

frank harmon architect

Frank Harmon Presents Case Study of “Green” Church at Duke Endowment Conference

October 10, 2007 (RALEIGH, NC) – When the Duke Endowment sponsored a conference last month to explore green building design how it can be used to meet church congregation’s spiritual and economic needs, organizers invited Raleigh-based architect Frank Harmon to present an actual case study of a completely “green” church.

On September 27 and 28, Harmon discussed his work on the Circular Congregational Church in Charleston, SC, during the Endowment’s conference “Trends in Modern Church Architecture:

The Artistry and Greening of Our Churches,” held at the Renaissance Suites Hotel in Charlotte.

The conference brought together church pastors and laity, architects, builders, academics, and environmentalists to explore way to implement environmentally friendly building design in rural North Carolina churches.

Harmon’s case study explored his renovation of the existing Lance Hall (1856) and a Sunday School classroom addition at the oldest church in Charleston, founded in 1681.

“What we did was to design the most ‘green’ Sunday School we could, with respect for its place -- not only its place in Charleston but in the 21st century,” Harmon explained. “The new addition to Lance Hall has a green [or vegetated] roof, which keeps the building cool and collects rainwater. We used cisterns to store the rainwater for irrigating the new courtyard, where children will play in the shade of live oak trees. To conserve energy, Lance Hall now has a geothermal heat source, using the earth’s constant temperature to heat and cool the rooms.

“Those rooms will be lit by daylight and filled with fresh air,” he continued, “with windows offering views over the Circular Church. The *morning* sun will fill the Sunday School rooms. Wherever possible, we used local materials. The floors are recycled heart pine. The structure itself is made of Southern yellow pine and recycled steel. “

Frank Harmon makes it a regular practice to incorporate the principles of sustainability in all of his projects, including the liturgical, because “residential and commercial buildings account for 40 percent of total energy consumption in this country,” he points out, “versus just 28 percent for the entire transportation sector, including automobiles. Thirty percent of all the forests are cut to make architecture, and 25 percent of all our fresh water is used in buildings. Clearly, if we want to make a future in which human health and environmental health are one, a sustaining architecture is a good place to start.”

According to Dr. Stephen Cofer-Shabica, a coastal scientist and chairman of the Circular Church's task force for the project, the entire congregation was committed to the concept of sustainable design and environmental stewardship. "This will be our generation's contribution," he said, "and a lasting testament to being sensitive to the church, the city, and the earth."

The Duke Endowment is a private foundation established in 1924 by industrialist and philanthropist James B. Duke. The Endowment's mission is "to serve the people of North Carolina and South Carolina by supporting selected programs of higher education, health care, children's welfare, and spiritual life." For more information, visit <http://www.dukeendowment.org>.

For more information on Frank Harmon, visit <http://www.frankharmon.com>.