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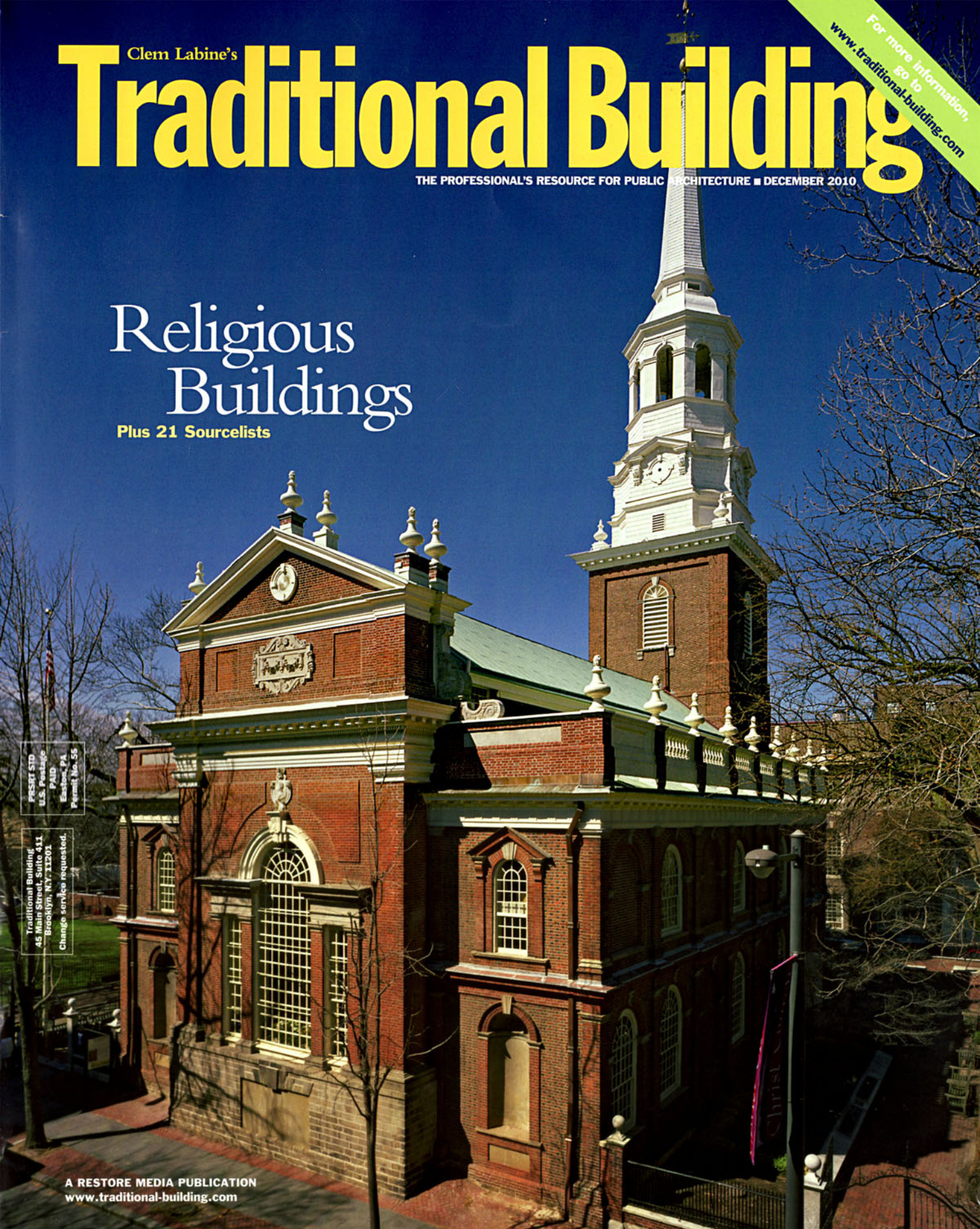
## Religious Buildings

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Above: The Kinsman Presbyterian Church, with its new spires and bell tower, is graceful and glorious. Photo: David Baio Photography

Right: The Kinsman Presbyterian Church in the 1930s; Library of Congress drawings were used to replicate the original bell tower and spires.



UT, received an award from the Copper Development Association. The project also won the AIA South Carolina 2010 Design Award and an award from the Historic Charleston Foundation.

Flatbed trucks transported the 30 elements, which ranged from the 28,000-lb. middle archway to the 15-lb. finials, to the cathedral, where they were fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. In March 2010, 103 years after it held its first mass, the cathedral finally got its crowning touch.

"The steeple has changed the skyline of Charleston forever," Keyes says. "And this is not something we get to do every day. We are a city of small-scale buildings that are only three to four stories high. The cathedral's gleaming spire is easily recognized all the way to Sullivan's Island."

#### Here's the Church – and its New Spires

The Kinsman Presbyterian Church, erected in 1833, is the oldest house of worship in the Ohio town that gives it its name. Set on the highest piece of land, it grounds and centers the town. When it came time to make repairs

and it was determined that the spires and bell tower had to be replaced for safety reasons, the congregation was intent on restoring it to its former glory.

This was a major decision as the bell tower and spires were not original; they had been simplified and replaced with more modern versions in the 1970s. With only about \$200,000 in donations, there was no budget for an architect, but after some Googling, Bill Sandrock, owner of Stratton Creek Wood Works in Kinsman, discovered 1930s drawings of the historic building on the website of the Library of Congress.

After Bill Perry, vice president of American International Construction in Berea, OH, repaired the roof, he and Sandrock put their heads together to devise a cost-effective battle plan to create the spires, railing and gingerbread that gave the church its 19<sup>th</sup>-century character.

For several years, Sandrock had been using Versatex PVC trim and sheet products manufactured by Wolfpac Technologies in Pittsburgh instead of wood millwork. "The original wood of the church is old-growth yellow poplar that can't be easily matched today," Sandrock says. "Versatex can be shaped and cut just like wood, and aside from periodic painting, there's no maintenance, which is what the congregation wanted."

Although some preservationists would consider this a controversial choice, Sandrock said this middle-of-the-road cost option gave him more flexibility than wood because it is available in 18-ft. lengths. "Wood only comes in 16-ft. lengths, and Versatex can be special ordered in lengths up to 24 feet. Yes, it's different from wood; it expands and contracts with the temperature, and unlike wood it does it lengthwise too, so you have to make adjustments."

One proponent of cellular PVC products is St. Charles, MO, architect Tim Busse, AIA, CNU, and senior vice president of Whittaker Homes. He has been using AZEK, a cellular PVC trim product similar to Versatex, for several years in his projects, including the re-creation of a local railroad station built in 1893. "There are only two disadvantages: You can't paint it a dark color, especially black, because it would absorb heat and become dimensionally unstable," he says. "And it expands and contracts substantially more than wood."

To make sure the copper-capped spires of the Kinsman church remain stable for the next century, Perry inserted a 4-in. hollow steel tube into each that is reached by access panels. "Coming up with a way to access the spires was a challenge," Perry says. "We decided to use access panels so the spires could be bolted to the tower and there would still be room for the railing. This solution made installation a snap – it only took about 10 minutes to put them in place."

During the work, church members pitched in, spending several weekends painting the pieces at Stratton Creek Wood Works' shop. A little more than a year after the work began, the Kinsman Presbyterian Church had its new bell tower and spires. "Everyone loves the 'new-old' design," Sandrock says. **TB**

**Web Extra:** Additional photos and drawings can be seen at [www.traditional-building.com/extras/Dec10Steeples.htm](http://www.traditional-building.com/extras/Dec10Steeples.htm).



Like the originals, the new spires, which are made of Versatex PVC, are topped by copper. Photo: David Baio Photography