

paid laborers building it. The congregation's help included women hauling bricks in their aprons.

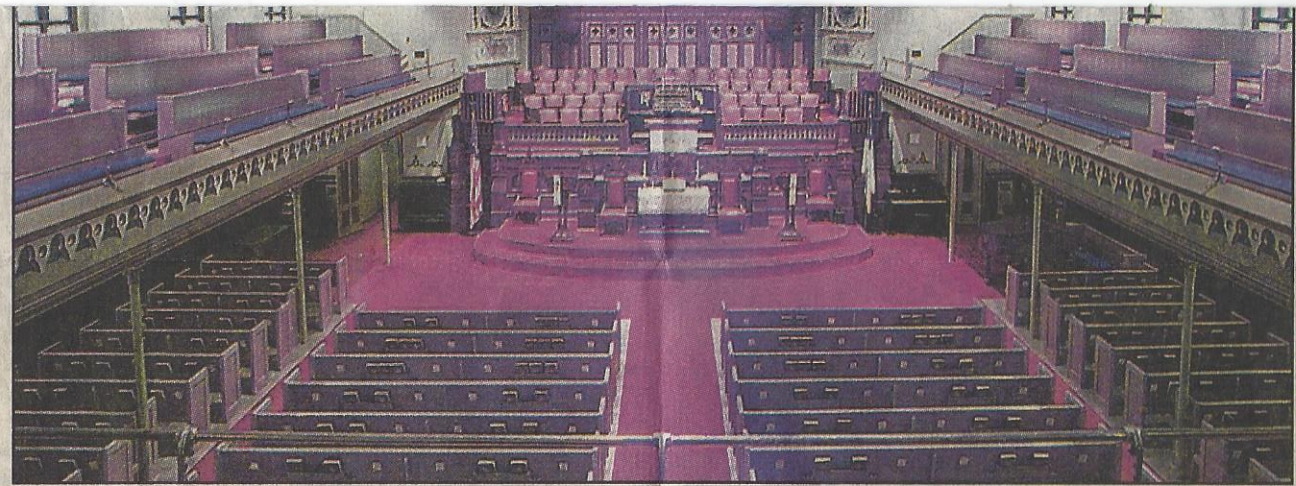
Dedicated to preserving their church, the congregation recently completed a \$1 million exterior restoration project that included tuck-pointing, repairing ornamentation and repainting.

The congregation is just as vigilant about preserving the breathtaking interior of their church. It's the job of caretaker Gary Ostermueller to maintain the historic church.

Ostermueller looks after the building inside and out, top to bottom. That includes climbing the narrow steps and ladders, dodging 16-inch-square structural beams, to change the exterior light bulbs that illuminate the six-foot diameter clock faces.

Ostermueller relishes his job.

"You know you are doing something that most individuals don't do much any more. Much of the work I do here is



A view of the sanctuary at Salem Evangelical United Church of Christ at Ninth and State.

H-W Photos/Justin Sagaree

served out at other places," he said.

Taking care of the inspiring sanctuary, which seats 1,000, by itself, is a monumental job.

The sanctuary is enveloped in ornately carved walnut, oak and sweet gum paneling and trim. It has a high pulpit, cathedral chairs, the church's original baptismal font, as well as rows and rows of stained glass windows that tell the history of the church. The Moller Pipe organ has ninety stops and 4,279 pipes and is one of the largest in the state.

It takes Ostermueller 20 to 30 hours each week to dust the sanctuary. The work is tedious, getting into all the tiny carvings, but he does it patiently and methodically.

He likes the sense of ownership that caring for the sanctuary gives him.

"You can often feel it is a part of you," Ostermueller said.

Once a year, Ostermueller sets aside one full week to polish all the wood with lemon oil. He uses lemon oil because it penetrates through the varnish.

"It helps keep the wood swelled up and keeps it from cracking," he said.

Ostermueller also takes pride in caring for another exceptional feature of the church — the giant tower clock. The congregation had the tower restored in 1995 by Hush and Pryer Jewelers in Palmyra, Mo.

The 100-year-old clock works on the same principle as a grandfather clock, except its weights are giant boxes of rocks and its pendulum weighs more than 100 pounds. Ostermueller winds the clock twice a week. It takes him 20 to 30 minutes to turn the large crank 240 times to keep the clock ticking another three days.

"With climbing the 100 steps to the clock and then winding it, I get my StairMaster and aerobic exercise taken care of for the day," Ostermueller said.

The Salem congregation plans to continue preserving its spiritual home. The Rev. Steve Schutte said members are still in the research phase of their next challenge — restoring the huge pipe organ. It is a major financial undertak-

AT A GLANCE

Architect: John S. McKean

Date of Construction: 1876

Style of architecture: Late

Gothic Revival, a style chosen because of vertical elements that physically reach toward God and the heavens

Special features:

- contrasting red and white color scheme
- steep gable with a parapet in the front and back
- dominating square tower with 236 foot tall spire and smaller spired towers
- arched and lancet windows with ornamentation
- rosettes
- corner quoins
- a set of three tower bells



ing, but it will happen because the Salem members are dedicated to preserving their spiritual and church history, Schutte said.

"This is an historic church in Quincy and it is also an historic church in the history of the United Church of Christ," Schutte said.