

Opening New Seats for The Hearing of The Life-Changing Gospel

Watching a church grow is an amazing site to behold. It's exciting to see people wooed to the hope the church holds out for them. It's attractive! From wooing to sending, there is nothing better than the church! When God's hand is upon a church like this, it impacts everyone within its reach.

But what happens when an irresistible, infectious, healthy church meets a speed bump of capacity issues? Wise leaders begin to see it way before the rest of us do. That's what they are called to do! They see 60% capacity in worship accompanied by growing parking issues and children's space challenges. Then comes 70%..... Uh oh! 80%! Oh Lord, what are you doing???

God says, "There is more where that came from. Are you ready?"

Can a church be faithful wooing, winning, discipling, maturing, equipping, and sending, and then have no capacity for more? The #1 reason people start attending church is because someone asked them to come along with them. But can it really be? A chain of faithfulness to end with no room?

If we choose to acknowledge it, the math is pretty easy to understand. If a church is at 60% capacity and growing 10% per year, there is about a 2-year runway before things start to get dicey. If you are at 70% capacity already, chances are you're beginning to notice the symptoms and needing solutions.

More chairs, stacking more services, and remodeling other rooms in the building for streaming worship to an overflow crowd will work- until it doesn't. Other on-site options could include remodeling existing spaces for new uses. Or in some cases, building out in a new direction for additional new space. Each of these are tempered by expectations for upkeep, maintenance, and equal treatment for parking and children's spaces.

Options outside of gaining capacity in the existing facility include:

New Build	\$15 - 25M	3+ Years
Commercial Build Out (40k sf)	\$8 - 10M	2 - 3 Years
Church Merge	\$1 - 2M	2 Years
Portable Church	\$250K - 750K	5 - 8 Months

*Estimates conditional upon community, and include the need for securing the undeveloped real estate community approvals, design, fundraising, financing, construction, and occupancy.

Depending upon the time frame, funding, and organizational preparations to launch a new location in a healthy way, any off-site solutions need to be considered and in process years ahead of time.

What if your growth pattern is happening faster than you can develop new preferred facility options, raise additional funding? What if your SENDING culture and capacity is stronger than your available options?

The best reason for launching a new location is because you have to! As land and building costs continue to increase, more efficient use of space and dollars will become the norm. Even large churches are learning how to multiply in more, smaller venues.

While strongly discouraging the launch of a new location too quickly (reckless), intentional planning of a new location in a portable venue can actually provide excellent momentum in at least ten different ways:

1. Low Capital Expense – Outside of the home-church, A portable church experience is the least initial expense and least operational expense when compared to mergers, commercial properties, new land with brick and mortar.

2. Little Or No Debt – Ministry is more fun when you have more liquid resources. Resources not going into paying debt and debt service can go to ministry and the development of people. People love to give resources to a church in action.

3. New Reach and Impact – Portability offers the opportunity to work out specific ministry match to the new community needs. While portable, the church can gain a presence in the community, get to know the people and leaders of the community in a way that can't be done from afar.

4. Becoming an Insider – A season of portability allows opportunity to determine the right design and purpose for a future facility. There is a significant advantage to understanding where the best place is for your church to land, and in what kind of 24/7 facility, when the vantage point is from within the community.

5. Insider Bonus – When you have been established as a positive element within the community, community leaders take note and make future approval processes easier when trying to develop a 24/7 facility. As a community member now, the community will already be on their side – the feeling of an outsider invading their space will be gone.

6. Enormous Flexibility – Portable churches have a significant amount of dexterity about them to be able to clarify their mission effectiveness, processes, adjust to growth and even change physical locations in real time with relatively small expense.

7. “Soft Failures” v. Hard/permanent Failures – Churches that launch a new portable location with Portable Church Industries find that 95.6% of the time, they last 5 years or more. Plenty of time to confirm viability and develop a plan for putting down roots in a permanent facility.

8. Early/Exponential Growth – New locations grow at a faster rate than existing locations. There is a strong feeling of “movement” before it begins to take on the burdens of being an organization where focus changes to buildings and “stuff”. Typically, attenders are confident and “on mission.”

9. Development of People – In an accelerated manner, portability gives an opportunity to develop a leadership pipeline while in the context of focused mission. Equally important is the massive opportunity to develop and engage volunteers in meaningful missional work.

10. Low/No Thresholds to Overcome – Neighbors go in and out of local schools, YMCA’s, movie theaters, and community buildings all the time. Without the stigma of thinking they are entering a “church”, curious attenders can be impacted by a church’s DNA before they realize it. They let their guard down a bit because the church is coming to “their turf.”

When you know that you need to launch a new location, using a portability strategy can make you stronger, more financially sound, and better positioned for putting down permanent roots. It makes all the sense in the world to leverage portable church Industries as a plan to accommodate God’s blessings of growth! It opens new seats for the hearing of The Gospel – both here and over there!