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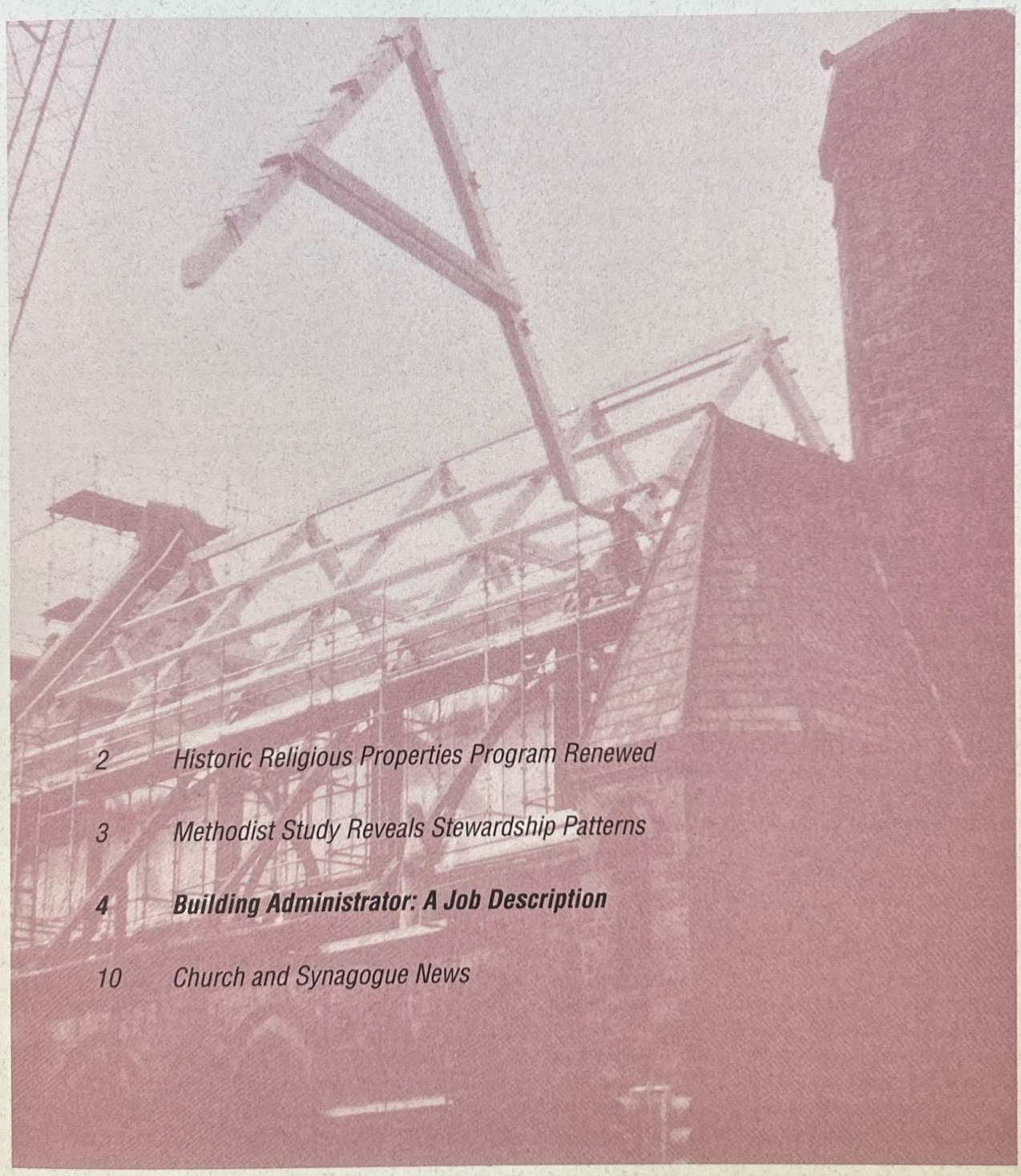

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Building Administrator: A Job Description

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At some point in your congregation's life, the governing board may determine that a part- or full-time person is needed to guide the daily activities in your church and related buildings, to coordinate with sharing organizations, to supervise routine cleaning and maintenance as well as help plan for larger repair projects and capital campaigns. This article describes the position as Building Administrator.

The congregation may need a building administrator for a number of reasons:

• The number and range of activities that are taking place in the building are beyond the capacity of the pastor, secretary, volunteers and/or board to coordinate. The administrator would be responsible for the scheduling and communicating with space sharers and program committees.

• An impending capital improvement program needs a reliable contact person, who is familiar with the buildings, grounds and improvement plan, to be on site for certain number of hours each week. The building administrator can provide the central coordination that is needed to bring together committee chairs, volunteers, consultants and contractors.

• The building and grounds committee and pastor find it difficult to adequately supervise the maintenance staff to complete daily and weekly chores and small repairs. The administrator may supervise the custodial staff and direct them to perform minor repairs as well as call in building professionals when specific skills (such as plumbing, electrical work) are needed. The administrator is sensitive to the historic fabric of the structure and will not allow insensitive alterations or substitutions without proper investigation and approval.

• The congregation finds itself dealing with building-related issue on a crisis-management level, never taking pro-active steps to insure that the building and grounds are well maintained. The deferred maintenance that results from this situation may lead to repair problems and bills that easily overwhelm the congregation. The building administrator, by communicating directly with the building and grounds committee, can keep the board informed of current building conditions and alert it to a needed repair before the problem reached crisis proportions.

The facilities manager at Summit Presbyterian Church, Green and Westview Streets, participates in an energy-saving experiment.

Responsibilities

It should be emphasized that the building administrator should not take the place of an active building and grounds committee of the governing board. The administrator may implement the committee's policies, but this staff person should not be expected to manage a religious property well without an active committee.

Every congregation should have a building and grounds committee, or an equal body by another title. This group may consist of 5-6 people selected from the governing body (council, vestry, session) and the general membership. Its responsibilities include:

1. Seeing that daily building and site maintenance is properly addressed.
2. Giving authorization for routine repairs.

The building administrator should not take the place of an active building and grounds committee.

3. Evaluating the need for major repairs and bringing such information before the governing body.
4. Establishing a practical, annual maintenance and repair budget (which includes the custodian's salary) and monitoring expenditures.
5. Setting up and maintaining a system for keeping all records on the building and its maintenance, repairs and modifications.
6. Meeting regularly throughout the year and conducting inspections of the building with the custodian at least twice a year.

Day-to-day maintenance needs to be guided by the building and grounds committee so that appropriate cleaning and repairs take place. However, the sexton or custodian will carry out the actual work. Sometimes this individual or team of individuals volunteers time. In most cases, it is a paid position, part-time or full-time.

The creation of a building administrator position should be considered part of a plan to assemble a decision-making team that helps the building to work efficiently for the congregation's needs, rather than having the congregation conform to the what the building will allow. Ideally, a building conditions and repair report is part of the team's information and provides a basic document that can be followed by the board and staff.

Skills

While previous experience with real estate management and/or building maintenance and repair is helpful, those particular skills can be learned on the job by an ambitious person. The primarily skills for which you should be looking are:

Organization: This person must coordinate materials from a number of different sources and should help to straighten out the mess, not contribute to it.

Good Judgement: The administrator will be making decisions about who and how to let people into the building as well as advising on what work is to be completed and when to call in professional help.

Reliability: Both the congregation and any individuals or organizations who use the building will rely on the building administrator to be accessible during appointed office hours.

Knowledge of Building Materials: The administrator need not have specific knowledge of the building's inner-workings, but a general understanding of what the repair and maintenance priorities should be is necessary. Also helpful in dealing with historic building materials is understanding of what is historic fabric that should be preserved rather than altered or replaced. While some of this information can be learned, the administrator should exhibit a conservative attitude toward the physical presentation of the building.

Compensation

It is unlikely that a congregation will find a volunteer who is well-qualified and available to assume these responsibilities. Furthermore, if the congregation is dependent upon this person to maintain regular hours, relying on a volunteer may be too much to ask. Obtaining the services of a consultant (salary compensation) or part-time work (paid by the hour) is probably your best bet. ○

This article is reprinted from the Philadelphia-Area Resource Manual for the Care of Older Religious Buildings. *See page 7 to order a copy of the* Manual.

Among the responsibilities of the building administrator may be considered the following:

1. Carry out the primary policies set by the building and grounds committee and the governing board of the congregation.
2. Provide a weekly presence at the site, preferably several days a week if part-time.
3. Keep a master schedule of activities ongoing in all parts of the building. All notifications of schedule additions or changes should be communicated and approved by the administrator.
4. See that fire prevention and security procedures are known by all occupants of the building and practiced regularly. The administrator should keep track of key allocations and security cards or codes, if applicable.
5. Coordinate the work of building professionals and contractors as is needed, especially for on-site work. The building administrator should make sure that all work is approved by the building and grounds committee, confirm that the right individuals are conducting the work and supervise them while they are in the building.
6. Coordinate communication as needed between the building and grounds committee, other building-related committees (restoration, capital campaign, etc.) volunteers and consultants, especially for major repair programs or restoration projects.
7. Act as the congregation's representative in community meetings, neighborhood watch groups, planning meetings and similar meetings that will have an impact on the use and security of the building and grounds.
8. Field all questions regarding the use of space in the building, particularly from outside organizations. The building administrator should administer the policy of the building and grounds or space-use committee in regards to allowing church, hall or educational space to be licensed for additional uses. The administrator will also negotiate all shared-space agreements as directed by the committee and/or board.