

The Bush Hill Building Program – A Chronology

April 2001 – A Handicap Access Committee was formed to study the church buildings, focusing on the challenge of providing access for all members. Neil Sampson was elected chair. The committee (soon renamed the Building Study Committee) conducted a survey of church members to ascertain their desires and priorities.

December 2001 – The Building Study Committee reported to Session and Congregation that the problems with the physical plant went well beyond handicap access bathrooms and included

- Access in many areas, including parking, walkways, seven floor levels, etc.
- Modern restroom facilities with more room and better access
- Multi-purpose fellowship space where 50% of the congregation could gather (up from the current 20%), including adequate and modern kitchen space.
- Inadequate office space, counseling and meeting rooms, and storage.
- Aged and inflexible educational facilities, including need for modern Day School facilities and flexible rooms for all-aged educational experience.

The Committee recommended that a major renovation study be undertaken.

January 2002 – The Bush Hill congregation established the “Vision for the 21st Century” Committee to “plan and implement a major physical facilities renovation in the next 5 years.” The V21CC met monthly in 2002 and 2003, and bi-monthly in 2004.

Mid-2003 – The V21CC retained Fred Kuntz of Kuntz and Associates to lead the development of design recommendations for the church. Three options were developed, focusing on the renovation inside the existing buildings to allow retention of the old chapel. Cost estimates ranged from \$2.2 to \$5 million.

May 2004 – After much study, the committee rejected all three of the options, finding that these renovations would cost far too much in light of federal and county requirements, and offer too little in terms of improvement. The architects were asked to develop a 4th concept, based on what had been learned in the first three efforts, but seeking to provide a new replacement building.

November 2004 – The new concept was presented to a congregational retreat and an evening meeting, and met with approval. The costs were estimated to be around \$4 million, but the improvements in fellowship and mission capability, as well as long-term efficiency of operation, were significant.

January 2005 – The congregation voted to accept the Vision 21st Century Committee report, discharged the V21CC with its thanks, and ask Session to name a new Building Committee to pursue the proposal of the V21CC report.

Carl Rush was installed as pastor after a long and difficult transition due to the illness and death of Jack Kurtz.

April 2005 – the Building Committee was formed; Neil Sampson elected chair. Kuntz & Associates was chosen to proceed with architectural and engineering design. A Stewardship Campaign was launched, with Dick Szymanski as chair. Resource Services Inc. (RSI) was chosen as a stewardship consulting firm. Under RSI’s guidance, 165 people became involved as leaders and committee members in the campaign designed to raise \$1.5 million (3 times the church’s annual revenues) over a 3-year period.

July 2005 – The Committee and Fred Kuntz presented the congregation with a schematic design for the new project, with total cost estimates in the \$4.6 to \$5 million range, based on current construction

costs which were, at that time, increasing at around 10% a year. The congregation accepted the design, and work to begin the process of Fairfax county permitting was begun.

December 2005 – The Stewardship Campaign was a huge success, achieving its \$1.5 million goal in contributions and pledges, to be contributed over 2006-2008. In the meantime, early contributions in 2005 covered all the design and engineering costs, and the Building Campaign was under way.

January 2006 – Documents were submitted to Fairfax County for the Special Use Permit required of all church construction. Permit approval was received in August and work began on the application for Site Plan approval.

January 2007 – Application submitted for Site Plan approval. Anticipating approval in a matter of months, a Transition Committee was formed to develop a plan for maintaining church activities and schedules during the construction phase. It was anticipated that demolition could begin as early as August, 2007.

January 2008 – No approval had been forthcoming from Fairfax County, and the transition and construction was delayed indefinitely until such approval could be received. The Building Fund has continued to grow, and contained some \$750,000 at the start of 2008.

March 2008 – The Jenkins property next door to the church was placed on the market for \$395,000. The Session determined that the church should pursue the purchase, and the Building Committee chair was asked to negotiate a purchase. The purchase was negotiated for \$360,000 and was approved by the congregation and the Presbytery. The property is now rented out, awaiting church decisions as to future use or disposal.

April 2008 – Designed second capital campaign with RSI, with Leadership Training planned for Aug 4-5, 08 and Commitment Sunday scheduled for Oct 26, 08, so that pledge payments to the new campaign could follow immediately upon the completion of the original Forward by Grace campaign.

September 2008 – With no approval on the Site Plan yet, the Committee decided again to delay the second phase of the Stewardship Campaign. Leadership Training was moved to Jan 7-8, 2009 and Commitment Sunday to Mar 29, 2009 Without being able to tell people exactly what costs we would be facing, it was felt that there was simply not enough assurance upon which to build a solid campaign.

November 2008 – Site plan approval was finally received, almost 2 years after application. By year's end, the Building Fund contained around \$777,000 in cash and stocks, in spite of significant declines in stock values during 2008.

December 2008 – The second campaign was rescheduled again to allow for completion of design documents and cost estimates prior to campaign launch. Leadership Training was rescheduled to Mar 11-12, 2009 and Commitment Sunday to June 7, 2009.

January 2009 – Design work was started for the application for the final Fairfax County permit – the building permit. Again, this is hoped to be a 6 month process, but our past record does not lead to great optimism. Kuntz is covered up with construction projects, and will need a couple of months to get the documents ready.

March 2009 – Work begins on the Second Stewardship Campaign, as Kuntz & Associates plans to submit the building permit documents in mid-April.

Plans Forward – As soon as the building permit documents are submitted, the Building Committee plans to begin interviewing 5-6 selected contractors to get a sense of their dedication to working with the church. Once they have been interviewed, we will provide bid packages for them to use in bidding.

We do not want to call for bids too soon before we get the building permit, as the bids could change if too much time elapses before we have final approval.

The general construction economy is in great stress right now, with prices falling almost 6% since January 1, 2009, according to one construction cost index. On public jobs, Kuntz is getting huge bidding interest, and some bids that are very low. Whether this situation will benefit the church or not remains to be seen. We are anxious to test it, however, as it could perhaps erase the inflation of construction costs that we've been so concerned about during the Fairfax County saga.

We have begun the audit of the church's 2008 books, as will be required by the bank and the Presbytery, and as soon as we have solid construction cost estimates, we will go through the process of seeking Building Committee, Session, Congregation, and Presbytery approval to move ahead.