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construction management

## Change Orders

The very thought of “Change Orders” can bring sweat to the brow of anyone who has been responsible for a large construction project. It’s nearly impossible to avoid them. Change Orders result from changes in the work that affect the cost, schedule, or scope of the project. Change Orders may result from finding “hidden treasure” like underground water or rock, from code interpretation by inspectors, or availability of materials. Often the Owner originates a change. Whatever the reason for the change, it can mean headaches. The change may cause the work to slow while bids are taken and paperwork is handled. A change to the schedule of one subcontractor (sub) usually affects the schedule of many others. Negotiating the cost of the change can become contentious. Some builders and subs actually hope for change orders because they can be so profitable and give them an excuse for not keeping the project on schedule.

To minimize these problems the church should have a complete set of architectural plans prepared, thoroughly bid as much of the work as possible before starting construction, and be realistic about the amount of money available for construction. Do your research about the soil and utilities on the land. Plan in advance to stick to your drawings. The subs should know that their change orders may be reviewed and competitively bid. Get all change orders in writing in advance of approving any extra work. Try to negotiate a limit to change order costs, such as “cost plus fifteen percent”.

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