



Wood-framed tower provides requisite stair without creating an eyesore.

Deferential Treatment

Center for Christian Study • Bruce R. Wardell, Architect

The Center for Christian Study, which was making do in a traditional shingle-style house set in a Charlottesville residential area, desperately needed to improve its facilities. Its program for expansion – completed in 1996 – added meeting space for 125, a library with a reading room and research stations, new offices, and residential facilities for interns.

Site constraints required that any new construction occur to the rear of the existing building, says architect Bruce Wardell, AIA, who designed the addition with particular attention to the relationship between it and the surrounding neighborhood. The project consists primarily of an addition to the rear of the house, which allows the existing building to maintain its existing scale and relationship to its context. The massing and symmetry of the original house is mirrored in the addition, with the two separated by a wood-and-glass connector that is painted to differentiate it from the two main building masses.

An enclosed exterior staircase allows direct access to the addition from the street. The building is clad in unpainted wood shingles, giving it a human scale and warmth. The connector piece helps create an overall massing which is appropriate to maintain a residential scale. On the upper level, the primary meeting space incorporates views of the distant Blue Ridge Mountains, framed by a hearth and bookshelves.

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The building respects the residential scale of the neighborhood by stepping down the hillside behind the old house (right). Library/reading room enjoys views through generous upper-level windows (left).

