

# Building Connections: A Vision for The NYAPC

Washington, D.C., March 25, 2007—Following a 10 a.m. worship service, nearly 200 members of the New York Avenue congregation gathered in Peter Marshall Hall to share lunch and kick off the church's first capital campaign in two decades. The children of the church, their teachers, and members of the *Building Connections* team wore t-shirts with the campaign's logo, designed by Brian Marquis.

Each household in attendance received a brochure detailing the campaign. (If you haven't received yours, please contact the church office.) The choir, with soloist David Williams, entertained the gathering with a rendition of "The Modern Presbyterian" (with apologies to Gilbert & Sullivan).

In a sermon during the worship service, and during the kickoff program, The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench explained the theology behind elevating the communion table and more centrally locating the baptismal font, as well as the place of music in worship.

Drawings of planned sanctuary changes were displayed, and members had the opportunity to ask questions of the architects.

Wilson Golden, chair of the *Building Connections* effort, outlined the timetable for the campaign and invited members to join in the tasks needed to achieve the campaign's goals.

Following Rev. Gench's closing prayer, members were invited to the sanctuary for an organ demonstration by Stan Engebretson, and for further discussion of the proposed changes with the architects.

*The Building Connections kickoff attracted nearly 200 members.*



## Some Questions & Answers on the Building Connections Vision

**Why should we raise and spend so much money on our sanctuary? Is this really necessary?**

*The Book of Order*, while recognizing that "it is not the particular space, but the presence of the risen Lord in the midst of the community which marks the reality of worship," also suggests guidelines for the arrangement of worship space:

When a place is set aside for worship it should facilitate accessibility and ease of gathering, should generate a sense of community, and

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### The Building Connections Team

- Wilson Golden, Chair
- Jennifer Clynch
- Martha Davis
- Rebecca L. Davis
- Margaret (Peggy) E. Evans
- Stacey Younger Gagosian
- Paul Gebhard
- Rev. Roger J. Gench
- Michele Holland
- Doug House
- Susan M. Jolley
- Rev. Riley McDonald
- Sam McFerran
- Jack Molenkamp
- Margaret (Meg) Neill
- Douglas R. Porter
- James D. Rhodes
- Catherine K. & John F. Schultheis
- Joyce Schuman
- Marilyn J. Seiber
- Kathryn (Kitty) Smith
- Edith Holmes Snyder
- Daniel A. Stokes
- Matthew Weitz

## Q & A continued

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should open people to reverence before God. ...The arrangement of space should visibly express the integral relation between Word and Sacrament and their centrality in Christian worship.

Today the sanctuary is optimized for a much larger congregation than exists today. Fewer people spread over many seats reduces our sense of community and connection in worship. Moving the choir closer to the rest of the congregation will help address this issue by bringing us closer together. Elevating the communion table and baptismal font emphasizes their connection to the Word preached, spoken, prayed and sung. An upgraded sound system and lighting improve accessibility.

There is a broad consensus that at a minimum, the sanctuary needs “freshening up” with paint and new floor coverings. An attractive, well-maintained sanctuary removes potential barriers to attracting new members.

### **Why do this now?**

The organ is on its last legs and increasingly expensive to maintain. The lead-time for a new organ is more than two years. In the meantime, the existing organ continues to deteriorate.

This capital campaign has been in the works since 2002, and the consensus of the congregation focus groups that met in the summer of 2006 was to “get on with it.”

### **Do we really need to spend so much on our organ?**

The NYAPC Long-Range Plan and the Every Member Canvass confirm that the music at New York Avenue is central to many members’ commitment to the church, and is a primary source of spiritual experience in worship for many. The majority of members who participated in the 2006 focus groups were in favor of making a significant investment in a “quality” instrument.

An organ committee has been meeting since 2004 and has solicited quotes from a number of organ builders in order to make a prudent decision. Simply repairing some current problems is the least expensive option for now, but will require the most ongoing maintenance

in the future. Rebuilding the existing instrument in place is also expensive (approximately \$500,000), and may not produce the best sound. A new organ located at the front of the church is more expensive than rebuilding the existing organ, but will provide a better sound with less maintenance and further the goal of more effectively integrating music within our worship space. As good stewards, we must consider the long-term costs that will affect future generations as well as our own.

After receiving a number of bids from organ companies and traveling to hear a variety of organs, the committee has determined that the best choice would be an organ in the range of \$1 million (not the top bid received). However, it is possible to stay within the campaign’s original budget by building a \$700,000 organ with a plan to add on to the organ in the near future.

A contract with an organ builder has not been signed, and if an additional \$300,000 beyond the original campaign goal of \$2.35 million can be raised, the committee can proceed with the organ as envisioned.

### **Why do the choir and organ need to move from the balcony?**

According to the experts consulted, any organ—even the current one—would produce a better sound if relocated to the front of the sanctuary. A large portion of the existing organ pipes is buried in the walls of the sanctuary. Additionally, the pipes are against an outside wall, subject to variations of temperature that actually change their pitch. The pipes for the new organ would be above the heads of the choir and congregation, for optimal sound.

Choir members report feeling cut off and excluded from worship when in the balcony, and they and our pastors believe having the choir in the chancel will enhance their ability to provide leadership in worship and congregational singing. Theologically, moving the organ and the choir to the main floor emphasizes the communal nature of worship.

### **Does the amount budgeted for the organ include removing the existing organ and pipes?**

Some of the bids include this, and some don’t. Before a contract is signed, the organ committee will carefully determine what is covered.

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### **What about other needs?**

Since 2004, more than \$250,000 has been spent on the church building on such items as window replacement, heat and air-conditioning upgrades, the Radcliffe Room floor, computer upgrades and stained glass window repairs. Currently, the Trustees have nearly \$100,000 available in the budget to address immediate maintenance and other capital needs.

### **Why isn't there anything in the campaign for mission?**

*The Book of Order's* Directory for Worship "reflects the conviction that the life of the Church is one, and that its worship, witness, and service are inseparable." In this sense, everything we do is related to mission. By enhancing the worship experience, the church is "equipping the saints" to continue to do God's work in the world.

Additionally, specific, significant commitments have been made for mission in recent years—most visibly in the hiring in 2006 of Rev. Mark Jennings as Director of Social Ministries.

One major component of the *Building Connections* vision is elevator repair, which is directly related to our mission work. The Community Club, Meals on Wheels, 7-2-9 and the McClendon Center would not be able to function without working elevators.

### **We run an operating deficit every year. Won't the Building Connections vision take away from annual stewardship giving?**

We are making progress on the church's general financial condition and growing the endowment. Since 2000, we have received more than \$3 million in gifts and bequests. The Session has developed processes to keep current year spending in line with future operating reserves. The endowment has grown to \$3.2 million, and more than \$1 million in future gifts has been identified to date.

Further, there is anecdotal evidence that annual pledge giving actually increases after a capital campaign as the congregation becomes more broadly aware of the church's needs and seeks to participate in meeting them.

### **May I designate my gift for a specific purpose?**

Although a designation policy has been approved by the Session, undesignated gifts are most beneficial

and will be assigned to projects according to priorities approved by the Session. Gifts of more than \$20,000 may be designated toward one or more program elements, but designations will not be permitted above 100% of each element's projected cost. If the requested designation cannot be honored, the donor will be given the choice of converting to an undesignated gift, designating for another project, or withdrawing the pledge.

### **Does the Church just want cash or can I use other assets to fund my gift?**

As you consider your support for The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in this campaign, keep in mind that this decision is both a spiritual and a financial exercise. You may want to ask yourself: What gift type and amount will be most satisfying for me while keeping in mind what may also be most beneficial for the Church?

Some donors may find that the best gift type for them will be in assets other than cash. Such donors may prefer to give from their stock or mutual funds portfolio because such gifts are compatible with their overall investment plans and may provide tax benefits.

Other donors may find that life insurance which is no longer needed or U. S. government bonds which no longer pay interest may be best for them. For more information on these and other gift alternatives, call Riley McDonald, NYAPC Director of Planned Giving, toll free at 877-457-2173.

### **What alternatives do I have if my cash flow is tight and I cannot give as much as I want right now?**

It may be spiritually beneficial for us to stretch ourselves in responding to a capital funds stewardship campaign. Our first challenge may be, therefore, to make the maximum current gift pledge that we can make. Even though we may think sacrificially, for practical financial reasons, some of us may not be able to do all we want to do right now.

Once we have made the most generous current gift we can make, we may be able to do much more of what we want to do by including or increasing the amount designated for NYAPC in our charitable estate plans. As you well know, this Church's financial challenges will continue after this campaign is completed.

By including NYAPC in your will, trust, retirement plan or other estate planning instrument, you can help

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NYAPC continue its valuable ministries far into the future. For more information on these and other ideas, call Riley McDonald, NYAPC Director of Planned Giving.

**Can we raise the money?**

The “quiet campaign” has already produced commitments of \$1 million from members and friends of New York Avenue. We are nearly halfway to our goal! The committee is confident that the additional \$1.35 million needed for funding the projects will be raised.

**What happens next?**

Prayerfully consider how you might help achieve the Building Connections vision. You will be contacted after Easter and given a pledge card by mail or in person.

*“Come to Him, to that living stone, rejected by mortals but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:4-5*

Our giving to the NYAPC’s Building Connections vision is a joyful expression of our faith and gratitude for God’s grace through Christ, “that living stone...chosen and precious.” Our gifts and pledges express our commitment to Christ’s ministry through the church and to God’s call to be “like living stones...built into a spiritual house,” fulfilling our membership promises.

