FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH *of* BERKELEY
2407 Dana Street • Berkeley, CA 94704
(510) 848-6242 • *www.fpcberkeley.org*

On This Corner

A Challenge and a Promise

THE STORY OF THE DEDICATION OF
GENEVA AND MCKINLEY HALLS

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH *of* BERKELEY

On This Corner

A Challenge and a Promise

SECTION ONE

On This Corner: A History

BY CAMILLE PETERSON

Page 1

SECTION TWO

Architectural Commentary

BY MARK GILLEM

Page 9

New Geneva and Old McKinley:
To Every Generation Comes a Challenge

BY CAMILLE PETERSON

This tale of two buildings is one of perseverance and personal service, of God's provision and protection. For more than 20 years, we have labored toward this opportunity to serve through these facilities. Many individuals have given selflessly of their time and money. We have seen the hand of God so often through these individuals, in the provision of skill and finances just when they were needed. God has protected us from dead-ends and disasters. This generation builds on the work of those who, before us, have walked with God to meet the challenge and live the promise.

A Brief History of First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley

First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley was founded one day before the city of Berkeley, on March 31, 1878—by 27 individuals meeting in the Berkeley Gymnasium—wishing to minister to the budding university community. In 1879 the first sanctuary was built, but by 1895, the church could not hold its 296 members. A second sanctuary was constructed, but within 10 years it could not hold its 424 members.

On This Corner

As Berkeley grew, so did the church, expanding every 10 to 20 years. In 1902 the congregation sold the second sanctuary and purchased the current lot at this corner of Dana Street and Channing Way. Amazingly during this period the church survived factional fighting over both building issues and whether to call a "liberal modern man" or a scriptural conservative as pastor. Building continued even while the church was

without a called pastor for two years. The much-larger sanctuary was opened for services in 1908. Under the new pastor, Dr. Lapsley McAfee, the church expanded its support of overseas missions and acted upon its interest in youth and college ministries. In 1922, the lot south of the sanctuary was purchased for parking and youth activities. And indeed, half of the lot was used in 1940 when the Scout Lodge was built to add capacity for those activities.

Membership dropped after the congregational split of 1944, re-blossoming to 3,000 under our next long-term pastor, Dr. Robert Boyd Munger. In response, by 1949, the Christian Education Building along Dana Street was completed. In 1959 the second wing of the CE building was dedicated. The church was sending out dozens of members into full-time Christian service, accounting for 10% of Presbyterian missionaries being sent from the United States. The radio ministry had begun. Sunday school and college groups were burgeoning.

In the '60s, attendance dwindled when the church found itself in the midst of a cultural and literal battleground. Dr. Harold Englund was pastor during this troubled time, and he was especially committed to enlarging the church's local ministries. When the sanctuary was declared unsafe by the fire department in 1971, First Pres made a very conscious decision not to leave these contentious streets where rioters were breaking windows, but to live out its mission on this very corner of Dana and Channing, building a sanctuary lined with glass windows to be open and visible to the community. The new sanctuary was dedicated in 1975. After this season of turbulence, the congregation under Rev. Earl Palmer, from 1969 to 1990, reaffirmed its spiritual footing and greatly recovered in its size and dynamism. This recovery included seeing an expansion in many of our ministries—music, children, youth, college, plus lay counseling and homeless ministries—with an emphasis on equipping ourselves via education.

To Every Generation Comes a Challenge

Under the leadership of Dr. Mark Labberton from 1992 to 2009, our ministries continued to expand and the need for additional space grew. Sunday worship services, support services, outreach events, and a licensed full-time daycare, just to name a few, pushed our resources to the limit.

It had grown challenging to find spaces and times for all for all that God was calling this church to accomplish.

Meeting the Challenge

A long rollercoaster ride began in 1983 when we purchased, for our future expansion, the brown-shingled apartment building at 2419 Haste Street. Built in 1906 as a support building for the no-longer-existing McKinley School, the building had been extensively remodeled into apartments in 1944 to fill the post–WWII housing shortage. To our surprise, in 1987 the Landmarks Preservation Committee designated it as a Structure of Merit, limiting our options while our needs were beginning to cry out for more space.

With the founding of our licensed daycare facility, Cornerstone Children's Center, in 1991, we began weekday use of the playground adjacent to the brown-shingled building. This brought great concern about what was happening in and around the building.

Around this time the Vision 2000 Committee brought into focus the glaring needs for parking areas, classroom space, counseling rooms, staff offices, and places to provide services to families and the community. We had come to the point of having only one free room on Sundays for special classes, constant double-parking, turning people away from our parking lot, cramming children into classrooms, dealing with a six- to nine-month waiting list for Cornerstone, storing furniture in hallways, creating offices in odd places and with funny configurations, maintenance staff being unable to access rooms, and denying outside groups access to our facilities. Our Director of Administration, LaVonne Niccolls, had an extraordinarily difficult time balancing requests.

From Vision 2000 came the knowledge and the drive to search for solutions. In 1993, Jim Childers, with organization and project development skills, became volunteer development project manager. He and LaVonne worked tirelessly. First Pres investigated renting, purchasing, and shuttling between additional parking and meeting areas—to no avail. We considered starting a second church or moving. But the desire to minister to this community, to grow our many outreach and discipleship opportunities here, compelled us to address the need for more facilities. We needed to use the Haste Street property.

From 1995 to 1997, we went through a long process of legal and bureaucratic battles to define our property rights. What would we be allowed to do with our land and buildings? The tides of Berkeley politics tossed us about. First, a demolition permit was issued for the brown-shingled building, and its tenants were given notice and aid in relocating. Then some of the tenants and the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association protested. In a reversal, the building was then officially landmarked, requiring extensive and expensive restoration. But God protected us. First, legislation that seemed to secure our right to go out of the housing business was passed. We sued and won, but the City appealed. Second, the Court of Appeals had just implemented its new Alternate Dispute Resolution program. Rather than spend more years in court, the church and the City entered into ADR, to both of our benefits.

The remarkable blessings of God and of the people in our congregation appeared again and again during this process. When we wanted to demolish the apartments, Charlie Oewel helped develop alternate housing for tenants. Jim Childers used his second career as a real estate broker. Martin Triano worked as our attorney. Steve Buckley, known to the City as an expert on city planning regulations, negotiated for us. Roland Peterson led open forums to elicit concerns from neighborhood stakeholders. Sherry Carson contributed valuable accounting expertise. During this time Terry McIlraith pressed forward with parking issues. A congregation member researched the Sather Gate Garage situation, presenting the City Council with a money-earning proposal for turning the garage over to a private concessionaire. They implemented it, and Sather Gate parking became available to us at useful hours.

This had been a difficult time for the church. There was uneasiness within the church over the building: some did not want to take away housing or see an old structure demolished. We needed to clarify what we could do with the property before we could define a plan for it. There was rancor between us and our community. Being in conflict, rather than in partnership, was wearing.

But Alternate Dispute Resolution brought many benefits. In an important turning point, as part of the ADR process, we presented a tentative plan for our entire property, changing the focus away from the single controversial building and articulating our current and future vision of

ministries. In the resolution agreement we responded to neighborhood concerns, retaining and restoring the McKinley Annex, but we were allowed to adapt the inside of the building to our needs. The City agreed to assign department heads to work with us in a timeline-defined process, beginning at our discretion, allowing us maximum usage of our property. In a win–win arrangement, the City agreed to split court-awarded costs between reimbursement to us and credit toward future building permit fees. Working relationships budded. Potential dead-ends and disasters had become positive potentialities.

With new hope, Session formed the Facilities Task Force, which began working in earnest on a new master plan in 1998. Why build, and for what? We wanted more room for children, youth, training, and discipleship; private places for counseling and prayer; expanded educational options; spaces for urban ministry projects, with a larger worshipping community, to invest in our community and the world. We wanted a more prominent and accessible space for our college ministry. To do these we needed a physical plant, staff, and parking.

Session devised long-term goals. We were looking for room to grow, room to serve—to live out the claims and the implications of the Christian faith for the next 20 to 50 years. The Architectural and Engineering Committee engaged an architectural firm, and a two-phase project was developed. This project involved constructing a five-story building including underground parking, with subsequent demolition and construction of a new Christian Ed building. While committed to growth, the FTF was not inspired by the design and was concerned about the large costs involved. Local residents were opposed to the plan, feeling that it overpowered the neighborhood and ignored McKinley Annex, the brown-shingled building.

Protection and provision appeared again one Sunday while models of the project were displayed on the church patio. Up walked Mark Gillem, a practicing architect and UCB doctoral student, fairly new to our church, and he began asking questions. To our great blessing, he brought with him a fresh approach, suggesting that we could meet our goals in more cost-effective ways. Mark Gillem, along with FTF member and architect Paul Berry, developed a new design that was the basis for our current configuration, incorporating McKinley Annex and saving

$15–20 million. Mark was truly God's gift to us when we needed him, bringing architectural vision, technical understanding, financial savvy, and communication skills.

Again, we were blessed with the right persons at the right time. In 1999 Barbara Buder, newly retired from a career in finance, stepped up to act as co-chair of the capital campaign, along with Lip-Bu Tan, a prominent venture capitalist. They were both deeply committed to Christ and His mission through our church. Even without the final plan in place, a campaign was developed to cover design and start-up costs. The committee and Session prayerfully weighed the cost of building against the goal of maintaining our ministries, knowing it would be a stretch for the congregation. In faith the congregation, while unsure of the actual project, responded generously to the goal of expanding our capacity to do God's will. The pledges received exceeded the expectations of the campaign. God had provided again.

Our Session, our congregation, and our neighbors enthusiastically supported this new plan. In fact, we received formal letters of support from the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, the Telegraph Area Association, and Students for a Livable Southside. The neighborhood support led to an unprecedented approval process with the City of Berkeley. We had no public opposition—which is unheard of for a project of this size. The City's planning director called it "miraculous." Throughout the environmental review process, the city approval process, and the 20 public hearings and meetings, we were praised as a congregation willing to make a lasting, positive contribution to the City.

We engaged ELS as our architects to implement the new design, with Mark Gillem as the project manager. Because of health concerns in November 2001, Jim Childers handed his chairmanship of the FTF over to Bob Russell and Lip-Bu Tan. By the time the second capital campaign rolled around, we had a new, inspiring vision in place, but the economy had taken a turn for the worse. Could we raise the needed funds in such a rough economic climate? Beth Streeter invited us to commit to serve on this corner. This time we pledged less than hoped, but just enough to move forward in faith. Amazingly, we were now able to begin before the Bay Bridge project was to drive up the costs of steel and concrete. We broke ground in 2003.

And a Promise

We saw the promise flowering in new Geneva and historic McKinley. Provision, protection, perseverance, and personal service were bearing fruit. Mark Gillem, as concept architect and project manager, worked with the builders, incorporating "value engineering" to reduce costs while maintaining functionality and code compliance—allowing us to come in on budget. There were many surprise blessings along the way. Mark happened to meet a Steelcase Co. representative at a convention who offered us good-quality, lower-priced office furnishings, and then another discount because we were a church. While looking for a better price for tile, the saleswoman recounted how her family had been blessed by our Suitcase Clinic and told her manager, who offered us a superb discount. When the production of our doors and windows was delayed in Germany, Kinner, USA and Polar, Germany offered us even higher-quality goods at the same price because they were currently in production! Fortunately, they sailed through customs at Christmastime in three days rather than the usual several weeks—which kept us on schedule. Because we had been allowed flexibility in restoring McKinley Annex, it cost us less than our original intention of demolition and construction would have.

We have seen the hand of God so often through His provision and protection, through personal service and perseverance. Our FTF committee has worked diligently since 1998—many members for the entire season. Our senior pastor, Mark Labberton, noted the incredibly consistent unity of a very prayerful Session, even through annual membership changes. We saw so many answers to prayer: decisions being permitted, money coming in at opportune times, success of the special drive to accelerate the McKinley restoration, safety of the construction workers, surprising appearances of necessary persons with the right skills willing to serve at the right times, and the project coming in on time and on budget. We learned that we are a richly skilled congregation that can do incredible things when we work together with God. We can work with our city and community. How can we enter this time without profound thankfulness?

How, Then, Shall We Live?

In 2004 the Session engaged in a process of discerning our vision. Out of the deep unity of our Session and pastoral staff emerged new statements of the vision and goals of First Pres. These statements reflect the passion and commitment that we bring to this next season of our church's life. They constitute the promise and the challenge that lie before us.

Our Vision

In response to God's great love and for God's glory, our vision is
to sow the gospel of Jesus Christ through word, prayer, deed, and community,
cultivating personal transformation, social healing, and cultural renewal
through a movement of churches and ministries
that reconciles us, Berkeley, the University, the Bay Area, and the world
to God in Jesus Christ.

Architectural Commentary: First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley

BY MARK GILLEM

Our Goal

Our overall goal for the project was developed over a series of meetings in the late 1990s and is as follows: "The facilities should show, inspire, and enhance our love for Jesus Christ, for one another, and for the world around us. Our mission has a specific context. It begins here in Berkeley, near Telegraph, surrounded by the University. Just as our sanctuary walls expose our ministry to our neighborhood, and vice versa, so any future facilities should engage with and significantly enhance our setting at Dana and Channing." The beauty of this goal is that it links our architecture to our love for Jesus Christ and to our location in Berkeley.

Our Objectives

In support of this goal, we have expressed in the architecture the following values:

ENGAGED. To engage with the neighborhood, we have provided buildings and outdoor places in our campus that are visible, inviting, and functional. We want people to see, walk around in, and experience the beauty of our campus and the generosity of our spirit. The Main Plaza is clearly one aspect of this attitude, and it complements our existing Courtyard and Patio. The balconies, terraces, and porches that surround the Plaza link the interior spaces with exterior ones and give us the opportunity to take advantage of Berkeley's mild climate. The Prayer Garden will give us a quiet place to study, reflect, and pray.

Inside, in Geneva Hall, the College Lounge opens directly to Channing Way to encourage easy access to this vital space. It will function like a

café space and provide an informal place to gather. Also, following the model of the Sanctuary, the Chapel has a small patio and large windows overlooking Channing Way, exposing this important worship space to our community. Our main campus entry along Channing Way will be open most of the day and allow anyone to enter our campus and enjoy the quiet of the Plaza, the beauty of the Prayer Garden, and the functionality of the Garage. McKinley Hall also contributes to this sense of engagement. For example, by rotating the building 180 degrees, we have placed its entry in a location that is clearly visible and easily accessible.

On another level, we have engaged the history of McKinley Hall by reusing rather than replacing the building. Originally known as the McKinley Annex, this three-story wood-frame structure encloses approximately 9,000 gross square feet. A local builder, A.H. Broad, built the structure in 1906 as an annex to the McKinley School located in the area across Haste Street that now supports the Rochdale Cooperative Apartments. Rather than demolish the building, which the church tried to do in the mid 1990s, we decided on a renovation. While the building needed new parts—including new shingles, roofing, windows, and interior finishes—the main structure was quite sound. The structural engineer suggested that it was so sound that it could be dropped 30 feet and still survive. We removed the old apartments, opened up the main lobby and classrooms to their original height, and kept the look of the original exterior, with its generous front porch, true-divided light windows, shingle and wood siding, and simple details.

LIVABLE. We have provided an architecture that is more than merely functional. Rather, it enhances and supports the daily needs of our congregation, staff, and visitors. Wide hallways in Geneva Hall allow for informal discussions and impromptu meetings outside of formal classroom spaces. We believe fellowship and learning happen as much outside a classroom as inside. With their beautiful windows and generous balconies, the hallways become places people can use and enjoy rather than simply pass through. On the first floor, the main hallway opens directly to the Plaza. On the second floor, the main hallway opens to a large south-facing balcony and several smaller terraces. On the third floor, the main hallway opens to several terraces, and the work station area opens to a large balcony overlooking Channing Way.

We have also provided numerous entries into Geneva Hall to minimize overcrowding of the main stairway and to simplify circulation into and out of the building. The main ground floor rooms open directly to the Plaza and Channing Way, a southwest stairway leads directly to the largest meeting room on the second floor, and a southeast stairway leads directly to the second-floor classrooms and third-floor offices. The Calvin Room on the first floor of Geneva Hall, for example, has French doors that open directly onto the Plaza. Since this room will be used by the Mariners, they will not need to walk up any stairs or spend time waiting for the elevator. Similarly, the Choir Room and Chapel are on the same floor level as the Sanctuary—which simplifies access to and from these important spaces.

Nevertheless, our site does have a nearly 10-foot drop, and we have used multiple-story buildings to use our limited land resources effectively. To ensure complete accessibility, we have installed elevators in Geneva and McKinley Halls and a lift adjacent to the Sanctuary. The exterior ramps, wide hallways, and ample doorway widths also ensure that anyone spending time in a wheelchair will be able to use the buildings with ease.

To make the classrooms more livable, we incorporated a variety of subtle but quite effective features. The splayed edges at many of the windows bounce light into the room and minimize glare. This will make the rooms more comfortable visually for everyone. In addition, the windows in Geneva Hall have two layers of glass and are fully sealed to minimize noise transfer from the exterior to the interior. When needed, recessed shades can "black out" most classrooms. By tucking the shades into the ceiling, we have maximized the amount of light coming into each classroom. Moreover, we have provided classrooms in a variety of sizes, from small seminar rooms to large meeting rooms, to accommodate the wide variety of learning needs present in a multi-faceted congregation.

And what church would be complete without ample kitchens? Each floor of Geneva Hall is equipped with a kitchen with direct access to the largest rooms and easy access to all other classrooms.

One more aspect of livability relates to storage. If unused tables and chairs clutter the wide halls and generous classrooms, livability suffers. To avoid this scenario, we have located storage rooms throughout Geneva and McKinley Halls. In Geneva, there are a dozen rooms of various sizes designed to accommodate stackable chairs, folding tables, audio-visual

equipment, and other storage needs. In McKinley Hall, nearly the entire first floor is devoted to campus storage.

We also considered how the parking garage could be made more livable. As a result, we designed a central atrium that brings natural light to both levels of the garage, increased the ceiling height of the upper level to make it feel more spacious, and doubled the artificial lighting levels from the norm for parking garages so that the space would feel bright. To be livable, the garage must allow congregation members, their guests, and our visitors to park easily. While we will likely never have enough on-site parking to meet our Sunday demand, we have maximized the amount of available parking in the garage. The design allows for the garage to extend under McKinley Hall and results in a capacity of up to 170 cars with attendant parking. This number compares favorably to a maximum capacity of 120 in our former surface parking lot.

SUSTAINABLE. Sustainability in architecture deals with the environmental impact of buildings. The goal is to minimize that impact by reusing building elements where possible and by incorporating features that minimize the use of energy. This not only reduces dollar amounts on recurring energy bills but also exemplifies careful stewardship of the earthly resources God has entrusted to us. By simply "recycling" McKinley Hall and converting it into a classroom and counseling building, we made a significant step toward sustainability on our campus. We reused the main structure and most of the interior and exterior framing—which kept tons of debris from going into local landfills and reduced the need for new materials, which require energy-intensive manufacturing, delivery, and installation. We believe this decision respects the efforts of the generation that built McKinley Hall and is a wise use of the original building.

For Geneva Hall, rather than create a square or rectangular building, we used narrow wings. This shape allows light to enter the building from many sides and substantially reduces the demand for artificial lighting, which, in a building like this, accounts for over half of the total energy consumed. Large exterior windows as well as interior windows let light move throughout the building. Even in our parking garage, a centrally located atrium brings light into both levels, enhancing the ability of people to find their way around.

Moreover, given our temperate climate in Berkeley, we chose to incorporate operable windows to facilitate the cooling of the building rather than rely on air-conditioning. To minimize overheating of the building—which can occur when direct summer sun enters through windows—we have set the south- and west-facing windows deep into the exterior walls, either behind terraces or under covered arcades. The building then naturally shades the glazing during the summer. In the winter, when the sun is low in the sky, direct light enters into the building, contributes to passive solar heating of the building, and reduces our energy needs. The concrete floors at each level absorb some of this solar heat and radiate it in the evenings to further reduce our energy demand. Other strategies that enhance our campus's sustainability include the use of occupancy sensors that automatically turn off the lights when no one is present in a room, dimmers and switches that allow lights parallel to the exterior walls to be controlled based on the amount of incoming daylight, and lights designed for longevity and efficiency.

COMPATIBLE. We have tried to make Geneva Hall compatible with its context in a variety of ways. In terms of massing, perhaps the most important strategy was to limit the building to three levels with the average cornice line being roughly at the height of the top of our Sanctuary as well as slightly below the roof peak of Beverly Cleary Hall. As a result, the building fits in nicely along the street and does not overpower adjacent structures. In addition, the north face of Geneva Hall is roughly in line with both our Sanctuary and Beverly Cleary Hall. Also, the north balcony setback on the third floor not only provides a usable space for our staff but also allows more light to reach Channing Way. And the setback of the building along the east property line responds to the shape of Beverly Cleary Hall in order to maximize available light for the dorm rooms in that building. Taken together, the height and location of Geneva Hall work together to make a building that fits into its context. At another scale, we have borrowed fenestration (window and door) patterns from elegant buildings in the neighborhood, including our own Christian Education building's west elevation. The French doors at the first level, "punched" windows at the second level, and "ganged" windows on the third level are all elements that have roots on our site.

AFFORDABLE. While building in the Bay Area is an expensive proposition, and building an underground parking garage adds to this expense, we have maximized the use of our limited resources. From a construction standpoint, it has been cheaper on a per-square-foot basis to renovate McKinley Hall than to build that same square footage new. From a materials standpoint, we have specified products that have an understated elegance. For example, the floor tile on the first floor of Geneva Hall is an inexpensive yet quite durable porcelain tile. The carpets on the second and third floors are stock. Cabinets are a maple laminate, not a veneer. And the wall tiles in the bathrooms are standard shapes and colors, albeit nicely arranged. Over the course of the design and construction, we have gone through numerous rounds of "value engineering," which is a formal exploration of less-expensive ways of building. We have changed lights, finish materials, and construction details to minimize costs while still achieving our goals and objectives. The design and construction team considered everything you see in terms of cost, constructability, and durability. From the low-maintenance floor tiles to the highest-quality paint, we have created buildings that will last for generations.

Design: Dan D Shafer *www.dandy-design.com* rev. 7/09