



The Rev. Phil Hazelton stands where the church's old sanctuary used to end. It has been expanded to suit the growing congregation.

Ye who are weary (OF CONSTRUCTION), COME HOME

Worthington Presbyterian wraps up year of renovations

By BRITTINY DUNLAP | Worthington News Reporter

The cacophony of saws, hammers and drills is nearly over at the Worthington Presbyterian Church in downtown Worthington.

For the past year, the congregation has been uprooted while numerous additions to the church were completed.

"It is an effort to try to accommodate the growth of the church," said the Rev. Phil Hazelton. "I am excited for the congregation to come in and see how the church has changed."

Discussion about expansion began in 2002 when church officials noticed an increase in attendance. The congregation grew from around 1,500 members to 2,100 members in 10 years and the church added a third worship service to meet worshippers' needs.

"It was taxing that it took an entire Sunday morning," Hazelton said. "There were so many things we couldn't do."

Part of the increase could be attributed to the variety of communities that are represented in the congregation. While half are from Worthington, the remaining half comes from Lewis Center, Powell, Dublin, Plain City, Westerville and Gahanna, Hazelton said. The congregation also is relatively young. The largest age group is members in their 30s, followed by members in their 20s.

"There are a lot of young couples with young children," Hazelton said.

Once a decision was made to expand, the church hired Peter Krajnak of Rogers Krajnak Architects Inc. to take on the project. Hazelton said he was particularly happy with the hiring of Krajnak because he grew up in Worthington. In addition to space limitations Krajnak faced, Hazelton said the church wanted to make sure that the new plans continued the already-established designs.

"He had to work within the footprint of the church," Hazelton said.

To fund the renovations, the church must raise \$4.1 million. The church started the fundraising campaign in January 2003 and formed a capital campaign committee to take on the project.

Hazelton said a large portion of the money is coming from

personal donations of church members.

"We made personal visits to members' homes and they were contacted by co-chairs of the committee," Hazelton said. The remaining amount came from a bank loan.

One of the biggest projects in the renovation was the expansion of the sanctuary. The seating capacity of the new sanctuary is more than 600 — almost double that of the old building, Hazelton said. Molds were taken of the original trim to keep the ambiance of the sanctuary, Hazelton said.

"I want the congregation to see how we have continued the same lines and that it is not a cheap imitation," he said.

The part of the expansion that Hazelton said he is most excited about is the upgrading of a large fellowship hall.

"We've never had a place we could gather large groups of people," Hazelton said. "I can't wait to see this place full of people having a good time."

Additional renovations include the reconfiguration of classrooms and office space. The old dining space has been divided into three classrooms and the old music practice space has been turned into staff offices. Hazelton also noted that there were general overall improvements to the nursery due to the young membership of the church. Bathrooms also were renovated and



News photos by Ben French (3)

Ray Cochenour (left) and Steve Barnhardt of WK Shepherd flooring in Powell lay wood tiles on the floor of the sanctuary at Worthington Presbyterian Church last week.

LEFT: The new addition to Worthington Presbyterian Church is nearing completion. The church will reopen its doors Sept. 11.

several were added that have showers to accommodate work-camp groups.

Project funds also helped purchase new desks, chairs, tables and toys, Hazelton said.

Groundbreaking on the renovation took place Sept. 5, 2004. Since then, the congregation has been renting space from the Worthington school district and meeting in the Thomas Worthington High School auditorium.

"The school system has been very kind, very helpful and very generous," Hazelton said. "They made it really easy and we are very appreciative."

Hazelton said the church plans to buy gifts for the school as a thank you for the kindness of its leaders.

The church will reopen its doors to congregation members Sept. 11.

"We are aware of the significance of the date, but it was coincidence that completion was at the same time," Hazelton said. "It was just one year later after groundbreaking."

Hazelton said he plans to address in some way the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001.

Despite the scheduled opening, the church renovations will not be fully complete until several weeks later. Renovations of the pews and organ should wrap up later next month.

The church congregation traces the origins of Presbyterians in Worthington to 1805. The current church has been on the northwest Village Green site since 1830. The oldest part of the current facility was built in 1926. Additions were made in the 1950s and in 1991.

"This church has a long history," Hazelton said. "It is a good congregation, very generous. It is not a congregation that has a lot of spats and fights. It is very healthy."

