



CRITICAL STEPS IN CHURCH BUILDING PROGRAMS

We all make mistakes. It is part of being human. But it is important to learn from our mistakes. Unfortunately, there are some things in life we have the opportunity to do only once or twice - - such as building a new church. With that said, my mentor pastor, as a teenager was Dr. Malcolm Rigel. He built a church building with undeniable success in five different pastorates. He was a church builder. However, most are not gifted with building program acumen like Mac Rigel.

Many pastors who have guided churches through building projects say it was an exhaustive time in their ministries. There are, however, ways to make the process a bit easier. There are some critical steps in assuring success:

1. Having financing in place first.

Many times church leaders make a decision to build, hire an architect and draw up plans. They then seek out a contractor and complete the contract phase of the project. Then, they approach a lending institution and learn they don't qualify for a loan to build what they have envisioned.

Generally, you will be able to borrow up to three times the church's annual unrestricted income. Church Builders *Plus* can help you determine your borrowing capacity before you get too far along in the process and provide your leaders with a number of financing options.

2. Having a capital fund campaign in place.

A capital fund program is designed to obtain financing commitments from church members over and above their tithe for a stated period of time (usually three years). It will provide cash so the church will not have to borrow as much for construction, and

provide money to help make the mortgage payment once the building is completed. Church Builders *Plus* can help your church establish a reasonable campaign goal and help lead your people to achieve victory.

3. Check out the contractor.

Many churches prepare little to insure the contractor they select can complete the job and do quality work. Ask for references before hand and check them out. It only makes commonsense.

Some churches have contracted with a church management-consulting firm to oversee the building process. By pointing out potential problems or finding potential cost savings, they can oftentimes save more than the consulting fee.

4. Building the right size.

Church growth consultants claim an average church that completes a successful building program will experience 50-percent growth within 18 months of completing a new facility. Choose the right size the first time, or you might have the same growth problem all over again this time with a mortgage that must be paid down before you can build again.

5. Avoiding change orders.

The two major reasons churches are foreclosed upon are problems associated with a pastor leaving and cost overruns. Many cost overruns are the result of changes made after the building project has begun. A church might not have control over its pastor leaving, but it should be able to manage cost overruns.

In the building process, it is important to make sure all questions are answered and all needs addressed before construction starts. Once actual construction begins, the costs of making changes will escalate tremendously, which could create undue stress and major problems.

6. Researching zoning and environmental restrictions.

Gone are the days when you could go out, buy a plot of land and build a church on it. Now there are numerous environmental issues to investigate. A Phase One environmental study tells if there are contaminants on the property. The owner is responsible for the

proper removal of these contaminants. It is the best insurance you can buy. It is comparable to having a home inspection before buying a residence. Be sure to know zoning and city requirements. Who is responsible for sewers, utilities, and drainage?

7. Create a master plan.

Too many churches haphazardly locate buildings and parking on their property without regard to efficient land use. There are architects and building consultants, who will, for a reasonable fee, study your churches needs and your property potential, then design a master plan to meet those needs. There is no reason to build a 1,000-seat sanctuary if you have a parking facility for only 500 people.

8. Build congregational support beforehand.

It has been said if you want to find out who the “uncommitted people” are in your church, enter into a building program. Keeping the congregation informed throughout the process can solve a lot of issues in this regard. Communication is important. Let everyone know what’s happening. Consider celebrating the completion of various steps. And be sure to recognize all those who helped make it possible. Remember these are volunteers.

9. Avoid adding another responsibility to the pastor’s duties.

The pastor of a growing church is busy with prayer, sermon preparation, outreach, visiting the sick, administration, and other responsibilities. What he or she probably doesn’t have is the time or the expertise to manage a building project. Pastor Paul Sheppard in Mountain View, California just completed a building project which seats 2,100 people. The opening day had attendance of 4,000 in two services. Rocky Bridges, a layman, was appointed by the pastor to manage the project. He was the right and left hand in this project for Pastor Sheppard. Make sure someone in the congregation is assigned the detail and administrative responsibilities, and let that person keep the pastor informed.

10. Understand you’ll face building problems.

Sometimes workers won’t show up on time. Some days, you’ll contend with bad weather or the wrong construction material will cause delays. There are times when the intensity of the project can overwhelm life.

There will be problems and challenges to overcome, but remember this: It's God who gives the vision, and it's His job to give the victory.

Remember you are not alone. There are others here who want to see your success for God's glory. Church Builders *Plus* is here for you. We would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about your project and covenant with you in prayer for your ministry.

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