

OAK HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The client required a new sanctuary and narthex on an environmentally sensitive site. Black + Vernooy located the new building adjacent to an existing building to define an interior court, from which all existing and planned future facilities could be accessed. The design was intended to evoke a “campus” set in a wooded context.

The congregation desired a simple, natural structure without elaborate finishes or details. In order to meet tight budget and schedule requirements, the firm took advantage of code provisions that allowed for a less expensive type of construction in which the heavy timber roof structure and ductwork remained exposed.

Black + Vernooy endeavored to incorporate “honest” materials which did not require additional finishes, such as the exposed structural wood frame and roof deck, and redwood siding. The narthex, ancillary and mechanical spaces, and restrooms were enclosed in economical split-face concrete block with alternating bands of brick to match existing buildings on the campus.

The firm responded to the congregation’s request for a light-filled interior by designing the chapel with a central cupola, which allows soft daylighting of the interior and symbolically marks the exterior of the church. Ample windows let in additional light and allow unobstructed views to the trees.

The Oak Hill United Methodist Church was a challenging commission with a highly satisfying solution. The result is a chapel that provides the congregation with an intimate, light-filled space in which to worship, and a modest but graceful building that responds to its wooded setting.

