

Leading Your Congregation Through A Building Program



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There are several factors that help lead to the success of a church building program. While such things as selecting the proper architect and contractor are important, much of the success for a building program rests on the leadership of the church and how they lead their congregation through the process. Here are a few pointers for church leaders going through a building program.

Seek Godly Counsel. When I was attending Seminary, one of our professors would often remind us that regardless of what situation we encountered while pastoring a church, other pastors had likely already encountered it and, therefore, we would gain from their experience if we would only talk with them. This is very true of building programs. Thousands of pastors have already gone through a building program. Seek out a trusted pastor and talk with him/her about the experiences he encountered and the lessons he learned. You truly can learn from someone else's mistakes.

Ask Questions. As a church leader, your area of expertise is most likely not in the fields of architecture or construction. Consequently, there may be many things about a building program that are foreign and confusing to you. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification about anything you don't understand. Some architects and contractors will use an intimidating posture so they can "push through" their plans or methods. Don't be intimidated. While these individuals are professionals and you should listen to their suggestions, they still work for you and you should never hesitate to question their direction if you do not feel comfortable with their recommendations.

Delegate. Some Pastors make the mistake of thinking that they have to attend every meeting, know every detail and make every decision. Believe me, during a church building project there is plenty of work to go around. Find trusted individuals within your church and delegate any responsibilities you can. Not only will this reduce your stress and the time you spend in meetings, it will also give different members of your congregation "buy in" for the project as they head up various committees.

Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing. If a church leader fails to delegate, it becomes very easy for that person to become so ingrained in the building program that he loses

sight of his true calling of ministering to the people and equipping the saints to do the work of the church. It is fairly common for a pastor to leave a church shortly after completing a building project. It is commonly understood that this is because of the stress he/she endured during the building project. While this may be true, if the pastor had delegated properly so he/she could stay focused on ministry issues, the outcome may have been very different.

Maintain Your Christian Walk. When it comes to "Keeping the Main Thing The Main Thing," nothing is more important than maintaining a close relationship with God. In our firm, we try to maintain a Christian atmosphere in our office and on our job sites, and we do as good a job at that as any firm I know. However, the fact still remains that there is a huge difference between building a church and pastoring a church. Even though some of the workers on your construction site may be Christians, a group of carpenters on a jobsite is far different from a group of guys at the Men's Brotherhood Meeting. Some pastors are tempted to "fit in" when they are on the jobsite. Don't fall into that trap. Maintain your professional distance. You are God's representative on that job site and the workers need to respect you for that. A pastor on one of our projects went to the jobsite each week and led a short time of devotion and prayer with the workers. On the dedication day of their new building, the Pastor was able to baptize a couple of men who had worked on the building and consequently accepted Christ while attending the short devotions led by the Pastor. What a blessing!

Keep it Positive. From the time that Noah built the Ark until today, any building project for God has met with some amount of difficulty and problems. As a church leader, it is important to keep everything positive during a building project. As tempting as it will be to complain about the architect, the builder, the local code officials, the fire inspector, the banker, etc., you need to minimize the problems and accentuate the positive. Just as the Israelites began to "murmur" and wanted to turn back when they encountered problems, most churches will encounter the same attitude from their people when the church begins to have problems with a building program. Consequently, as a leader, you need to protect the congregation from as much "bad news" as possible and constantly remind them that you are building for God's Glory so that others might come to know Christ. Anytime, we are moving ahead for God, we will meet resistance from the enemy. Building a church is no different. Keep it positive and keep moving ahead.