

On the Road: Remembering

#10 in Series – October 9, 2011



How Our Buildings Came to Be

THE ORIGINAL STRUCTURE

After Kidron Mennonite Church started, it took only a couple months for the 331 charter members to decide to build a new structure for worship. Groundbreaking took place February 3, 1937, less than four months after KMC was organized. They built with commitment and speed.



South parking lot at the dedication in 1937.

Dedication of the new 48x80-foot church building took place eight months later on September 26, 1937. Combined, more than 5,000 people attended the three dedicatory services. Enthusiasm and excitement ran at a feverish pitch, and with this enthusiasm the new congregation grew rapidly.

THE ANNEX (Education Center)

By the mid 1950's KMC had a major problem. All 20 adult Sunday School classes met in the main sanctuary, using all available space including two classes in the "amen corners," four in the balcony and one in the home of Dr. V. W. Zuercher. As can be imagined, it was easy to be distracted by neighboring classes and teachers when they could be heard as easily as their own teacher. In the basement, 19 primary classes were jammed between cloth curtains which invited children to poke each other through the curtains instead of paying attention. Something had to happen. More space was needed for education.

On March 31, 1957, a building committee composed of Clarence Sommer (chair), Earl Bixler, Glenford Gerber,

Harvey Nussbaum, and L. E. Sommer submitted a plan to build the annex for the purpose of alleviating the congestion of Sunday School classes, especially the primary department. The 1957 Annual Business Report states that "The congregation accepted by a large solicitation drive was held on the evening of June 3, 1957." The building was dedicated on August 24, 1958, one year after the arrival of Pastor Bill Detweiler.

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Groundbreaking for the Annex in 1957: Earl Bixler, Glenford Gerber, L. E. Sommer, Allen Bixler, Reuben Hofstetter, Isaac Zuercher, Clarence Sommer and Harvey Nussbaum.



The Annex was built onto the northwest corner of the sanctuary in 1958.

Isaac Zuercher and his crew served as carpenters. Clarence Sommer and his crew were the masons. Amos, Gilbert, and Sylvester Geiser dug the basement. V@^À à~ā|āā} *Á, æ•Á | Íç | JÁ-^ÁÁ, äc@Ác [cæ]Á ' [[!Á•]æ&^Á [-Á c@ā|āÁ ' [[!ÉÁCEÁ àā*Áæcc!æ&cā [}Á, æ•Ác@^ÁF€€É•^æcÁ [ç^! ' [, Á room off the northwest corner of the sanctuary used by families with young children.



@cc_]b [']bhc'h\Y'UbbYI 'c jYfÚck'fcc a'Zfc a'h\Y'gUbwHi Ufm']b' 1958.

In 1975-76 Titus Gerber installed new windows in the CE} }^çÉÁæ} āāā}ÁFJÌHÉÌ |Ác@^Á'æcÁ! [[-Á, æ•Á!^]æ&^ÁÁ, äc@Á a hip roof.

Annex/Education Center Renovated

Jump forward 50 years. On April 19, 2009, Steve Gerber, with the help of the trustees and the study committee appointed by the church council, presented an Annex renovation plan. The congregation approved the plan on May 3, 2009. The renovated Annex was completed on September 12, 2010. On September 16, 2010, the CE} }^çÁ, æ•Á [-, &āæ||^Á!^}æ { ^āÁc@^Á%Óā~&æcā [}ÁÓ^}c^!É+Á P. Graham Dunn installed the sign in the sanctuary above the Education Center entrance.

THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

By the late 1950s the Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF) meetings, under the leadership of Bill Detweiler, were numbering close to a hundred youth. Monthly meetings were crowding the rented Kidron School gymnasium, which was without restrooms or a kitchen. On December 9, 1958, Jay Lehman, at a church business meeting, asked about the possibility of building a youth center. On November 23, 1959, Rhoda Amstutz, then MYF president, petitioned the council with a letter giving

14 reasons why the church should consider building a ^ [~c@Á&^}c^!ÉÁÚ@^Á, ! [c^Á% ö, ^Áà^]ä^ç^Ác@æcÁc@^Á] ; [b^&cÁ, [~|āÁ { æ\^ÁæÁāā•cā }&cÁ& [}c!āā~cā [}Ác [ö c@^Á&@~!&ÉÁæ}āā decisively result in helping to keep the youth of the church committed to Christ and KMC.”

A planning committee, headed by George Kratzer, was appointed in 1960. In July of the same year, the youth and their supporters were disappointed when the congregation was asked whether the concept of a youth center should be explored and it only garnered a 53% favorable vote. With that vote, the idea of a youth center was dropped for two years when it was again picked up by the new MYF president, Gloria Amstutz, in a letter written in support of a youth or fellowship hall.

Soon a new planning committee was appointed, chaired by Don Sommer. But a higher priority soon surfaced. Some people wanted to alleviate the crowded conditions in the sanctuary by enlarging the auditorium. The idea [-æÁ^ [~c@Á [!Á-^|| [, •@ā]Á@æ||Á, æ•Á [cÁ { ^ }cā [}^āÁ [-, &āæ||^Á until January of 1966. At that point, a new idea of building a separate fellowship hall along with enlarging the auditorium gained support. Groundbreaking for the Fellowship Hall was on October 13, 1966. It was dedicated on July 2, 1967.



The Fellowship Building as it was constructed in 1967.

Fellowship Hall Enlarged

By 1986, church membership stood at 793. The Fellowship Hall was too small for wedding receptions, MYF activities, and other social functions. The small kitchen was especially a problem. In May of 1985, a building committee of Roger Geiser, Arlene Lehman, Gerald Swartzentruber, Ben Weaver, Dick Wolf, and Hazel Yoder was appointed to double the size of the Fellowship Hall. An effort was made to build it in time for the 50th Anniversary celebration that was to take place in October of 1986.

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Ben Weaver and Gerald Swartzentruber, both general contractors within the congregation, worked together to organize the building and sub-contracting. Weaver's crew laid the block and did the framing. Swartzentruber's gang revamped the parking lots, did excavation, laid footers and sewer lines, and installed dry wall. Al Geiser and Art Neuenschwander did the electrical and air conditioning. Curt Nussbaum did the plumbing and heating and Jake Miller did the carpeting, tiling, and papering. Titus Gerber supervised the volunteer labor and George Amstutz and Jim Nussbaum did the painting. Because all these key people were from within the congregation, we were able to draw upon their talents without seeking outside bids. The kitchen was tripled in size.



The Fellowship Hall as remodeled in 1986.

Fellowship Hall Renovated

Over the years, classrooms have been added in the basement, including The Back Door used presently as a youth center. In 2009, the upstairs was refurbished with new furniture, carpet, and paint partially funded from the estate of Clayton Zuercher, elder and custodian for many years.

THE PRESENT SANCTUARY

Two years after the Annex was completed in 1958 to handle the overcrowded Sunday School classes, discussion started on what to do with the growing { ^ { à^!•@â}Ác@æcÁ,||^âÁc@^Á }^, ÁCE} }^Á [ç^!' [, Á! [[{ Á with young families, and the men's and women's anterooms in the rear of the auditorium with persons } [cÁ æà\^Á c [Á , }âÁ •^æc•ÉÁ Û [{ ^Á ~æ { â\^•Á •æcÁ â} Á c@^Á basement listening to the Sunday morning service via loudspeaker. It was said that visitors were not coming to church because we had no room. At one meeting, Bishop Reuben Hofstetter asked the congregation how we could expect to keep our young people when we had no room for their growing families.

V@^Á ,!•cÁ • [| ~cá [] Á &æ { ^Á â} Á FJÎÉÁ , @^} Á c@^Á ^Á c@^Á } •â [] Á committee was authorized to see if there was interest in families starting a sister or mission church in the area. One group's sentiment was best expressed at a council meeting in July 1963, saying, "We ought to @æç^Á æ} Á [~c!^æ&@Á • [{ ^ , @^!^ ö à^&æ^ •^Á c@^!^Á â•Á æÁ } ^Á âÁ c [Á , || ö +Á V@â•Á • [| ~cá [] Á c [Á c@^Á [ç^!&! [, ââ } * Á , æ•Á talked about a lot and it gained enough support that it came to a congregational vote on August 15, 1963. On that vote only 29% of the members voted "yes" to the statement "I am in favor of building a 'sister' church within a ten-mile radius of our present church."

The second solution was to have two worship services. This idea came to a vote on August 15, 1963, (same ballot as the "sister" church) when 59% of the members voted "yes" to the statement "I would be in favor of considering two worship services â} Á [~!Á &@~!&@Á ^æ&@Á Û } âæ^Á { [!}â} * ö , ác@Á Û } âæ^Á School sessions between the two worship services." The church leadership struggled with a two-worship concept for the next two years. They felt they could not move ahead without a 2/3 majority vote. Some felt so strongly in support of two services that they presented a petition with 130 signatures asking the leadership to try the concept on a temporary basis. According to the petition, "The [two worship services] plan was non-partisan, temporary, and not costly and in addition, opens our doors now to these many who would fellowship with our congregation except for lack of space." On September 7, 1964, another vote was taken with a 64% majority, but not the required 2/3 majority for two services.

The discussion of two services came to an end on June 13, 1965, when a vote to re-open discussion on possible expansion of our facilities passed by 77%. At the annual church business meeting on October 7, 1965, a motion to re-activate the existing building committee was made by Phil Zuercher and seconded by George Kratzer. The motion passed. The committee members were Clarence Sommer (chair), Carl Gerber, Paul Keiner, Chester Lehman and Clarence Nussbaum.

From that June 13, 1965, meeting until ground was broken on October 18, 1966, up to 12 different á!æ , â } • Á , ^!^Á â!•&^ ••^Á ÉÁ V@^Á ,!•cÁ [] æ} Á , æ•Á c [Á à~â\áÁ on the north side by the Annex. Explored next was building on the south side, but the exterior appearance became an issue. Next some people wanted to build an entirely new structure and use the existing structure for youth activities and Sunday School. That idea was discontinued when it was discovered that it would cost

