



## THE CENTURY GUILD, LTD.

custom furniture builders and designers  
box 13128, research triangle park, nc 27709 • 919-598-1612

March 2, 1994

Ben Mixon  
Mixon Construction  
POBox 1727  
Durham, NC 27702

Dear Mr. Mixon:

Enclosed is a review of my observations concerning the front doors of Duke Memorial United Methodist Church. As the review states, I am not convinced that restoring the doors is the better long-term solution. Even if the restoration is done with the greatest of care, there is no way to know whether the instabilities would be totally corrected; the checks and other problems could continue to create movement, causing cracks in the new finish and thus allowing moisture to do its work again. As I also note, while we could build you a fine set of replacement doors, it would probably cost less to have a competent millwork house reproduce them. Although we have built and restored many an exterior and interior door, such work is not really a specialty of ours. Gothic style furniture or woodwork for churches is. I am enclosing some information about our studio for your reference.

Thank you for thinking of us. Should you want to discuss these observations further, please do not hesitate to call me.

Best regards,

Nick Strange





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**Observations:** Duke Memorial United Methodist Church—Front Doors

[1] Doors are stave-core construction with 1/4"-thick quarter-sawn red oak laminated to the faces of the stiles and rails.

[2] It is apparent that after many cycles of the finish degrading and moisture leaching into the wood, surface checks exist over much of the exterior faces. Sunlight has no doubt bleached out much of the color of the wood; once the finish is removed, the wood will probably appear "lifeless" and dull.

[3] The bottom rail faces have delaminated on at least four of the six doors; the stile faces are also beginning to delaminate at the bottom. The astragal is also deteriorated at the bottom end and around the locks.

[4] The lock keepers are broken on at least the center pair of doors.

[5] Some panel moldings are loose and cracked, especially around the bottom rails. The places where the panel moldings and panels meet show an extreme build-up of old finish. It is difficult to tell whether these conditions can be repaired without removing the panel molding.

[6] The jambs, exterior casings and transoms appear to be in better condition, with little degradation of the wood.

[7] The doors knobs and escutcheon plates appear to be fine specimens. Such hardware is difficult to equal today. Therefore, I would recommend restoring this hardware rather than replacing it. The hinges also appear to be in good shape, although a pin is missing here and there; again, I see no reason to replace these and recommend restoring.

[8] I was not able to see the interior of the doors because they were locked.

**Conclusions:** While I am usually all for retaining all that can be retained of the original fabric of a building, I am not convinced that refinishing and restoring these particular doors will result in something significantly better looking. Surface checks and other manifestations of years of weathering, refinishing, moisture absorption and use—as well as the problem of making new wood the same color as old—will all have an effect on the appearance of the finished product. Although it would probably be less expensive to restore them, I feel the better long-term solution would be to replace the doors while restoring and reusing the hardware.



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While we would be prepared to restore the actual doors, we would prefer having someone else refinish those parts which must remain in situ—the jambs, casings and transoms; such work is better done by those who do that sort of work all the time. We would also be prepared to build new doors and see that the hardware is restored. And while I can say with some certainty that the replacements would be of a quality at least equal to that of the existing doors when they were new, I must add that a high-quality millwork shop could also build new doors of an acceptable quality and would probably charge you less.

**Estimates:** to restore doors—remove, provide and install temporary security panels, strip, repair, refinish, rehang—90 to 120 hours/pair @ \$40.00/hour plus materials = \$4,000.00 to \$5,500.00/per pair [excluding the cost of restoring the hardware and any North Carolina tax on materials];  
to remake doors—160 hours/pair @ \$40.00/hour plus materials = \$8,400.00 per pair, finished and installed [excluding the cost of restoring the hardware and North Carolina sales tax].

Nick Strang