.

Churches typically think the sequence of a project should be to hire an architect who will design the facility, then go out to bid with various contractors, take the lowest bid and then construct the building. The problem is that it rarely works that smoothly. The Design/Bid/Build process usually turns into Design/Bid/We Can't Afford That/Redesign/Re-bid/Delay/And On and On process.

The primary problem is that churches do not put enough effort into front end planning before turning the architect loose to design the facility. Architects always begin the project with programming which is an attempt to determine what the needs of the client are. The problem is that this type of programming is not much more than a wish list of the space the church would like to have. It does not take into account a myriad of other considerations that should be evaluated before design begins. I would like to suggest that we

consider a different approach to managing construction projects.

First, we need to realize that these projects are spiritual projects and not just construction projects. Anytime a church is experiencing growth you can be certain that it will come under attack. Disunity will pop its ugly head, or those leading the project will face physical illness, or family members will begin to struggle with concerns, or any number of issues will come up to hinder the project. Therefore, it is important to cover the project in prayer and for the leaders to be aware of, and prepared for, the battle that faces them.

Also, it is a great opportunity for the church to model Christ to the men and women who will be working on the project. For instance, when unexpected change orders occur, how do we react? Do we become irrational and begin playing the blame game or do we approach

the issue calmly and fairly? Oftentimes churches grind every penny they can from a contractor in the name of good stewardship. To me, that is not good stewardship. I believe good stewardship is using money in a way that brings honor and glory to God. If that is true, then I would much rather have a contractor feeling like he was treated fairly instead of feeling like the church took advantage of him.

Second, we should unlearn the Design/Bid/Build process and go to an Innovate/Unify/Define/Design/Build/Evaluate process. This new process puts more emphasis on the planning phase of the project where the greatest opportunity to control costs exists. Once the design process has begun, the opportunity to control costs decreases dramatically and when construction begins there is almost no opportunity to reduce costs. At that point, all the church can do is to manage the costs

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to which it has committed. But many church leaders will go through schematic design, realize they have a project that is too costly, and continue on with design development thinking that they can cut costs in the process. It does not work. Once design development has begun it becomes very expensive to make significant changes that will reduce costs.

So, let's go through this new process, step-by-step:

Innovate

A building project represents a great opportunity for the church to redefine itself. Unlike the human body where our DNA is a given, a church can change its DNA. Planning for a new facility allows us to dream about new ways to do ministry and reach out to our communities in relevant ways. It is an opportunity to reaffirm the vision of the past or perhaps cast a new and refreshing vision for the future. Logically, our vision and mission should determine the programs and activities of the church which should then shape the actual facilities. Unfortunately, many churches build their facility which defines the types of programs they conduct which indirectly shapes the mission of the church – the exact opposite of what it should be.

Unify

Vision unifies the church. If leadership does a good job of communicating a compelling vision for the church, the congregation will rally behind them in support of the project. It is important for the congregation to take ownership of the project. In order for this to happen, they need to be drawn in by a vision that excites them. Of course, this discussion assumes that leadership has formulated a vision that the people will support with their time and resources. The "if we build it they will come" strategy is rarely convincing and is a lazy approach to planning.

Define

Defining the project is the core of the strategic plan for the project. It is driven by the following questions:

- How much will we grow?
- How large should our worship center be?
- How much total space will be required?
- How much will it cost?
- How should we phase the project?
- How much can we afford?

All of these questions are interrelated and interactive. A change in one results in a change in the others. For instance, a change in the growth projection changes the size of the facility and all other related education spaces which changes the cost and our ability to afford the project. Also, if we can defer construction to a later date, our future operating budgets will presumably be larger which increases the likelihood that we can afford the project.

It is important to be realistic with our growth projections. Many young churches that are experiencing 30% to 50% annual growth think they will sustain that in the future. That is not realistic. As we get larger, the growth percentage tends to decline. Unrealistic growth expectations result in facilities that are much too large and too costly to build.

“When it comes to estimating the cost of the project it is important to not fall into the trap of believing cost fables.”

When it comes to estimating the cost of the project it is important to not fall into the trap of believing cost fables. The cost per square foot for a specific project is usually irrelevant to any other project. The construction costs are not the complete costs of the project. Be wary of what other churches say their project cost. That is why I recommend that the church engage a contractor early in the planning process so that realistic and complete project costs are developed.

If we have answered these questions and have realistic growth projections and cost estimates and a phasing plan that takes into account our ability to incur debt against future projected operating budgets in a way that will not adversely impact the ability of the church to conduct ministry, then we are prepared to begin design within the parameters of our plan.

Design

The most important point here is to make sure that the design phase is not out of sequence in the process.

One of my horror stories goes back to my early days managing church construction projects. On that project we acquired land, got our entitlements, built our parking lots, roadways and stubbed utilities to the future building pads. During that time we had our architect develop construction documents for the first worship center to seat 2,000 people. Unfortunately, we lacked the funds to construct that building so we put up a tent and portable buildings. Three years later when we were ready to construct the first building, we had already outgrown the previously designed building and had to scrap those plans costing us \$1 million.

Remember, architects make their money by drawing. As a result they are motivated to get the church to commence design even if the church has not spent the proper amount of time in planning. It's up to the church to control the pace of the project. No one else is going to do it.



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Build

With rising costs, the church has to balance the desire to begin construction at the earliest date against the desire to have complete construction documents. By going “fast track” the church can lock in construction costs at earlier dates. Unfortunately, this means that construction documents may not be complete which results in unforeseen costs, change orders and coordination issues between architectural, structural, mechanical and electrical documents. Churches might not overpay, but they may pay more than what they thought it was going to cost.

I mentioned before that I encourage churches to get their general contractor on board early in the planning process. Usually churches wait until they go out to bid to select their contractor. In my mind, waiting to hire the contractor until after design is like starting a baseball game with only 6 players and then adding 3 more in the seventh inning. I don't think you would have much of a chance to win. For me, a collaborative team with good chemistry is much more important to the success of the project than trying to get the lowest competitive bid. The contractor is an important part of the team and can add a lot of value in the planning process. Besides, I know that he is going to get bids from several subcontractors so that we still get the benefit of the bid process.

Evaluate

The project you just completed will probably not be your last building project if you are a growing church. It is important to learn from earlier projects so it makes sense to debrief with key personnel at the end of each project to review what worked and what could have been done better. Assessment and understanding are the beginning of future projects.

In conclusion, we need to rethink and relearn the process of church building projects. The ways we have done them in the past have usually led to frustration and cost overruns. We can ensure a more successful project by putting more effort into the planning process and using it as an opportunity to improve the way we do ministry and to instill vision into the church. ✦

Thomas Greer CPA, FCBA is the Director of Multi-site Operations for NewSong Church in Irvine, California. Before that, Tom held administrative and financial positions at three other large churches where he was involved in several building projects. He is also the founder of Firm Foundations, Inc. which assists churches with the planning of building projects. He can be contacted at tgreer@firmfoundationinc.net.



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The eye-catching facade of a church called Faithbridge commands a second look. The NW Houston church's custom-tailored cross beams through the wall of skyward-reaching glass, beckons onlookers to come in.



This evangelism through architecture is no accident. It was a carefully planned part of a \$10-million building project to provide Faithbridge, averaging 1200 worshippers, with its first permanent home.

"We wanted people to be able to look inside and see what's going on," said the Rev. Ken Werlein, Faithbridge's senior pastor. "We wanted them to see that there's nothing hidden or secretive going on here. There's nothing up on high shelves they could never reach. We're real people, with real lives, and we have a desire to meet folks where they are, wherever that may be, and take them to meet Jesus Christ."

Faithbridge held its first service in the new 55,000-square-foot facility April 9, 2006. The congregation spent a year planning the project, followed by a year of construction. Werlein planted the church seven years ago with a handful of people who met in his apartment. As attendance grew, the congregation rented space for services in an intermediate school and leased administrative office space in a bank building.

Building a Bridge of Faith Northwest Houston



Faithbridge Staff Family.

“Even though the congregation had experienced tremendous growth, it was handcuffed in its ability to conduct programs and ministries throughout the week,” said Joani Williams, Faithbridge communications director.

“Some have thought of us as the church that wasn’t really a church yet because we didn’t have our own building,” Werlein said. “Having facilities gives the congregation a sense of presence, legitimacy, and permanence. After meeting seven years in a school with teams of men arriving at 4:30 a.m. to set up for services, no one questioned the need.”

To launch the project, the senior pastor wrote a facilities vision paper that gave clarity and focus in concept development and in interviewing architects. He also served as the primary “vision caster” to share his excitement and support with the congregation.

“The senior pastor has to be 100 percent behind the project, otherwise people think it’s shaky,” Williams said. “He can’t go in half-hearted or it won’t work.”

The senior pastor also served as the chief fund raiser. “In this type of project, it is important to figure out how much debt

you can take on responsibly; we did not want to extend ourselves beyond twice what we could pledge,” Werlein said. “With growth projections, we were comfortable we would not jeopardize ministry operations so long as we stayed within those parameters.

“You have to watch to make sure you don’t get overextended. If all your money is going to debt reduction, you can’t pay for staff, programs, and promotions necessary to reach people and fill the building.”

The process toward construction involved several steps. The congregation hired a site planner who helped them assess their long-term goals or “wish list,” determining how much land they needed in order to accomplish those goals. The planner determined they needed 65 acres. The congregation searched, located the property with the help of their realtor, and staged prayer walks on the site for members. Eventually they purchased 73 acres that allowed space for extra frontage.

As the team considered design elements, a Faithbridger, who was a retired airline employee with time and unlimited travel privileges, traveled the country photographing church facilities and interviewing staff members at two dozen designated

churches. After each trip, he created a slide show to report on the designs and features of interest to the Faithbridge team. “We learned so many things without ever having to transport our team,” Werlein said.

Laurel Burrin, Faithbridge’s building team chair and congregation member, said church leaders considering building projects should determine the project details and budget early on in the process. The Faithbridge building team identified safety, connecting with the community, and the potential for future expansion as important features. They wanted to make sure they weren’t landlocked and had plenty of room to grow. “People are more mobile than they were a few years ago, so parking was also a major consideration,” Burrin said.

The team wanted to build a “smart facility” – energy efficient, easy to expand, future oriented, and flexible to use. The team wanted the building to embody the “feel” of the congregation and be a place for everyone, with customized features geared toward the various types of people who would use it. They also wanted the latest audio-visual technology, a contemporary design, and easy access. They prioritized good signage to help make the facility welcoming and easily navigated for newcomers around the building. Prayer is essential to Faithbridge members, so the design also includes a prayer center with 24-hour access.

The church is “wired” for computers and multi-media throughout, including two large projection screens in the multi-purpose room. People, in general, are more technically capable than they were even a few years ago, Williams said. That is especially true of younger people. They are accustomed to instant messaging, good visual effects, and great sound. Approximately 10 percent of the total building cost is devoted to technology.

“Churches wanting to combat the stereotype of an aging, dwindling congregation have to communicate the world’s most important message in a compelling way, and that means using the latest technology,” Werlein said.

continued on page 28



CONSIDER A MULTIPURPOSE SURFACE FOR YOUR NEXT FLOOR

When church leaders approach an expansion or renovation project, often the focus falls short when it comes to flooring. Sometimes it is simply overlooked or put at the bottom of the list because it is one of the last parts of a project to be completed and funded. That should not be the case. Visitors to the facility, whether frequent worshippers or guests from another church, congregation or sports team, should walk away with a distinct impression. And, flooring can help create the right one.

By Robin Traum
Public Relations Consultant
Taraflex Sports Flooring by Gerflor

Flooring deserves a place at the top of the renovation/expansion project list, especially when it is destined for multipurpose applications. The first topic to discuss about the flooring is where it is going and how that space will be used. As churches increasingly use the same areas for more and more programs to meet the needs and demands of various activities, the necessity of a versatile and durable floor becomes apparent.

Think about it: the role of churches has expanded from holding several worship services a week in sanctuaries to facilities with pre- and grade school sessions, sports programs, youth ministries, concert halls, meeting places, bookstores, coffee shops, exercise classes, banquet halls and more. The schedule is usually filled from morning until night, most days of the week. If the ministry is active and involved, the floor must be able to keep

up. There is no spare time to allocate to cleaning an intensive care floor or having to cover it between activities. If this sounds like your facility, look at multipurpose flooring to serve all your applications as completely as possible.

Before comparing different surfaces, prepare a list of what activities are likely to take place on the floor. Be sure to consult the staff members who will be using the room. Determine which programs will take place most frequently. Those should get priority for having their specific flooring needs met. Perhaps the new flooring is going into the fellowship hall for hosting services, choir practices, basketball games and fitness programs. That means the floor must be comfortable for standing, easy to run on and cushioned in case someone falls. Remember, the floor is constantly in use by people walking through the room, setting up equipment or participating in an activity. The surface must be easy to clean and durable so chairs or tables can be placed on it without damaging the surface. Once there is agreement on how the floor will be used and what characteristics are essential, get recommendations from your architect and colleagues for different floor types – resilient pure vinyl, polypropylene interlocking tiles, poured urethane, solid rubber, vinyl composite tile or hardwood. Visit facilities with these various types of flooring. Bring the decision makers, those who will pay the bills, along with the staff, who will be using the room and cleaning it. Let them - the youth leaders, teachers, administrators and maintenance personnel - talk to their counterparts. Be sure to take advantage of being at an installation and ask them to use the floor as they plan to at your building. Bounce a basketball, walk several laps, sit down on it, jump, run and stand in one spot for awhile. Gather their opinions afterward. When everyone helps do the research, it pays off in the end with a floor that meets expectations and does not present any costly surprises.

While visiting, find out how long the floor has been in place and examine it carefully. Does it look like a floor that has been there for six or eleven years or

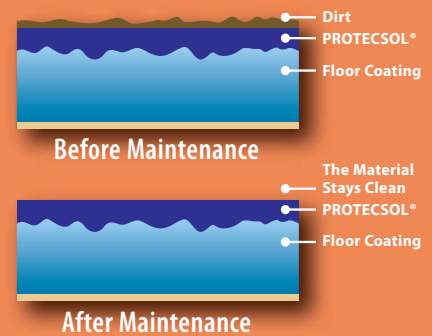


appear newly installed? Flooring creates impressions and the color and design can really complete a room. It is a huge part of the image of a room that people will walk away with. Think about what a large area you are covering, usually several thousand square feet or more. Reflect on the frequency of use and number of people walking in and out. It is important to select a floor that goes beyond looking good when it is new. The right choice will be a lasting floor that is easy to clean and comfortable to walk on. It will not restrict people because they wear the wrong type of footwear or require a specially purchased floor cover be put down before equipment can be moved in order to avoid potential damage.

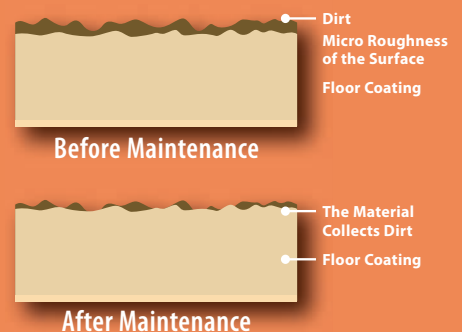
Once the broad range of choices has been narrowed to a select few, it is time to prepare a life cycle cost analysis for each flooring option. This process will help to reduce the number of choices and bring the manufacturers to you. A life cycle cost analysis takes into consideration the initial purchase price and installation of the floor; it includes the yearly and long-term maintenance expenses in terms of supplies, equipment and staff. Think long-term, it is risky not to. Buying an inexpensive floor can be short sighted if expensive maintenance equipment or procedures are required in a few years' time. The amount and type of maintenance varies greatly from floor to floor and if maintenance requires closing off the area for time-consuming cleaning, stripping or re-finishing processes, it can greatly impact a program schedule and of course, the budget.

Durability of Performance to Maintenance Advantages

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available and how effective it is. Find out what protects the floor's surface. Grit and dirt can damage the finishes of some floors and others will be ruined by water or other liquids spilled or tracked into the room. Multipurpose floors are available with built-in product treatments and an impermeable surface to resist dirt and food stains and prevent bacteria and fungus development.

Find out the length of the warranty and what it covers. A correctly maintained floor often outperforms the warranty and a poorly maintained one can cause a host of problems. If the manufacturer's suggested maintenance program is not followed, the result can be peeling game lines, uneven coloring and worn-out sections. People using the room will notice the ball does not bounce as well; the floor looks dirty or is no longer comfortable to play or stand on.

Check with the manufacturers about their product's certification. It is critical to find out if the flooring brands being considered have been tested according to current standards. The United States has not established sport flooring standards; the most widely accepted ones, DIN, were developed in Europe. They set the criteria for sports flooring performance and quality including coefficient of friction, shock absorption, ball rebound, rolling load, deformation control and resilience. DIN V 18032-2 (April 2001), the most recent standard, tests the materials used in sports flooring according to six technical criteria and five performance criteria. The architect should have access to this information and obtain documentation stating the test results. Include in the request the status of ISO 14001 environmental and ISO 9001 quality accreditation.

Interest continues to grow in using environmentally friendly materials that can help earn building credits from LEED, the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design rating system. Confirm that the flooring you are considering is LEED eligible because of its high recycled content, ability to be recycled, low life cycle costs, low Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions and compatibility with solvent-free, very low VOC adhesives and low VOC game-line marking paint. Some multipurpose synthetic surfaces minimize usage of cleaning products and require reduced amounts of water for maintenance.

By now, you have reached the conclusion one type of flooring merits serious consideration – cushioned back vinyl flooring. It is manufactured in a variety of thicknesses to accommodate the wide variety of possible uses from education to sports to religion to recreation and is available in a broad range of colors. The qualities of multilayered vinyl flooring include shock



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absorption, comfort, versatility, durability, performance with true ball bounce and accurate pivoting and sound absorption. Installation is available with an under-floor moisture barrier. Another very important factor in pure vinyl's favor is simple maintenance such as daily damp mopping and biweekly or monthly automatic scrubbing

which translates to low life-cycle costs.

CO+OP Member Vendor Vector Concepts, Inc. can assist you with selecting the right multipurpose flooring for your church. Its partnership with Taraflex Sports Flooring by Gerflor gives you access to resilient vinyl flooring geared to the spectrum of multipurpose needs. Benefit from both Gerflor's almost 60 years of sports flooring experience and the more than 200 years of combined experience of the Vector Concepts' team in the commercial floor covering industry. Texas-based Vector Concepts is independently owned and operated and offers national specification, sales and installation services with a focus on teamwork and developing and maintaining long-term customer relationships. Vector Concepts provides a single source for product selection and delivery through expert installation, long-term care and maintenance. ✦

Taraflex Sports Flooring



Supply... and deliver

by Bob Fox

I came on staff at Kinsmen Lutheran Church in 1995 to establish a new position, that being the position of Business Administrator. As most Administrators know, the responsibilities vary. While there are some constants across the board that are found in every church, there are also some variables. One of the responsibilities that all Administrators are charged with is to “save” the church money and Kinsmen is no exception.

As an Administrator, we have to be aware of quality vendors with quality merchandise and service at an attractive price. These quality vendors become the “core” of suppliers that partner with us as we seek cost savings.

From the very beginning, 11 years ago, I realized that I needed to partner with the Co+Op because they already seek the types of vendors that meet our cost saving needs.

The approach that the CO+OP has is the idea that by banding together as a group, no matter what the size of our congregations, we all enjoy the same price discounting on quality goods and services. The CO+OP is more than a “discount club”, it is a ministry and the CO+OP Marketing Representatives and staff continually share this vision and mission passionately.

I feel it is important to always provide the Representatives of CO+OP an opportunity to visit with us when they ask for some of our time.

...it was an afternoon in January that Dan Bishop called and asked if he could stop by my office and share an idea with me. It is my philosophy that I will always visit with the CO+OP staff as these visits usually save me money or the CO+OP staff leaves me with a usable idea. This visit was not going to be any different....

Dan shared with me information about Home Depot Supply and added that he was hopeful they would be a new vendor and asked if this would be a vendor I would use. Dan explained to me the difference between Home Depot Supply and the local Home Depot Store and the impact and savings that I could realize, in cost of goods and labor (shopping time).

This was a timely visit as I was in the process of installing 12 television monitors in our Sunday school classrooms and had all but ordered the wall brackets from Peerless. Dan explained that Home Depot Supply has 2 virtual catalogs and provides supplies and equipment to hotels and meeting centers as well as the “typical” hardware items. We went on line and discovered that I could purchase the 12 TV brackets, at a considerable savings and since Home Depot Supply maintains a warehouse in Houston, I could get them delivered with no delivery charges. This was extraordinary in that, not only did I get quality merchandise at a discounted price, but, also, I had them in house 9 days earlier than the manufacturer could get them to me. So my project was completed at an earlier date than expected.

Working with Home Depot Supply has been a pleasure, their staff helped me establish our account with them over the phone and in a few short hours we were ready to place our order. The convenience of the on line catalog eliminates any time consuming labor costs associated in shopping at the

store. I look forward to a long relationship with Home Depot Supply as one of our vendors and I can't say enough to encourage anyone reading this to check them out. Remember that the money that we have to work with all belongs to God and whatever we can save can be applied to other ministry areas of our churches.

The Co+Op works... we are Member Organizations and Member Vendors working together to achieve great Stewardship. ✦



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we've got you covered

by Gary Benson

Religious institutions can no longer consider themselves safe from potential litigation. However, you can prepare for the possibility of being involved in a lawsuit so, that should it occur, you don't lose everything. Umbrella liability protection provides the extra shelter your church or non-profit organization needs to be completely covered.

The purpose of Umbrella insurance is to provide additional liability coverages that go beyond the other liability limits. Umbrella liability policies are typically available in coverage amounts ranging from \$1 million to \$10 million.

“Without an umbrella liability policy, a large judgment against you could cost your organization a substantial part of all of the assets you now have.”

How much is enough?

Unfortunately, there is no exact science when it comes to determining the appropriate level of liability insurance coverage, but you may need more liability insurance than you think. For example, standard commercial policies usually provide \$1,000,000 worth of liability coverage, but in today’s society it’s not unusual to hear of \$2-million, \$10-million, and even \$20-million liability judgments. If someone is injured at your facility, or if you cause a serious accident, it is possible that you could be hit with such a judgment. Without an umbrella liability policy, a large judgment against you could cost your organization a substantial part of all of the assets you now have. Perhaps it’s best to consider such factors as the following:

- What amount of assets does your organization have?
- Does your organization travel to foreign countries where even your base limit of liability may not apply due to exceeding the defined coverage territories?
- Does your organization frequently transport members or guests?
- Is your organization well known so that you might be a more likely target for a lawsuit (i.e., do you give the appearance of having “deep pockets”)?

The amount of coverage you should have depends on the factors mentioned above, as well as your risk tolerance and your financial ability to weather a liability judgment.

Could Your Church Afford it if....

- While making business calls, your minister collides with a vehicle, injuring three children, and the mother files a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against your church?
- A volunteer, while replacing ceiling fixtures, topples from a ladder and sustains a life-long back injury, resulting in a \$1.5 million judgment.
- While a 6-year-old boy is in Sunday School class, a partition falls on him. Award Given - \$1,800,000.
- A camp counselor runs a stop sign and hits another car broadside. One person is seriously injured; two persons have minor injuries. Award Given - \$1,750,000.

If your church would have to dip into investments or sell land or property to afford the above, you need an Umbrella policy. +

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by Paul Ward

Current Market Conditions

Natural gas, the fuel that drives a considerable portion of electricity generation in Texas, has been fluctuating for the last 3 months. The high reached in that market during late December, 2005 was \$15 per MMBTU. The current month is trading right at \$10. That is a decrease of more than 33%. The favorable conditions of an unseasonably warm winter corresponding with healthy natural gas storage reports has led to the largest decline in the cost of this fuel since the beginning of deregulation. However, this drop is only for the prompt month. If you look further out on the forward months NYMEX Index for natural gas, the costs are still higher for 1-3 year contracts than they were this same time last year.



Understandably, customers all across the state have been clamoring for fixed rate contracts since the price of natural gas has come off so considerably. Retail Electric Providers (REPs) have been slammed with requests for updated pricing and renewed agreements for the last two months. However, for those who did not need to lock in rates *prior to the last two weeks*, fixing a rate may be

deemed to have been slightly premature. The cost of energy will very likely continue its downward movement until the end of April, 2006. Obviously there is no guarantee that this will be the case, but market watchers often suggest that customers not buy while the price is dropping but do so once it begins to turn upwards. The reason for this approach is to get as close to the bottom of the trough as possible.

Long Term Rationale

If you look at pricing from any REP right now, the one year price is a little lower than the two/three year rate quotes. So the obvious question comes to mind. Why sign a three year contract if it is more costly per kWh than a one year agreement?

The answer is that the cost of electricity will likely be elevated this time next year above what it is right now, and it could be MUCH higher. So for the sake of budget stability and the opportunity to lock in 2006 prices until 2009, we have chosen to move forward for an extended opportunity instead of risking the short-term alternative.

Some have asked why we have chosen to not go longer than three years. The analysis behind this decision is that there are some changes coming in early 2010 that will have an unknown impact on the cost of moving energy across the state. Congestion costs will be impacted by Texas moving from a zonal to a nodal structure.

Everyone shopping this electricity market is focused on one thing... the bottom line.

Reasons for contracting now

In our last article we suggested that conditions were not ripe for signing a contract for an extended term due to still high prices. But we also stated that Price To Beat (PTB) customers could still benefit from signing an agreement simply because the market was beginning to fall and PTB was increasing at the time. However, CSSI and PoCo have always believed that March/April 2006 would yield the premium opportunity for buying electricity contracts.

Since December 2005, the natural gas commodity has steadily declined from its historical high that was reached following the two hurricanes last fall. And in the last month and a half the cost of gas has decreased from \$9 to \$6.50 per MMBTU. This dramatic decline is certainly validating the direction CSSI and PoCo agreed to take since early in the aggregation process. Now that the cost of energy is in reasonable range again, we are at decision time.

Benefits to Your Ministry

Everyone shopping this electricity market is focused on one thing...the bottom line. How much can I expect to pay for energy? That is the question on the mind of every person facing the decision to lock in at a fixed rate for a fixed period of time.

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Several CSSI members are coming off of a rate that fell in the range of \$.062 - \$.065 per kWh. Now we are looking at rates of \$.087 - \$.09 per kWh, and that is for energy only and does not include transmission costs to get energy from the generation plant to your home or facility. Obviously the increase is pushing the 30% level, depending on your previous rate.

Facing a 30% budget increase for electric power is a huge factor in planning the financial plan for the coming year. However, that is the nature of where we are at in the market, and there are no signs of continued dramatic decreases on the near horizon. The downward movement in natural gas prices is very likely near the low that it will reach prior to heading back up when summer is upon us.

The benefit to your ministry is this: there is power in numbers, and we will have that power going forward. If the cost of energy does take another dive in the future, we together can buy power going forward. So instead of three years, we will add another one to two years onto the contract in order to benefit from the market dip. And if it appears that the cost of energy will climb even higher, we together can extend our agreements to hedge off the looming increase. Either way, as a united group we will have the option of carrying our fixed margin into the future and that is the advantage we have before us.

Eleventh Hour REP Switch

By now you have likely heard that we were well down the road with Reliant Energy as the REP of choice for our aggregated CSSI load. In the middle of March, just prior to the CSSI annual conference, Reliant regrettably declined the ability to continue on in the process with the CSSI membership and PoCo Energy Group. Due to some unforeseen alterations in the Reliant structuring side of the business, they were no longer able to honor previous commitments to a fixed retailer margin on an ongoing basis. However, PoCo was able to quickly shift to a new REP the day after the news from Reliant. The new REP was selected after sending the business opportunity to two other REPs: those were First Choice Power and SUEZ Energy. Both are reputable and stable providers in the Texas marketplace. First Choice responded very promptly in the affirmative while SUEZ declined the following day after the request was sent.

First Choice Power was acquired last year by PNM Resources, an energy holding company based in Albuquerque, NM. The acquisition by PNM has brought First Choice a new level of expertise and improved services. But most of all, First Choice is now a very competitive retailer in Texas. And that is good news for our load of business. First Choice has agreed to all of our criteria for moving forward in this aggregated load of business. They are not new to large church loads.

First Choice has worked with several Methodist Conference groups in Texas and is very familiar with the kinds of issues related to church loads.

Therefore, we have chosen to move ahead quickly with First Choice. However, this was not a hurried and careless choice. PoCo has worked with First Choice for several years and we have watched them improve with age, especially since they were obtained by PNM. And the fact that First Choice so quickly agreed to hold their retail margin throughout the course of the term for all churches/ministries coming into the aggregation as well as not having a monthly meter fee put them in the lead position from the outset.

Conclusion

Summer will very likely bring with it both the normal Texas heat as well as an up tick in the prices for energy. For all members whose contracts are expiring within the next 4-6 months should strongly consider locking the rate for renewal previous to the middle of May in order to insure not being caught in an unreasonable market high. Thankfully both CSSI and PoCo are laboring on your behalf to lay the groundwork for us to all forge ahead together for the advantage of all involved.+



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continued from page 15

To capture the feel of the congregation, planners were guided by the congregation's slogan, "Real People, Real Life," as well as its mission statement – "To make more and stronger disciples of Jesus Christ" – and core values of fervent prayer, ministry excellence, life-changing community, authentic leadership, generational relevance, and intentional loyalty.

"We wanted the church to be inviting and user friendly so members would be comfortable and eager to bring unchurched neighbors and friends with them," Werlein said. "The decisions weren't based on what would make us more comfortable, but what would help us bring new people in."

For example, security is an important consideration, particularly for parents with small children. Parents want to know their children are safe, especially from sexual predators. To address safety concerns, the Faithbridge design includes a separate area for the children with a special computer software system for parents to check children in and out. The area has security cameras, windows in the doors, and a fenced play area with security gates. The staff and youth program workers are also required to receive safety training.

The senior pastor plays an important role in the design and construction process. However, unless he has prior hands-on experience building multi-million-dollar projects, he needs to be an effective builder of teams who can handle the project details. Werlein said about the time he realized he was trying to run something he didn't know how to run, Burrin stepped forward to lead the building team. She had experience running multi-million dollar projects and felt God's call to use her leadership skills on Faithbridge's building.

"To choose the architect and construction companies, the team solicited lots of input, looked at many candidates, visited offices, checked references, examined completed projects, and developed interview questions so they could compare companies equally," Burrin said. They interviewed local architects, looking for just the right "chemistry." They eventually broadened their search outside the local area and chose RNL in Denver to develop a master plan and the design of the project.

The architectural team conducted preliminary interviews with all key leaders and congregation members. Staff members were involved in designing portions of the building affecting them most. The architects also used a brainstorming process called a "charette," with several dozen key leaders brainstorming in the same room, with the architects, who then converted concepts into drawings on the spot for approval or disapproval.

"We were able to see the vision emerging right then, not two weeks later. It created a sense that we were designing it together," Werlein said. "A good benefit of that process is that everyone has a sense of ownership in the building." Once the design was completed, the Faithbridge building team began looking for the right construction firm. They considered approximately 10 firms with church experience, checking out their work, and then narrowing



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the field to three whom they invited to make presentations. "Again, chemistry was a big thing for us because we knew we were going to be working with them for 12 months or more," Werlein said. The ultimate choice was Tellepsen.

The building team also hired Fred Jenkins, founder of Reliable Construction Management, Inc., a major Houston real estate developer. Fred served as their independent owners' representative, managing the project and representing their interests with the architects and the construction firm.

"Without question, Fred has saved us all of what we've paid him through his years of experience and vast pool of knowledge," Werlein said. "I've seen churches who have tried to do it themselves and the results just aren't as strong. If you don't have an independent project manager, your project manager will be assigned by the architects or the construction firm. Someone will end up in charge, but the conflict of interest presented is obvious."

Selecting a non-local architect created a challenge, however. "If you hire a non-local design architect, you really need to plan on hiring a local production architect too," Werlein said. "The further the project moves from the design phase, the closer the architects need to be." RNL knew the church preferred a local architect and agreed to partnering with a local production architect to oversee design implementation. Faithbridge hired Houston-based Kendall/Heaton Associates as production architects, and both firms agreed to the hand-off approach. RNL designed the building and Kendall/Heaton developed and provided oversight to the construction details.

"We wanted the work to be high quality, not ostentatious, but attractive, warm and functional," Werlein said. Some churches go to one extreme in terms of flash, and others go the opposite direction, considering only functionality. "We didn't want either extreme," Werlein said. "We wanted to make sure that anything we built in phase one never required an apology or demanded a second phase to feel complete."

The Faithbridge project finished on time and under budget, which Werlein attributes to the skills of a committed building team with a sharp-minded chairperson and a vigilant independent owners' representative. "A key to success is praying for everyone involved and setting a precedent early on for open, honest, quick decision-making and feedback," Burrin said. Now that construction is complete, serving teams comprised of laity will handle most of the interior and exterior maintenance under the supervision of a Faithbridge staff property management director.

The completed project is phase one of a six-phase master plan designed to accommodate a six-fold increase in attendance to multiple thousands. Phase two will likely include more children's classrooms and the addition of a fellowship hall, Burrin said. "The church was built for growth with a 100-year mindset," Werlein said. "We hope people will look back 100 years from now and thank us for the decisions we made on the front end." +



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Cleancare, Inc. *Page 27*
Comerica Bank *Page 2*
Comfort Systems USA / Accurate Air Systems *Page 18*
Creative Coffee, Inc. *Page 5*
DataVox Business Communications *Page 18*
DeBow Lock & Safe *Page 13*
Design & Print on Demand *Page 9*
Educational Products, Inc. *Page 29*
Ernest Ideas Design & Media Group *Page 13*
Express Stamp *Page 27*
Facilities Solution Group *Page 26*
American Light Design Electric
Hillyard, Inc. *Page 27*
Home Depot Supply *Page 21*
ID-TEN-T Telecom Consultants *Page 28*
Insurance One Agency *Page 23*
Integrity Furniture & Equipment *Page 25*
Main Street Enterprises
National Signs *Page 32*
Office Depot Business Services Division Furniture Services *Page 11*
Professional Janitorial Service of Houston *Page 13*
SignUsUp *Page 12*
Systems Evolution *Page 29*
Take Home Defensive Driving *Page 28*
Tech Depot *Page 10*
The ProVisio Group *Page 5*
Upright Ministries *Page 25*
Varidoc *Page 9*
Vector Concepts *Page 19*

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