

June 20, 2014

Greg Jones
Chairperson, Reconstruction Committee
First Christian Church of Sandersville
166 E. Church St.
Sandersville, GA 31082

RE: Allen & Batchelor Construction – Letter of Recommendation

To Whom it May Concern:

In June of 2011, our church Sanctuary building was badly damaged by an accidental fire. The building had to be totally gutted before reconstruction could begin. We basically stripped it down to just the bare brick/masonry walls and completely removed the roof and floor structures. Reconstruction started with just the foundation and walls standing. Everything else had to be rebuilt new including walls, flooring, HVAC, lighting, electrical and audio/visual systems, roof and ceiling, choir risers, chancel, pews, exterior finishes, trim, gutter system, concrete stairs and walkways, etc.

The Sanctuary was built (completed) in 1907 and was of the Akron design, having a central worship room with ancillary/attached additional rooms for various uses, and that could be opened up to enlarge the worship seating area, etc. Total square footage of the involved building was about 4,000. The interior and exterior were very ornate, with heavily detailed moldings, a bowl-shaped and sloped floor with arched seating pointed down and focusing on a small chancel area. The walls are several feet thick unreinforced brick and mortar and had a plaster finish interiorly. The roof was very complex, with multiple valleys and peaks at differing elevations with a cupola in the middle. Due to the age and the construction methods used when first built, nothing was exactly square, the foundation had some weaknesses, and there were numerous idiosyncratic features that had to be dealt with. One interesting note is that the many large, beautiful, and original stained glass windows were not damaged. They were boarded up and had to be protected during the reconstruction.

Our intention from the beginning was to maintain the architectural features and decorative design of the original. We also used this opportunity to add new square footage and make other significant improvements (ADA compliance, add an audio/visual booth above head height to save floor space, etc). We hired one of the best architectural firms in the Southeast to help us redesign the building and help manage the reconstruction. The partners of this firm have a combined experience of over 70 years and they state that they've never encountered a job like this one...with the various design nuances and challenges...and that the roof itself was the biggest engineering/architectural challenge they've ever dealt with. All of the above is presented to make the point that this was no ordinary reconstruction job. Indeed, it was an extremely complex and ambitious "historical reconstruction" of a building that means an awful lot to the congregation and community.

Along comes Allen & Batchelor Construction from Augusta, Georgia. We had three bidders and as well as being the low bidder, Allen & Batchelor (A&B) had the strongest credentials and exhibited the necessary expertise and desire for the job substantially better than the other bidders. We likely would have selected A&B even had they not been the low bidder due to the uniqueness and complexity of the job.

In a nutshell, A&B performed exceptionally. I have been involved in a number of construction projects both in my personal and professional life and A&B is by far the best general contractor I have ever worked with. They took an immediate and sincere interest in the building and in the congregation's needs and interests, and were "on the same page" with us the entire time. In every aspect of the job, they demonstrated expertise, commitment to quality, responsiveness, resourcefulness (needed a lot of that with this old building and our ambitious reconstruction design), and patience with our membership and reconstruction representatives. It was absolutely clear from day one that A&B shared our vision for the reconstruction and respect for the building and what it means to us and our community. They developed a wonderful working relationship with our architect and Reconstruction Committee. I could call them at any time night or day...and I did often...no problem. As individual challenges would arise, they always had a good solution or worked with the architect and Committee to develop one. The site superintendents assigned to the job would stop what they were doing at any time to address a question or simply greet Reconstruction Committee members and congregation members. The quality of the work by A&B staff and their subcontractors was top notch. Each team and individual were highly skilled in their area. I would qualify some of them as true artisans versus carpenters (e.g., the team that did the interior trim). They also used local vendors and contractors where possible, a big deal for us. A&B managed the subs and all the vendors/suppliers, etc., wonderfully. A&B worked extremely well with our City administration regarding permits and approvals. We had some special issues with right of way and fire safety that required collaboration with the officials and A&B managed it perfectly and all issues were resolved.

A&B consistently met timelines and target dates for completion of various stages. There were some delays, virtually all due to weather and design changes requested by the church. Once all changes were planned and A&B set a final date for our first service, they delivered. Our first service in the new reconstructed Sanctuary was April 20, 2014, Easter Sunday! We optimistically targeted Easter early in the year and A&B made it happen.

All in all, the job required close collaboration and the expertise of many – and primarily, God's blessings (which were delivered!). As General Contractor, A&B was the hub of the entire project and is directly responsible for the successful completion of this job and extremely high quality work. The Sanctuary is amazing and more beautiful than ever, the congregation is ecstatic, the community is admiring, and we have a wonderful worship space that will serve generations. As the Chairperson of our Reconstruction Committee, I whole-heartedly recommend A&B to anyone for any construction project large or small. I would also be happy to talk to and even host a visit of anyone considering Allen & Batchelor for their project.

Sincerely,



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