

Your Facility: Right Size to Maximize

Most church plants and multisite campuses launch in a temporary space. They do not have the resources or loan capacity to buy a 50,000 square foot building. It is right for them to have a temporary space for their initial season of ministry. As a church plant grows and they begin to offer additional ministries and have more children, a facility with certain security and safety needs becomes something that the ministry requires.

On the flip side, a church built 50 years ago when the church had more than 1,000 members may not fit the same congregation that is now under 200 members. This scenario often involves a community that is going through a significant demographic change. Just as a 50,000 square foot building would not fit the church plant, a 50,000 square foot church may not meet the needs of an aging congregation of less than 200 senior adults.

Aging Facilities

We all know the church is not a building. That being said, most churches will build or buy a church facility. Typically, the buildings that were built 40+ years ago no longer fit the current ministry, and both the church and the building decline.

Our team had the great privilege to serve Royal Haven Baptist Church in Dallas, TX. This church was at one time a growing and thriving congregation. But over the years, as more people moved to the suburbs of North Dallas, the demographics changed significantly. A sanctuary that sat 900 now had a weekly attendance of 70 people. This church struggled to make decisions about their facility issues for 10 years. At long last, a buyer came along and an opportunity to relocate from their 80,000+ square foot building to a 30,000+ square foot building. The church right sized their facilities, and within 2 years they were growing and had more than doubled in attendance. They were able to merge with another church and began new ministries in their new neighborhood.

Evaluating Your Facility is a Must

Like the established church at Royal Haven Baptist Church, church planters need to evaluate their facility. Whether they use a one day a week space or an exclusive lease space, the church must consider if the space they have fits their ministry. The church that started in a community center without a defined worship room may need a new space that has a larger worship area and a better area for children. A simple move from the place you met when 50 people were coming to a space that fits a congregation of 150 can create a better opportunity for your guests.

I've talked with several church planters recently who said their current worship space was full and a little awkward for a new guest. Church in the Center in Houston previously used a spot in the medical district. They recently moved to a local YMCA, and in just a couple months are seeing an increase in attenders. Leaders must constantly evaluate the facility and how it fits your ministry. You may need to consider a relocation like Church in the Center, while another church may just need to add an additional service time.

Recently I met with a pastor who has been at a church for 4 years, following the 20-plus year ministry of the church's founding pastor. The new pastor has a vision to plant churches. The church was built with plans to be a mega church in the community, with room to build and receive thousands of people. The pastor understood that they could try to be the church that the building was built for 20 years ago or they could be the church for which they have a vision today. If they are going to be the church for today, they need half the building they currently have. They need to right size their facilities to maximize their ministry effectiveness. This thought is counter cultural. Many leaders are pushing to be the next big church and build out a campus or multiple campuses. This pastor pressed into who this called out people, the ecclesia, are called to be and is leading his people to right size so that they can most effectively accomplish the ministry that God has set before them.

Do you have the right tool to maximize ministry? Does your facility facilitate ministry, or does it limit ministry? Growth and measures of success should be contextualized in your setting. Your facility, location, staffing, and debt are all factors to consider based on your ministry. Are you positioned well? Is your facility, staffing, or debt right sized for your budget and your ministry strategy? Right size your ministry and *be* the church.