

The Mission of the Church House

THE STORY of Westminster Church House is a story of dedication, of sacrifice and of devotion to a cause by a congregation that was willing to build a church home, not on its own land, where it could serve the particular mission of the church. It is a story with a long history, one which may go back ninety two years, for that is how long Westminster church has been without such a building. For years, farseeing members of Westminster Church have been conscious of their inability to provide services for young people comparable to what is offered by most other churches. In recent years, as this need became increasingly urgent, church members began to think and talk of ways of erecting such a building. The Alumni Building Fund was held to renovate Kauke and \$75,000 was earmarked by alumni members of the church or friends of the church who wished to see some day a building built by the church or by the college to further the work of the church on the campus. That \$75,000 was put into the church house building fund and was held until this building was begun. The balance of the fund has come from members of the church, friends of the church, and friends of the college who wanted to see the work of the church continue on campus. This balance contributed qualifies for matching money in meeting the Ford Foundation's challenge grant. Proof that the need was real was demonstrated by the fact that at least eight major meetings and the daily nursery school were held in the new building before it was dedicated.

WITHOUT exception, the members of the building committee, in assessing the two years' work we had completed, approached dedication day realizing we were happier but wiser. Every member had put in long hours making decisions ranging from general design and number and size of rooms to the kind of door latches to use. Three years ago, at the outset, when we began seriously to discuss the project, the minister, Beverly Asbury, and the session said, "Fine, we will consider such a building, but we must first consider the mission of this church." And this is what the congregation did, what I believe is good for every congregation to do about every decade. In October, 1963, we began a series of four church nights in which we examined the theology of today, this church's thinking about Christian education, a campus ministry and the church beyond Wooster. We had panel discussions and invited leading church men from inside and outside Wooster to help guide us in analyzing ourselves. Members of the congregation admitted they were surprised to find out so many facts about their church. One fact became clear—that although we were an independent church, our primary mission was to the College of Wooster.

Out of this self-examination came replies from older church members, the Prayer Group, the Campus Life

Committee, the Womens Association, the Sunday School department and various student groups telling us what facilities they needed to accomplish what they now believed was the mission of the church.

It was immediately agreed that we were not to build a sanctuary. Westminster Church, because of its commitment to the College, would continue its program of Sunday worship in Memorial Chapel. Soon we established two general principles: 1) neither the church nor the students wanted the ministry to be building-centered, 2) every part of the building was to serve more than one purpose. The latter means good stewardship; the former underlines the conviction that the church's ministry is not to itself but to the world.

THE NEXT major decision concerned how we could go about filling the requests from the church organizations. We had inherited an estimated figure of what the building should cost—\$200,000. No one now has an idea where this figure came from, perhaps someone's guess. The committee soon realized that it would be impossible to do the job we needed done for this money and were unanimous in deciding that we would do more than build a two-story box with a roof overhead—we were planning for the far future. The College made the land available; the church agreed to raise the money and build a house to be owned by the College and used by the church. The architects set out to do three things—to meet our program, to "blend" a new building in with surrounding buildings, to utilize a thirteen foot drop in the contour of the land by providing ground-level entrances at all activity areas. Then they wanted to capture the feel of the "nooks and crannies" of the old homes on College Avenue. We found we would also need the adjoining Gable lot for which the College will be reimbursed by the church (at cost and on condition that Gable House be left standing until the new men's dormitories are available. We built around Gable House.) The committee went through an evolving series of plans until it was felt that the desired objectives had been met. It was time to go back to the congregation. When they and the College Trustees' Committee on Buildings and Grounds had approved the exterior design concept, we proceeded to the final interior arrangements. These final plans provided for our needs even though it meant going over our first budget allowance. All spaces are multipurpose, with an eye to future needs and uses.

The lounge is also the library, designed to seat forty-five. The breakfast room, off the kitchen, doubles for food preparation and as a meeting place for high school and college students who said they wanted to meet in a home-like atmosphere where they could have coffee and refreshments, where they wouldn't have the feeling they were in a formal living room or an office.

By DONALD E. BROWN '53, *Chairman, building committee*
vice-president, sales and finance
Wayne Concrete Products Company

The lounge-library and seminar room are used by various groups and for adult and student seminars. Here students may meet with campus visitors as well as with campus groups. Here James Robinson* will soon be talking with students, the Religion-in-Life speakers may hold meetings, discussions may be held on business ethics and related topics; discussions a church such as this certainly should be initiating. Within Mackey Fellowship Hall are alcoves which may be closed or opened, thus changing the size and nature of the room. For the first time we can seat three hundred at a church dinner, and four hundred at a congregational, or other, meeting. The nursery is used during the week by the Wooster Women's Civic Club as a nursery school, quite properly involving the church with the community, and for care of toddlers during church services and meetings.

We have provided for an expanded church which we are sure will develop in Wooster. The city is growing, the College is growing, industry is expanding. We suspect that some people have come to Westminster and have not found opportunity for work within the church or the kind of program they wanted for their young people; they will now find their needs are met. Within the building there is an unfinished basement, created by installing a floor and walls utilizing the Livingstone Lodge basement excavation. Unpainted, without a

finished ceiling, the space can readily be made useable when it is needed and money is available.

With the combined efforts of pastor, church members, members of the building committee, College officials, students and campus leaders of religious organizations, and of many people over many years, the Church House became reality. Many prayers, hours of thought and planning have gone into it. Perhaps the most effective appeal came from the students who said, "Provide us with a place where we can hold our study groups and meetings, and we will come to you." Appropriately, the main entrances face the campus, opening the doors of Westminster Presbyterian Church House to the students we committed ourselves to serve, and allowing Westminster to effectively enter the world. Ω

*Founder and director of Operation Crossroads Africa, Inc.

Donald Brown has been a member of the trustees of Westminster Church where he was chairman of the financial committee. He came to Wooster after a two-year tour of duty in the Navy; with his wife Nancy (Campbell '52) he has been a member of the Church since they moved to Wooster. For fourteen years he has been a member of the executive committee of Boy Scouts.

The Building Itself

NAME	<i>Westminster Church House</i>	BUILDING COMMITTEE
CONSTRUCTION BEGAN (WITH GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY)	<i>September 20, 1961</i>	<i>Donald E. Brown '53</i> <i>chairman</i>
DEDICATED	<i>September 26, 1965</i>	<i>Wilson Compton '11</i> <i>(College Trustee)</i>
OPEN FOR USE	<i>August 2 (unofficially)</i>	<i>Robert Cope</i> <i>(elected from church)</i>
COST	<i>\$248,000</i>	<i>Donald MacKenzie</i> <i>(elected from church)</i>
ARCHITECTS	<i>Schafer, Flynn & Associates, Cleveland</i>	<i>Donald Noble</i> <i>(College Trustee)</i>
ARCHITECT IN CHARGE	<i>Bertil Lindblad</i>	<i>Sarah Painter '25</i> <i>(church member)</i>
DESIGNER	<i>Peter Van Dijke</i>	<i>August Schmitthenner</i> <i>(church member)</i>
PROJECT SUPERVISOR	<i>Donald McCutcheon</i>	<i>Cary Wagner '15</i> <i>(College Trustee)</i>
CONTRACTORS	<i>Freeman Construction Company</i>	<i>Margaret McKay Wright '24</i> <i>(church member)</i>
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT	<i>Henry Fletcher Kenney, Cincinnati</i>	BUILDING COMMITTEE ADVISORS
NUMBER OF ROOMS	<i>13 (plus storage rooms & unfinished basement)</i>	<i>Carol Gustafson Dix '32</i> <i>(College Trustee)</i>
FLOOR LEVELS	<i>5</i>	<i>Lilian Notestein '11</i> <i>(College Trustee)</i>
SQUARE FEET FLOOR SPACE	<i>15,000</i>	<i>Arthur Palmer '47</i> <i>(College Business Manager)</i>
LIGHTING	<i>Fluorescent & Incandescent</i>	<i>See back cover for floor plan</i> <i>of the Church House</i>
MATERIALS		
EXTERIOR	<i>Concrete & brick</i>	
INSIDE WALLS	<i>Concrete block (plaster in lounge)</i>	
WOOD	<i>Oak (fruitwood stain)</i>	
FLOOR	<i>Painted concrete and asphalt tile</i>	
AIR CONDITIONING	<i>Offices only (provisions for full installation later)</i>	