

Hesston MB design reflects congregation's personality

It was a member of the Hesston Mennonite Brethren Church who encouraged the congregation to use a design/build model when they decided to build a new sanctuary addition for the growing congregation.

"I'd never heard of design/build, but Mike King, who works for a construction company in Wichita, encouraged us to look at it," said building committee chairperson Richard Prieb. "He had a lot of expertise with building contracts and thought that using design/build and a contractor like Fuqua Construction would be a good fit for our church."

It was a good decision, Prieb said. The process allowed the congregation to work in partnership with the architect and contractor to design and build a facility that fits their needs and stay well within their budget.

The building committee opted to hire a contractor first and interviewed several before selecting Fuqua Construction. They then hired the architect for the project, Mitch Brown of Mann and Company of Hutchinson.

"We selected Fuqua Construction as our general contractor partly because it was a smaller company and more hands on. Max had a small town feel and we were able to discuss things with him. He was very accessible and we felt very comfortable with him," Prieb said.

The project began in the fall of 2005 and, according to Prieb, the process was a little rushed because of the rapidly changing price of building materials at the time. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had just hit the Gulf Coast and building materials were in high demand. Prieb believes that having a design/build contractor during that time saved the church a significant amount of money – even though they didn't have everything approved on the building design when bids started going out.

"Costs (of building materials) were going way up and Max was able to lock everything in for us at the best price possible," Prieb said. "We didn't have all the money when



PROJECT PROFILE

Hesston Mennonite Brethren Church

Location: Hesston, Kansas
Completed: 2006
Project Scope: Sanctuary addition
Square footage: 9,000 sq. ft.
Design Build Team: Fuqua Construction & Mitch Brown, architect
Mann & Company

we started...But in a project that was over \$1 million, he brought it in \$125,000 under budget even with the rapid rise in construction material costs."

Prieb said that savings also was based on the work done before construction started. The church had a good idea of what they wanted when they began planning with Fuqua and Brown and didn't make a lot of changes as the work progressed.



The simple, clean lines of the sanctuary reflects the congregation's desire for functionality with beauty. Storage is built on the platform and the congregation opted for padded chairs rather than pews for optimum seating flexibility. The sanctuary has a 400-seat capacity with overflow.

"If you do your work upfront, you'll save money in the end," Prieb said. "We had very few changes after construction started."

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The project scope – adding a sanctuary to an existing building – is one often undertaken by a growing congregation, architect Mitch Brown said, and works very well in a design/build approach.

“The goals were very straight forward. The tie in to the existing building was a little complicated, but we had a good team effort. Max brings a knowledge of construction and costs to any given situation. The church had defined goals on what they wanted to accomplish and evaluated whether what we were proposing (for a design) fit what they wanted. This project was a good example of how design/build can work. We ended up with a nice building and the whole process went very smoothly,” Brown said.

Brown said having a team approach to the project and listening to those involved is the key to a good outcome on a building. One of Fuqua’s strengths is that he not only is very knowledgeable about the building process and has quality craftsmen on his crews, but he is also very easy to talk to and down to earth, according to Brown. That ability to listen and communicate clearly was very important to the Hesston MB building committee.

Prieb said that Fuqua and Brown had good suggestions as they led them through the design process. In fact, one major change to the church’s original idea after working with the design/build team was relocating the sanctuary from where they thought it should be to another part of the building, which the congregation had never considered. It was an excellent decision for traffic flow and appearance, Prieb said. After the design was in place, Fuqua took over the process, meeting frequently with the building committee and listening to what they had to say.

Fuqua was very responsive to the nature of the congregation which meant a lot to the congregation as they worked through the construction process. Prieb described the congregation as a “plain” people that preferred a sanctuary that was functional without being overly ornate. Fuqua understood what they were going for and worked with them to achieve it as the construction process began.

“Max was very professional. Any questions we had were answered and resolved immediately,” Prieb said. “He was also very sensitive to our budget situation.”

Part of that sensitivity was reflected in Fuqua’s working with church members who were interested in providing some of the labor for the project. At the same time that Fuqua Construction crews were working on the sanctuary, a crew of church members was working on remodeling the existing kitchen. Church members were able to prepare the adjoining wall to the new construction and tore up concrete in the parking lot. The two crews worked smoothly together and Fuqua helped coordinate the electrician to do the electrical work on both the sanctuary addition and the kitchen. Congregation members also took on the job of hauling off construction debris which cut costs.

Brown said the Hesston MB Church project is a good example of how the design/build model can work for a church, especially in a time of volatile construction prices. It’s particularly helpful for a remodel/addition project because there are more unknowns which can surface as construction begins. Having a

design/build contract helps lock in costs early as the contractor has more control of all aspects of the construction process. The negotiated design/build process also allows the contractor to weigh in the quality of work in the subcontracting bid process and gives more flexibility in choosing subcontractors than a traditional bid process does.

The congregation moved into the new sanctuary in 2006 and has been very pleased with the end result.

When asked by another congregation about Hesston MB’s experience with Fuqua Construction, Prieb said he highly recommended Fuqua.

“I told them they would fit real well with Max. He will do you a good job. With all the work he did on the project, he was always upfront with us on where he was at and where we were going next,” Prieb said. “There was nothing negative about their work. We haven’t heard one complaint about the sound, lighting or ‘feel’ of the sanctuary.”

“He earned every penny he charged us. He did a tremendous job.”



The soaring brick and stone with a simple cross provides a solid, yet dramatic look to the new addition.