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Church turned home for sale

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NEWPORT - When empty nesters Michael and Rosemary Braeckel moved to the Cincinnati area five years ago, they wanted to live in a unique home and found it in an old Presbyterian church in Newport.

"We had always wanted to convert an old school or firehouse and we came across the church driving through the neighborhood, which had been divided into two condos in 1993, but ours needed a lot of TLC so we accepted the challenge," said Rosemary, a retired paralegal and contract manager.

Michael said the space drew him to the former church at 625 Overton St.

"Dramatic, unique and uniquely beautiful," he said. "The architect did a great job of creating a gracious home in the space while highlighting the many architectural features."

The First Presbyterian Church was built in 1893 and was active until the 1980s. In 1993 it was converted into two condos.

"There were 90-plus years of people's lives that passed through these doors as evidenced by the World War I and II plaques in the side vestibule," said Rosemary. "I still find myself curious about the people that were married, buried and worshiped in what was a warm and wonderful space for so many years."

The Braeckels have now retired and are moving back to their native Texas. The home is for sale for \$475,000.

"We love the space, love the neighborhood, our parish, my choir... but it snows here," said Michael.

However, the couple have left their mark by updating the home.

"We're sort of rehabbing the rehab," said Michael. "We actually took out some of the architectural detail from the 1993 rehab in order to reveal the church features better. We completely redesigned the lighting scheme on the gallery, the coffered ceiling in the master bedroom and the cathedral ceiling in the master sitting room. We also did a ton of the practical stuff such as insulation, tuckpointing, restoring the back decks that sort of thing."

Rosemary said living in a church isn't uncomfortable at all.

"We tend to view it more as an art piece rather than an old church and love being surrounded by the glass and the wonderful old woodwork that reflect the craftsmen that came before us," she said.

Michael agreed.

"It's really quite comfortable," he said. "We are architecture fans so it's great to live in a unique space integrated elegantly into the church architecture. Folks spend a lot of energy making their churches beautiful and we get to enjoy that level of architectural detail every day."

Anyone interested in purchasing the home can call real estate agent Leslie Young at 888-353-5478.