

St. Luke UMC moves forward with renovation

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It's been more than two years in the making, but St. Luke United Methodist Church is finally receiving a much-needed renovation.

As one of the oldest Methodist churches in the state, having formed in 1859, pastor Kyle Randle said St. Luke facilities have needed an upgrade for some time. And with help from Columbia-based Bobbitt Design Build, the church will receive upgrades to its sanctuary, meeting spaces and classrooms.

"We're very excited," Randle said. "We're still pretty much on target to be back in the church by Easter. Bobbitt has done a great job in pushing forward and getting this done."

Preliminary design plans were created for the renovation a few years ago, but budget concerns due to the declining economy slowed the process down. The plans had originally called for several additions, including doubling the size of the sanctuary at an estimated cost of \$2.6 million.

Steve Baird, of Bobbitt Design Build, said his company was brought on board to help get the project on track.

"Originally we were going to do a much larger project, but with the economy the way it was, we tried to give functionality of what they (St. Luke) wanted and reduce the cost," Baird said.

Sitting down with members of St. Luke, Baird and his team discussed the actual needs of the church. Narrowing the focus of the renovation, the company instead offered to increase sanctuary size by 20 percent. They also decided on creating a new entrance and welcome center, a new choir practice area and new classrooms. Through their efforts, Bobbitt reduced the price of the project by almost 30 percent, with a new cost of about \$1.8 million.

Ben Wilson, project designer with Bobbitt, said his company received help from both Archi-



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The renovation of St. Luke United Methodist Church in the Elgin community is scheduled to be finished by Easter 2010.

trave, the architectural firm for the project, and Lancaster-based civil engineering firm Hagins and Associates.

"This was a 100 percent team effort," Wilson said. "Everyone had to come up with the actual needs of the church and in the end we got them what they really needed."

As part of the process, Bobbitt is also committed to using as many local contractors as possible, and is already working with local flooring contractors and building supply companies.

Renovation plans

St. Luke will get a complete overhaul, Randle said. Located at 128 Providence Road in Lancaster, the church will receive a full

renovation of its sanctuary, which will be gutted and remodeled, adding seating capacity for about 60 more people.

There will also be a new choir area and welcome center with elevators, restrooms, conference room and administrative space. A covered drive-through entrance will be added and the building will also be made handicapped accessible.

"Also, all the entrances to the space will flow together into a central space," Randle said.

As part of a second phase of construction, two new classrooms will be built on the bottom floor of the facility, and existing classrooms and restrooms on the floor will be refurbished.

Wilson said the new space will be about 5,000 square feet.

"When the building is complete, it will be like going into a new facility," Randle said.

Randle hopes the renovation will make the church more accessible for members and guests, and create a more inviting space for families with children.

"This is not just to get a new building, but the work being done on the building can allow us to further our ministry," Randle said.

The design process was finished two months ago and site work has been going on for the last month. Baird said his company is aiming to finish the renovation in time for services to re-

sume by Easter 2010.

"The church has a goal to get in by Easter Sunday and we'll work diligently to get them in by then," Baird said.

Established in 1946, Bobbitt Design Build is one of the Carolinas' largest design-build contractors for commercial construction. The company provides architectural design, engineering, permitting and construction services, and has built more than 3,000 commercial buildings throughout the Carolinas. Bobbitt was selected for the job because of its extensive experience building churches.

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