

CHURCH BREAKS GROUND FOR EXPANSION

\$1.8-million project is first part of a three-phase building program

By **LIN RICE**

ThisWeek Staff Writer

Members of the Harlem Road United Methodist **Church** broke ground on a major new expansion at the **church** June 21.

The \$1.8-million project will add much-needed sanctuary space for the congregation, along with several other improved areas, according to the **church's** capital campaign chairman, Glenn Evans.

"One of our goals is to perform more outreach services," Evans said. "I was so pleased with the groundbreaking Wednesday night. It was an awesome experience."

The **church**, located at 5520 Harlem Road, Galena, has many members who live in Westerville, Evans said.

The groundbreaking marked the first part of a three-phase building plan. It will deal with construction of a new multipurpose room, which will replace the current sanctuary. Instead of pews permanently attached to the floor, the new area will have movable seating and will be able to accommodate 360 people, according to Evans.

The first phase will also include installation of a new, fully equipped kitchen, to replace one that is having difficulty meeting the needs of the **church's** large population.

Evans said the **church** currently has about 345 members and holds two separate Sunday morning services. A new sanctuary will make them feel more comfortable, he said.

"We hope to be able to accommodate our community and not make them feel like they're in a sardine can," he said.

Construction on the sanctuary and kitchen will take approximately 12 months. Once the first phase is completed, phases two and three will deal with expanding the building's restrooms and expanding an area used for drama, musical and choral productions. Evans said an original proposal that included a Christian day care area had to be cut due to cost restrictions, but he hopes to see it reintroduced in the coming years. The entire project should be completed in three to five years, he said.

More than 250 people attended the groundbreaking ceremony June 21, with sunny skies and no signs of rain to dampen the event.

"Today we stand at the threshold of a new move of God in our midst," said the Rev. Bud Leskovac.

"The spiritual significance of this moment will touch many in our community, and will continue to do so

for many generations to come."

Bruce Ough, bishop of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist **Church**, offered praise for the project.

"I am very proud of the Harlem Road United Methodist **Church** congregation and all of its leaders," he said at the ceremony. "They have caught God's preferred vision for the **church**, they've embraced it and planned for it and have worked hard to cause it to become a current reality."

According to an informational brochure provided to **church** members regarding the expansion, **church** officials expect other services to evolve from the project, including facilities for a senior citizens adult day care program, a children's day care, expanded youth ministry programs, the creation of a Christian community center where counseling, tutoring, emergency food resources, parenting and marriage seminars would be offered, and to lay the groundwork for a Christian school through a dedicated children/teen center.

"This groundbreaking will allow us to reach out to the community so that they might find comfort," said **church** council chair Dale Shipley.

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Caption: Artist's rendering of what the expanded **church** will look like.

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