

Good morning to all,

Here is my list of the things I remember that happened at/in the church over the last 30 plus years that Susie and I have been going to church here.

One of the first major things that I can recall was that when our congregation was small, we used to come in thru the front door, walk thru the manse living room, dining room and then kitchen to get to the area that we serve the food in now. That was our fellowship hall!! When our congregation started to outgrow that area, we knew that we had to expand. So we did. Where we sit down to eat now was a 2 car garage. The garage door was covered over, the floor was raised, walls were taken down to add more room and the kitchen was added so that our part time pastor would have her own kitchen. The ramp outside was added for handicap access.

Next we remodeled the inside of our church. Most of the surfaces on the inside of the church were painted white. We took all the pews out and brought them to Buena Vista to be stripped of the paint, stained and varnished to make them look like they did back in the late 1800s. Different members of the congregation "adopted" a pew (the one that they usually sat in) and paid to have that work done. The church placed a plaque with either their name or their favorite bible passage on the side. Other members chose a window to strip all the paint off. Some windows had 7 layers of paint. We had an electrician rewire the whole church. He told us that the wiring was so antiquated that it was by "the grace of God" that our church had not burned down. We installed new fans, all new lights and plugs where they needed to go. We moved the hot and cold air registers of the furnace to the floor level instead of up by the ceiling where they were extremely inefficient. We blew insulation in the walls and tried to keep the air from blowing thru the sanctuary by installing drywall on the walls and ceiling. We stripped the oak floor of the dark stain and decades of dirt, stained it a warm golden oak color with the best flooring finish that we could buy. We took down the small ½ wall that was in front of the church, replaced it with the wall to wall steps for our choir and installed carpet to make the church warmer and not have that "echo sound". While all this was being done, we had worship services at the senior center (the building that we had sold them just the year before).

Next we remodeled the basement in the manse. We were a church in need at that point with few members who could help so a youth group of a church from Texas came up to help us. The basement was a "Catacombs" with different games (pool table, foosball table, pop machine ...) for kids in the community. It was dark, dirty and in need of major repairs. The youth group took everything out of the basement, taking turns of 20 minutes at a time down there to make sure that they were not overcome with the dust that they created. After it was cleared out, Benson Builders came in and put all the walls up and painted everything a warm white color, installed the "drop down" ceiling and made it a welcoming place for the youth of our community. It has been a real benefit to "South Park Youth Group" who meet there now.

In the meantime, windows were added upstairs in the manse since the old ones were leaking, part of the manse back roof was redone because it was leaking, gutters were added because the drainage away from the manse was poor and caused the basement to flood when we had a hard rain, dilapidated fences around the manse were taken down and the furnace for the fellowship room, which was the wrong furnace for that room and caused us to have very high heat bills, was disconnected and taken away.

We got a grant to help us with the outside of the church. We reinforced the foundation of the church since it was starting to crumble in certain spots. We also rearranged the sprinklers to the garden to protect it from doing that again. We had a hazmat crew come out to strip the paint since it contained lead. Then had it repainted. We set up scaffolding up the front of the church and on the church roof so that we could totally redo the steeple. We first got a crane to take down the church bell that was built in the early 1870s. Then we took out all rotten wood, took the flat area where the bell sits and covered it with a rubber coating, created a new opening for the rope to travel thru, and gave it a new coat of paint. We upgraded the front deck and steps to make it easier to enter the church. We had the old wood shake roof taken off and a new asphalt shingle roof installed.

In more recent times, we have put a new roof on the manse, installed new windows in the manse, poured a new concrete driveway and we have replaced the furnace in the manse. We have replaced the furnace in the church, bought a new electric piano for the church and have upgraded the watering system for the church garden. We have redone part of the manse to turn it from a part time pastor residence, to a place for a fulltime pastor with a family.

We, as a church, just took a vote to buy a house for a new manse for our pastor. It passed unanimously. That tells a lot about the direction that we, as a church, want to go.

One of the things that has struck me as being so cool is that at each step, the congregation was not looking at "now" but at the next people of our congregation. Each step was to preserve our church and its history and how to handle our growth. Susie and I can remember going to church one stormy winter day where it was us two, our two kids and one other person. Now, one Christmas, we had over 150 people in our little church. We are so blessed and we have come so far.

I am sure that I have forgotten some projects that we have done over the years and I apologize. But these are the ones that I have been a part of and therefore I remembered them. I hope that this helps you all out.

Yours in Christ,
Gerrits Kasper

SPCC CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

*Celebrating
God's Goodness
Embracing
Our Mission
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