



January 19, 2011

First United Methodist Church of Middlefield
Middlefield, OH 44062

By way of introduction I have included a bio and have been introduced to your church by my colleagues Al Morrison, Jack Berry, and Randy Runyon.

First, I want to commend you for taking the time to evaluate what you need to do in order to be as effective as possible for the Lord and His Kingdom. Too many churches have the idea of fire, ready, aim. Not usually the best policy. Having said that it is not good policy to get stuck in ready, aim, ready, aim, ready, aim....and never firing.

I want to share a few valuable principles that I discovered in completing my dissertation on the subject of Church Building. The following principles should be considered and hopefully valued by the committee members and members who will communicate vision to the congregation:

1. When you consider building you first need to focus on evangelism and legacy. That is, the only reason to enlarge one's space is for others (evangelism) and to have space for discipleship (legacy left to children and grandchildren).
2. The Scriptures give us a very good guide for the why of building. When one considers that Noah's Ark, the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and the Body of Christ on the day of Pentecost...each speak of being redemptive in purpose. The Ark was for Noah and his family, but the purpose was to redeem the world. The Tabernacle was for the Jews, but the New Testament clearly reveals to us that it pointed to redemption for both Jew and Gentile in the New Covenant. At the dedication of Solomon's Temple he prayed for the Jews but also for any foreigner who would look toward the Temple. On the day of Pentecost the Gospel was communicated by the 120 in many languages representing the redemptive nature of the Gospel for all nations.
3. When a church builds the focus should be: We are building for others. In Middlefield's case it seems from the survey that some may not be aware of

Dr. James D. Allen
Midwest Church Design Ltd.
Midwest Church Construction Ltd.
634 Eckel Road – Perrysburg, OH 43551
Cell Phone (419) 467 7724
Office toll free (888) 874-0838
www.midwestchurch.com

how the current location is limiting ministry and others see the limits very clearly. This leads to differing views on the decision to move or not.

4. From what I have read and gleaned from Jack, Al, and Randy is that the people are mature and of sound faith with a desire to reach others. The difference is the best course of action to take concerning facilities.
5. From personal experience, I was pastor of a church surrounded by residences with no parking. We triple parked on the small lot we had. I led the church to purchase ten acres of land because we knew we were limited by the facility and the parking. We watched as people would pull up and drive away. Our facility was nice and held a lot of memories for many people, yet the call to evangelize had to trump our “nesting feelings”. Later the church did move to that location under the leadership of another pastor and quickly grew.
6. Al Morrison has provided you with a Strengths assessment that affirms a lack of awareness of the shortcomings of the current facility. A congregation must be convinced that moving is the best option for fulfilling the Great Commission. You obviously are getting the hint that my counsel is to move from the current location. The moving of the tabernacle in the OT is a good example of following His Spirit, even today in building. They followed the leading of the Lord through the cloud and the fire. Numbers 9:15-23 is a good lesson for us to remember. I note here only verses 19-23.

Numbers 9:19 - 23 (NASB) ¹⁹Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep the LORD'S charge and not set out. ²⁰If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, according to the command of the LORD they remained camped. Then according to the command of the LORD they set out. ²¹If sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would move out; or *if it remained* in the daytime and at night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out. ²²Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out. ²³At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out; they kept the LORD'S charge, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.

7. The passage cited reminds us of our current pilgrimage as His Church.
8. Whichever direction the church decides to go, there needs to be unity of vision. The community is always watching when a church builds or remodels. The church then becomes an “incarnation” of Christ to the community. The question is: What will the community see? A divided Christ? A compassionate Christ? A Christ who foregoes His own ego to wash feet?
Building programs are times when we must constantly be in an attitude of repentance before God, and reconciliation with one another!
9. I would agree with Jack, if the church decides to move, Property No. 1 is the most attractive. It has more long term potential for ministry. It is visible and near a popular restaurant. I also understand that 5 acres are available with a possible option for 15 more acres. If this information is not correct and you do buy Property No. 1, you would want to get first right of refusal, or first option to buy the additional 15 acres. Property No. 3 has available utilities and that is about the only positive I see. The property is deep and would mean a long walk for most in the congregation. If the building on property 3 were demolished there may be other options to make a new building more accessible in parking. If the building were kept you may find the building dictating your ministry rather than molding a building to accommodate and facilitate your ministry. You would be in the same position you are now with the building dictating vision. The building needs to be designed to meet the vision.
10. There may be an Option 5 that has not been discovered; however, if you currently have some momentum and desire to grow and move don't get paralyzed by what might be out there. If these four options are the options discovered, my recommendation is Property No. 1.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.
Respectfully submitted,

James D. Allen, D. Min.
Executive Vice President

(419) 467-7724 Cell

James D. Allen
Midwest Church Design Ltd.
Midwest Church Construction Ltd.
634 Eckel Road – Perrysburg, OH 43551
(419) 874-0838 Toll Free (888) 874-0838 Cell 419-467-7724
www.midwestchurch.com