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Dave and Jason Bossart Using Modern Systems to Build Churches



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Dave and Jason Bossart have found a way to use a modern type of building technology to create exceptional houses of worship
 BY SUE MARQUETTE
 POREMBA

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COVER: Dave and Jason Bossart in front of the Milton Methodist Church, Milton, NJ.

Dave and Jason Bossart: Using Today's Innovations

to Create Outstanding Churches

BY SUE MARQUETTE POREMBA

DAVE AND JASON BOSSART'S COMPANY, BOSSART BUILDERS, USES A MODERN METHOD OF CONSTRUCTING TO CREATE A TYPE OF BUILDING THAT HAS BEEN CRUCIAL TO THE WORLD SINCE ANCIENT TIMES: CHURCHES.

The term "church" to early worshippers actually referred to the act of assembling, but evolved to mean the house where people gathered—a vital place to those of faith. But like with the rest of commercial building, churches today face new challenges and new requirements, and Bossart Builders has stepped in to provide them a solution that reaps a quality house of worship for the best price: pre-designed and panelized building.

Dave Bossart, who is president of Bossart Builders, explains how that came to be.

"About 12 years ago, my pastor introduced me to a company that specialized in pre-building and panelizing church buildings," he says. "They were looking for a commercial builder to represent them in New Jersey, and I decided to do that."

Dave, who has been building homes and commercial developments for 30 years, now spends a large part of his time in church construction. His Flanders, NJ-based company has managed the construction of more than 50 church buildings since the mid-1990s.

Dave Bossart runs the company with help from his son and vice president,

Jason. They manage from between eight and ten churches a year, ranging in size from 5,000 to 32,000 square feet, in locations that stretch from Connecticut to Virginia.

"We are probably one of the most active church builders in the New Jersey area," Dave Bossart says.

The company's clients include a wide variety of Christian denominations, and Bossart Builders also constructs Christian and private schools, as well as buildings for non-profit groups. For example, Bossart built the largest new American Legion building in the state of New Jersey—a facility used for meetings and banquets. The company also occasionally takes on residential projects.

Bossart Builders acts as the construction manager for its clients, arranging all aspects of the building project, from working with designers and architects to securing permits and inspections. The company's project managers oversee the construction on site. Bossart also helps some of its clients find financing.

Such oversight is often critical for religious groups, who must work with a budget, but want to get the most for their money. "We take the lead for the church," Dave Bossart explains.

For panelized building, Bossart Builders represents Barden Building Systems, a company that pre-designs the building systems for Bossart's clients, in particular the wood panel systems and the trusses. Barden then ships out a complete shell package including windows and doors.

Although a large part of what Bossart handles today is done through Barden, "We have used other building systems as well," Bossart explains, including steel, precast concrete foundation systems and laminated beam systems. "Sometimes it is a combination



Bossart Builders used a 30-foot curtainwall behind the altar for the interior of the Milton Methodist Church.



of several systems. Whatever is most cost effective," he explains.

Jason Bossart adds that: "It is important to get the pre-engineered system that adapts best to pre-existing plans." That's because "We come out with a completely customized design for each client. Owners are still getting the benefit of architectural features and details, but at a lesser price by using a pre-designed system," Jason explains.

These days Bossart Builders uses mainly pre-engineered wood systems because of the skyrocketing cost of steel. That cost is critical to budget-minded church clients, which is also why Bossart Builders uses the pre-designed building systems. By doing so, Dave says the company can keep overall costs lower, saving 20 to 30 percent on a typical project.

TODAY'S CHURCHES

One trend Dave Bossart says he sees today in church design is that clients are looking not only for a religious facility, but also for a building that will function as a multipurpose social and educational gathering place.

"Foyers are becoming larger and including bookstores or cafes, so people can have more fellowship after church," Bossart says.

There is also a need for meeting spaces for the growing number of organizations within the churches, and the sanctuaries themselves are designed with stages and sophisticated audio-visual equipment for concerts and other performances.

However, some churches still prefer a traditional look, Bossart says, pointing to the Princeton Presbyterian Church in West Windsor, NJ as an example.

"It will have a 100-foot gothic tower clad in field stone," says Bossart. The tower's function will be to hold the church bells and fiber optic lighting, but mostly it was included for aesthetic reasons.

That church is also a good example of another trend. While the overall look of the Princeton church leans toward gothic, the building itself uses many different modern technologies and has been built using green building prac-

tices, such as solar panels to generate electricity. The construction of the church will also combine concrete, steel, and wood. The church uses precast concrete panels as in-fill to create a curved look to the front of the structure. Sapphire Architects, along with Barden Building Systems, designed the building, as well as the pre-designed panel system that will enclose the building.

Other churches show examples of additional trends in what is used and how churches today are building. For example, Milton Methodist Church, Milton, NJ, used exposed laminated curvilinear beams and a tongue-and-groove wood ceiling. Behind the altar, a 30-foot glass curtainwall was erected.

The Christian Community Chapel in Hillsborough, NJ, stands out because of its expanse—32,000 square feet, which includes a banquet hall, a senior daycare, a full-service commercial kitchen, and a sanctuary that seats 700 people.


Bossart points to the Calvary Bible Church, Readington, NJ, as a good example of another trend: expanding what's already there, renovating it and adding meeting space. The company built a 17,000-square-foot addition that includes a 6,000 square-foot, multi-purpose room with audio-visual capabilities for drama performances.

THE BOSSARTS AND CHURCH BUILDING

Dave and Jason Bossart are proud of what their company can do today, because, as Jason explains: "Any builder can build a building. What we're able to offer people is the various pre-engineered construction systems, as well as our value engineering."

The company gives church groups, who are big on hopes for a beautiful place to worship but often small on funds to do so, the tools to "accomplish their vision for God's kingdom," Dave Bossart explains. Bossart is often called upon to work with an architect, who designs a beautiful church that would be cost prohibitive if built by traditional methods.

"We've worked with a lot of churches



Princeton Presbyterian Church in West Windsor, New Jersey will have a gothic look when completed. But it's being built with a modern, pre-engineered system.

who thought they had priced themselves out of a project," Jason Bossart explains. "Understanding how to save money and making sure every dollar is stretched, working with communities—that's what we bring to the table. That's how we built our reputation."

"It takes a lot of background and experience working with the building committees and understanding what they want in their designs," Dave Bossart adds.

But the Bossarts don't stop with fulfilling their clients' design desires. They also take into consideration the carbon footprint of their projects, both the building and the construction process itself. They address green building by using the Barden building systems, which focus on renewable resources such as wood. But they also use a pre-designed product because there is less wasted material at the job site.

They do all this even though Bossart Builders is a small company. "Jason and I do everything," Dave Bossart explains, "from construction management to sales and marketing," and working with three project managers who oversee the trade workers.

Although small in number of employees, Bossart Builders has created a strong presence in New Jersey and other Mid-Atlantic states. Over the course of its history, the company has built more than a quarter million square feet of commercial space, which includes apartment buildings and custom housing developments, as well as houses of worship.

Dave Bossart holds a degree from Rutgers College, where he studied engineering and advertising.

Jason Bossart, however, didn't have either an engineering or construction background when he came into the business. Instead, his background was in sales, marketing, and politics. He studied political science at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., before coming to work with his father, then served internships in the U.S. Senate and the White House. The skills he learned in the political arena have served him well in the construction business, he says.

"It's very much a people business—it's all about building relationships and leading people through the process," Jason says.

The immediate future for Bossart Builders includes several new churches and church additions throughout New Jersey, but also two major non-church projects. One is the Mountain Lakes Police Department, where they say they will be able to save the town 25 percent on building costs by using modern methods, and luxury condominiums in New Rochelle, NY as well as a Christian high school.

AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Both Dave and Jason have been active in their community, and Dave Bossart currently serves on NAHB's Commercial Builder's Council. He also served as President of the Somerset/Morris Community Builders Association (CBA); Director of the New Jersey Builders Association (NJBA) and Commercial Council; and Chairman of the CBA council. For NAHB, he has served as Director and Designated Commercial Property Builder (CPB) and presided over development of the "Education — Dream House" project, which earned a NAHB National Builder Award.

Jason Bossart is a local director for CBA and on the state legislative committee at NJBA.

"The knowledge gained through these associations and graduate builder courses is extremely valuable as is the networking potential such organizations can provide," Dave says.

The company itself has won other

The structure of Princeton Presbyterian Church includes the latest in concrete, steel and wood.



awards as well, including NCBC's Chairman's Award of Excellence for 2008 for both Community Christian Chapel, Hillsboro, NJ, and Calvary Bible Church, Readington, NJ, and the Award of Excellence for Best Commercial New Construction and Renovation for

churches six times from Community Builders Association. *Builder/Architect* magazine and *Your Church Magazine* have cited Bossart Builders for exceptional quality building, and Dave Bossart was named Builder of the Year by the Community Builders Association for 2006.

When not working, both men like to keep physically active, participating in sports such as softball, skiing, golf, fishing and tennis. One of their favorite pastimes is traveling, and they admit they mingle their business travel with pleasure.

"We will visit churches when we travel and take lots of pictures," Dave Bossart says. In fact, one of the structures he saw on a visit to Switzerland was built by his own grandfather 100 years ago.

"I guess building churches is in our spirit," he says with a chuckle.

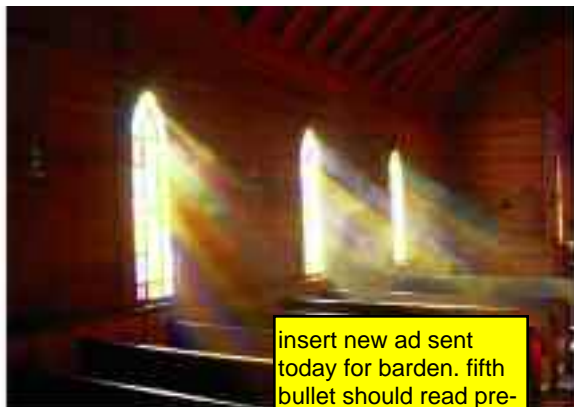
Jason Bossart has traveled to Italy, which has some of the most ornate religious buildings in the world, to tour churches.

However, while the Bossarts do bring home ideas, they say it would be difficult to incorporate some traditions from older churches into today's more modern facilities.

"They are the early pieces of art," Dave Bossart says. "But we like to incorporate some of that tradition, even if it is just stained glass. We give suggestions based on what we've seen."

"Churches have evolved so much," adds Jason Bossart. "For the most part, they are entertainment, multi-purpose facilities, although every once in a while we do get the opportunity to do a more traditional church, like the one in Princeton. When we do, we really appreciate how difficult those types of churches are to build now, and can only imagine how difficult it must have been back then." ■

SUE MARQUETTE POREMBA is a freelance writer frequently called upon to write about construction and real estate. Reach her at scporemba@verizon.net.



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