

by Gary L. Aylor

Capital Funding Needs

Strong Among Smaller Churches

The reward for a church's numerical growth often comes in the form of a need for additional space. New converts mean the church must disciple them for ministry. Additions by letter mean the church must channel new members' spiritual energies into ministry. An increase in the volume of people mean more parking spaces, more space for worship and fellowship are required. Growth in Sunday School/Bible study units dictates a need for new classes. Because the church exists to reach new people for Christ, numerical and spiritual growth continually create the need for more efficient use of space, and often, new space.

Growth Starts with a Vision

Those churches that have developed a mission statement and have consistently applied it to every aspect of church life are best prepared to see clearly how their growth can be maximized to carry out the Great Commission. In his book, *Kingdom Principles for Church Growth*, Gene Mims states that "Growing churches produce stewards who expand the churches' ministry under the Holy Spirit's leadership. When the body of Christ is growing numerically and spiritually, the Lord moves in the hearts and lives of people to do wonderful things. Extraordinary things happen, and the needs of people are met in unusual ways."¹

Growth Presents Teaching Opportunities

Whether through new construction or remodeling, the wise leader sees the need for creating new space as an opportunity for spiritual growth within his flock. Growth presents wonderful teaching opportunities, refocusing the church on its mission and purpose. Far from being an exercise in creating comfort for its members, church growth that results in construction stretches the congregation spiritually. Today's crowded classrooms, packed pews, and difficult parking translate to tomorrow's kingdom advance through the spiritual transformation of individual believers.

The church that recognizes growth as the natural outcome of its strategies for worship, Bible study, fellowship, prayer, and ministry, is well-positioned to

advance these strategies to higher levels of practice and experience. Approached from this perspective, the need for capital funding then becomes an adventure of faith, a natural outcome of kingdom activity and an intentional strategy for future growth. "A growing church cannot rest until it reaches the world for Christ, beginning in its own neighborhood and moving out nationally and internationally under the Holy Spirit's leadership and power."²

Obstacles for Smaller Churches: Resources and Organizational Structure

The smaller church (those averaging 125 or less in Sunday School or worship), frequently need to embark on a capital funding program yet feel they lack the resources to do so. Growth generally stretches existing human and financial resources to the maximum. Many churches experience growth spurts that create stresses and strains on existing budgets and space. Leaders have to budget their time and energy to meet the demands of a growing congregation. Taking on the additional task of a capital funds program without outside assistance may seem daunting. Once again, viewed from the perspective of kingdom advance, these obstacles become new opportunities to exercise wise stewardship.

Many times the leadership of growing churches has had no exposure to the basic tools that are fundamental to capital funds programs. They need help with the organizational structure, goal setting, printed helps, and a host of other essentials for conducting a successful program. The pastor and staff wonder how they will be able to channel the energies of their members into constructive and efficient help with a program to raise the needed capital funds.

A church's lack of financial resources, or perhaps even its location, often preclude calling on outside professional assistance. The cost of having a consultant travel long distances for repeated visits may prove to be out of the question. These constraints, though real and challenging, need not prevent the church from proceeding with a capital fund raising program.

*Bridge To Tomorrow*³ was designed to meet a church's need for such assistance and to allow the church to conduct its own capital fund-raising program entirely on its own. The program is patterned after the highly successful *Together We Build* consultant-led program, but with important differences that make it broadly applicable to smaller churches. This resource is a stand-alone CD-ROM, which guides the pastor through every step of a capital funding program.

Preparation

"If the strategies and plans we develop in our churches are only our plans and strategies, we lose sight of our kingdom stewardship. We also lose the power, presence, and freshness of the Holy Spirit to direct us according to God's will and in the ministry He chooses for us."⁴ Perhaps the single most important part of realizing success in capital fund raising is the foundation laid through preparation. Aside from the obvious need to schedule and calendar key events during the program, this is the time when leadership is carefully and prayerfully selected. Making the right selections goes a long way toward enlisting broad support of the congregation, communicating effectively, and inspiring members to make campaign goals their own. Beyond the leadership of the Lord, no single factor in the program is more important than the quality and commitment of program leaders.

Training

Training those enlisted ensures that each member of the team knows exactly what is expected and why. This phase of the program provides rich opportunities for developing stewards within the church family and for discovering new leaders for other areas of ministry. Discovering individual spiritual gifts is an important by-product of this program element and will prove useful as the church continues its growth.

Communication

Many worthwhile plans and programs fail because they were not properly communicated to those in a position to achieve the desired results! A carefully planned and orchestrated communications effort will effectively carry important messages to the church family and extend to the community. The best communications strategy is intentional, well designed and broad in scope. Church leaders must recognize that people tend to receive information differently. Some people are very visual, relying on the printed word, while others prefer to receive information by

hearing. Still others tend to gain more from small group meetings or some creative event, such as a banquet. A good mix of communications methods will produce the widest possible understanding and acceptance of program goals from the church family.

Implementation

Despite careful preparation, effective training, and even good communication, some churches fail because they do not stick carefully to the plan. There is always the temptation to leave out a step, omit a key communication, or improvise for one reason or another. It is not the essential elements of capital funds programs that make them successful, but rather the combination of elements, carefully followed to the last detail that creates success. Stick to the plan!

Achieving Success

Assuredly, the church family embarks on a capital-funding program with a financial goal in mind. Success in reaching the goal is a cause for praise and celebration. But the greater achievement is often a renewed sense of purpose—a redefinition of what the church is all about, which is becoming a church on mission with God. When members have a heightened sense of purpose, a firm conviction about their role in kingdom advance, and a personal experience in seeing God at work, the impact on the local church is nothing short of spectacular. The second chapter of Acts will become more than a history lesson—it will become a present-day reality!

¹Gene Mims, *Kingdom Principles for Church Growth* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2001), 82.

²Gene Mims, *Op Cit*, 87.

³*Bridge To Tomorrow* is available through LifeWay Christian Resources

⁴Gene Mims, *Op Cit*, 83.

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Bridge to Tomorrow

A capital fund-raising resource designed for churches averaging 125 or less in Bible study and/or worship. It is designed so that churches can conduct the program entirely on its own, without outside assistance.