

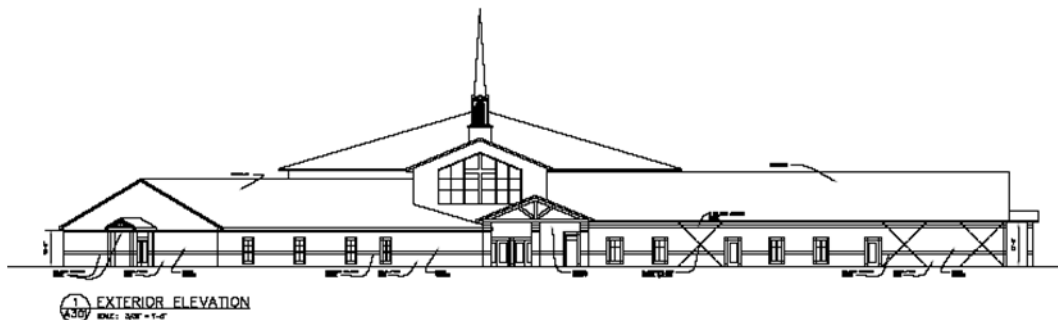
RELOCATION MANUAL

For Pastors & Church Leaders

Compiled by Derek Gentle

FOURTH EDITION

UPDATED AND REVISED APRIL 2022



The Relocation Manual for Pastors and Church Leaders was compiled by Derek Gentle, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tallassee, Alabama. First Baptist relocated in 2004.

Fourth edition, updated April 2022 and represents an update of Edition 3.0, February 2, 2008
You may use this booklet freely in ministry, distributing to church leaders at no charge. You may not copyright this booklet under your own name or sell it, except to recover the costs of printing.

Your feedback is appreciated. Let us know if this booklet has been helpful to you or to your church. If you catch a typo, we will be thankful if you let us know. Suggestions are welcome.

Derek Gentle
info@smalltownbaptist.net

Find More Free Resources at:

www.smalltownbaptist.net

Related Material:

Going Places with God: A 31-day devotional guide for congregations considering relocation

By Derek Gentle

Available online at: www.smalltownbaptist.net/pdf/going_places.pdf

Unless noted otherwise all Scripture references come from the Holman Christian Standard Bible ©2001, Broadman & Holman Publishers, LifeWay Christian Resources, 127 Ninth Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37234. Used by permission.

Table of Contents

Preface: Considering Relocation	Page 1
Why Discussing Relocation is Difficult	Page 2
The Biblical Basis for Relocation	Page 3
Step by Step Through the Relocation Process	Page 7
Landlocked!	Page 8
Neighborhoods Have Life Spans	Page 9
A Church Like Ours Can Reach Folks Like Us.....	Page 10
The Church and Neighborhood Transition.....	Page 13
The Options.....	Page 14
Estimating Your Growth Potential	Page 17
For Pastors Who Suspect the Need to Relocate	Page 18
Relocation Fever	Page 21
The Ground Rules for Discussion	Page 22
Relocation: Please do not attempt this without adult supervision	Page 23
Principles of Congregational Persuasion.....	Page 24
Questions for Those Who Oppose Relocation.....	Page 25
When Relocation Will Not Work.....	Page 26
Finding Your Next Site.....	Page 27
Master Site Plan	Page 28
Capital Campaigns.....	Page 29
What Should We Build First?	Page 30
Balanced Space	Page 31
Between the Vote and the Move.....	Page 36
Kick-Off Events	Page 39
Appendix Table of Contents.....	Page 40

Preface: Considering Relocation

It is difficult for a congregation to sort through the many emotions involved in a decision concerning whether to relocate or not. Some may feel that the church is considering a course disloyal to their forbearers or that the church will never be the same at another location. These feelings are powerful and agonizing. We need to acknowledge them, but we shouldn't allow them to prevent us from taking a courageous look at the facts and making the right decision.

Discussing relocation will test your congregation's spiritual commitment. There is a greater temptation to turn the building into an idol than we may realize. The key question for your people is: "Would you be willing to support relocation if God leads you to do so?" If God calls you to place this Isaac on the altar, will you withhold your building from God?

Relocation is a strategy decision. It concerns your congregation's part in the Great Commission. Churches either think strategically or selfishly. Most church members have not been trained to think in terms of strategy.

There are two basic reasons churches relocate. First, the church is landlocked. They cannot add the buildings and the needed parking at their present location for growth to continue. The second reason is a terrible mismatch between the congregation and the community. The people in the community simply don't feel at home with the people in the church. The congregation cannot reach this community as it now exists.

Additionally, congregations sometimes relocate when they conclude that their facilities are outdated and become a hindrance to their mission. Your building is full, but inadequate. It cannot be renovated at a cost you can justify as good stewardship. It would cost less to build new. Even if you renovated your old building, it would still look like an old building.

Another key factor in a decision to relocate is that parking has become a problem. People have been seen driving through the parking lot and leaving when they couldn't find a space. Members are parking on the street, creating ill-will from your neighbors.

Churches which relocate have generally discussed the subject three times before making the decision to do so. The subject kept coming up.

If your congregation needs to relocate. Stop: even if your church *shouldn't* relocate, but it's a plausible option to consider... then your best leadership is needed. Probably not since your church's founding has such leadership been required. You are there for "such a time as this." As pastor, you will need to lead your people to think biblically, strategically, and unselfishly.

Why Discussing Relocation is So Difficult

Why can't more congregations discuss relocation in a calm, rational way? Families can discuss life and death medical procedures with their physicians in that way. Why can't the GPS coordinates of where we study the Bible and pray together be discussed in a matter of fact manner? Why is this simple discussion about the best strategy for reaching the most people so often fraught with divisiveness and vitriol? Allow me to suggest several reasons why:

First, it threatens peoples' sentimental attachment to the building. With all the memories the building holds for them, people develop what is called, "place attachment." On an emotional level, what is sentimental and what is spiritual may feel similar. Members will make comments such as:

- "We were married here and, then, our daughters were married here."
- "My mother taught Sunday School in this classroom for 45 years."
- "I was sitting in this pew when I was saved."
- "Everyone in our family was baptized in this baptistry."
- "Some of my earliest childhood memories are of being in this sanctuary."

It offers radical change to senior adults when they are least able to process change. And no one likes change except babies with wet diapers.

It attacks the pride of some members. While some moved out of the community and commute to church, many have chosen to stay. Some stay because they cannot afford to move. Some feel a kind of ownership in the community — "This is my community and no one is going to take it from me." These people dig their heels in to stay. So, when you make presentations to the congregation proving that the community has changed so radically your congregation is no longer able to effectively reach the people who live there, it is as if their decision to stay has been called into question. What they think they are hearing you say something like, "Were you too stupid to move?" Of course, that is not what those recommending relocation are trying to say... but it feels like it.

It makes some members feel their "sweat equity" was in vain. The one thing these members had a part in they thought that would outlive them, won't endure after all. They hear you saying, "You have wasted your life." Of course, what you are really challenging them to do is invest their lives in something fresh. You are actually offering one "last gift to an old soldier."

It challenges many members' theology. All of their lives many thought the definition of church involved a building, in fact that particular building. Others will resent the fact that some "Johnny-come-lately's" are trying to "take away our church." It does not occur to them that the church is an organism, and not a building. It's hard to come face to face with the doctrine that Jesus is the church's only Owner. Ultimately, the question of relocation comes down to your most deeply held doctrinal beliefs — what you *really* believe. It is, first, a theological issue, and then a question of strategy. Unfortunately, many church members are not grounded in sound, meaty doctrine. Then, when an issue like this arises, the church members cannot think about it biblically. They react emotionally.

Satanic Opposition

If God is truly leading your congregation to another site, then the devil will be one of the first to know. He will fight God's will just because it is God's will. He will fight a sound evangelistic strategy in order to restrict the spread of the Gospel. He will be angry that the "sleeping giant" of the Lord's church has been awakened. And then, in his capacity as "the deceiver of the whole world," he will twist the thoughts of the unsuspecting. He will spread lies and arouse dark emotions. To discuss relocation is to do more than to enter into an abstract discussion about the best location for your facilities; it may engage you in spiritual warfare. To be willing to relocate (whether the church actually and finally determines that is God's will or not) is a test of spiritual commitment. The devil will fight that level of commitment.

I am not suggesting you tell a member opposing relocation that he is an instrument of the devil or that she is not thinking biblically about the nature of the church. However, as you pray and think about how to present this issue, you need to be aware of the dynamics of the situation. Many are taken by surprise.

The Biblical Basis for Relocation

Some congregations desperately need to consider relocation, but cannot conceive of worshipping in another place. They are not thinking biblically or theologically. Of course, this is not to say there is a biblical basis for every church to relocate; it is to say that doctrinal misunderstandings often hinder churches from being open to relocation.

So what biblical truths come to bear on the issue of church relocation?

1. The Definition of the Church

In Baptist life, the shorthand definition of a church is, "A group of baptized believers." While there is a little more to it than that, it's a good start. Here is Article 6 in the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message:

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

This says we believe the church is composed of people - believing and baptized *people*. We *don't* believe that a building is essential to the definition of a church. The New Testament church didn't even have buildings. Yet the Epistles often begin, "To the church at..." Many congregations today meet in storefronts and other assorted locations - but they ARE churches.

Somehow, in our minds we have intertwined our buildings with our definition of church.

Ever hear someone remark, "That doesn't look like a church to me"? No building looks like a church! The church is composed of redeemed people, not bricks, boards, and concrete.

So, if the building is not an essential part of who we are as a church, then that isn't a reason we shouldn't leave.

2. The Ownership of the Church

One congregation was discussing relocation. One member is reported to have stood to oppose it with words that expressed, not only his personal feelings, but also seem to reveal parts of his doctrine of the church:

These people want to take our church and give it to some other group of people who don't love it, don't know it, and haven't earned it, just give it away like it doesn't mean a thing. Let these people just get on out of here and go do what they want and leave us alone.

Did you read those words? — *our church*. There is a lot of difference between feeling ownership in the sense of sharing the vision and having a sense of responsibility for the congregation's work—and thinking you own the place. This is an attitude most every congregation considering relocation must address.

Whatever the church is, Jesus bought and paid for it at great personal expense. It is, "The church of God, which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). That established ownership; it is "His body, that is, the church" (Colossians 1:24). "He is also the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). If it belongs to Him, then it doesn't belong to you or me. Here is a principle which every congregation should be able to affirm:

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and its only owner. Let no member think that long service or large gifts impart tenure in an office or control over any part of the ministry.

If Jesus owns the resources of a congregation, then that congregation should make the building, as one of those resources, available to Him to do with as He leads!

3. The Mobility of the Church

The ideal is that the church should be more like the children of Israel as God led them through the wilderness. Numbers 9:23 says:

"They camped at the Lord's command, and they set out at the Lord's command"

The church is more like a guerilla army rather than a fixed fortification - mobile and quick to adapt, not stationary and inflexible. That's the church described in the Bible.

"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. To please the recruiter, no one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of everyday life."

(2nd Timothy 2:3-4)

The church doesn't have to be gathered at a particular location to be the church:

"So those who were scattered went on their way proclaiming the message of good news." (Acts 8:4)

Even when scattered—not gathered—the church is still the church.

Jesus' working assumption was that the church would, in most periods of history, be too persecuted to get cozy in a particular location.

"When they persecute you in one town, escape to another. For I assure you: You will not have covered the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

(Matthew 10:23)

In Acts 11:19-21 we see the difference a militant adaptation to circumstances and a rapid seizing of opportunities makes in spreading the Gospel:

19 Those who had been scattered as a result of the persecution that started because of Stephen made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the message to no one except Jews.

20 But there were some of them, Cypriot and Cyrenian men, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Hellenists, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus.

21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

What happened was cross-cultural and effective - and exactly what God had in mind!

According to the following verse, does the New Testament assume the church is to be mobile or not?

"And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How welcome are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things!" (Romans 10:15)

Since the church is, by definition, the army of Christ — obedient, mobile, adaptable— then who are we to tell "The One who enlisted us" we will not move? The question is not whether we should be *willing* to move, but only if the Commanding Officer is *leading* us to move. We are His rapid deployment force!

4. The Mission of the Church

World evangelization is the main work of the whole church until Christ returns. They don't call it the **Great** Commission for nothing! This means every decision a congregation makes

should be made in light of that decision's impact on the success of their mission.

World evangelization means we are concerned with every people group, every nation, every culture, and every language group.

What about the influential leader who was concerned that a group who had no appreciation of the meaning of the building would end up getting it? Isn't it wrong that people who have no "sweat equity" should take possession of such a meeting place? What do we owe them? Paul was speaking of other ethnic and language groups when he declared, "*I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise*" (Romans 1:14, KJV).

The question is: Can we best fulfill our God-given mission by relocating or staying?

Step by Step Through the Relocation Process

When a church decides to relocate, what you have before you is not one process, but several. There is the Strategic Planning process involving plans for your church's ministry. In determining whether to relocate, there is the strategic decision as to whether your congregation can be effectively reach the people who live in the old community. Upon the decision to relocate, there are strategic decisions to be made concerning how to reach people at your new location.

There is the process in locating your next piece of property and negotiating that purchase. There is the decision of what to do with the building at the old location.

The Building Program starts with the crucial step of a Master Site Plan. It also involves planning the design of your first phase building at your new location. To pay for the building will required a Capital Campaign with its steering committee, events, and emphases.

And hopefully, you are balancing all of these components with a strong spiritual emphasis, to keep everyone focused on why you are working so hard and sacrificing so much.

Here are the basic steps, listed in order.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Ministry Plan (strategic plan) | 6. Construction |
| 2. Decision to Relocate, if Indicated | 7. Preparation of Church |
| 3. Master Site Plan & Phase I Floor Plan | 8. Advertising in Community |
| 4. Capital Campaign | 9. Move In |
| 5. Value Engineering (making decisions about adding or cutting back on building plans based on pledge amount in capital campaign) | 10. New Ministries |
| | 11. Next Building Phase |

Landlocked!

Our church was landlocked. We had 1.63 acres where our main education building and worship center were located. These were built in the days most people walked to church. Across the street, we had a couple of houses and a small parking lot. We repeatedly attempted to purchase property around us, but nothing seemed to work out. We came to realize God had closed the door to staying at our present location. We had gone to two worship services, but we did not have enough education space. Multiple services and Sunday Schools may help some churches — if you can get the congregation to go along with it. But sooner or later you need to build new growth space. And you will need property on which to put the new buildings.

Do you know the capacity of your church property? Consider these selected *Rules of Thumb* from Texas Baptists (www.texasbaptists.org/ministries/church-architecture/fact-sheets-english):

Land Area: 1 acre per 100-125 in attendance on site at one time.

Generally, an acre of usable land (43,560 square feet) is required for each 100-125 persons in attendance (for everyone on campus at the same time). This is sufficient to provide for the worship center, education buildings, limited landscaping, and parking. A Christian school, day care, recreation ministry, etc. will require additional land.

Note: Zoning regulations, green areas, set-backs, storm water retention requirements, utility easements, irregular property shape, steep slopes, and low-lying areas will reduce the amount of usable acreage.

Parking: While talking about the land you need to grow, don't leave out parking. Parking is growth space. If you build a new building in the parking lot, where will they park? Non-members won't have the same commitment and the same tolerance for inconvenience members have. If parking spaces are hidden behind your building or are located far away from your entrances, guests will get frustrated and just leave.

Spaces Needed for Parking: One space for approximately every 1.8 people in attendance. To provide parking for 200 people, you will need at least 112 parking spaces. A high percentage of widowed members will bring the average per car down. Some families will come in multiple cars. Do this for one month: Count cars and divide the number into your attendance, calculating the average number of passengers per vehicle for your own congregation.

Parking Ground Coverage: 100-110 spaces per acre used for straight-in parking only (assumes efficient layout with parking on both sides of driving lanes with limited landscaping and access). Angled parking requires more land for the same number of spaces. If your members drive SUV's and trucks, you will want 10-foot parking spaces (instead of 9-foot)

Neighborhoods Have Life Spans

Like people, neighborhoods have life spans. You probably know of what was, 30 or 40 years ago, a really new neighborhood. In those days, so many children who lived there they called it "Diaper Row." Over time, the children grew up. Their hard-working parents saw to it they went to college. They would graduate and advance in their careers. Meanwhile, their parents got on up in years. Diaper Row became "Depends Row." Younger families want houses with more square feet and more bathrooms; so the children of Diaper Road didn't move back to the old neighborhood. They moved to the new development across town. So it was the seniors and the young families who couldn't afford the bigger, newer homes who live in the old neighborhood now. Depends Row is now known as a neighborhood "in decline."

In *Suburban Decline: The Next Urban Crisis*, authors William H. Lucy and David L. Phillips state, "With their small, outmoded, and deteriorating housing, many post—World War II bedroom suburbs are in urgent need of help." They state:

These bedroom suburbs once were heralded as "the future," providing opportunities for individual households to improve their housing quality. But most of these suburbs depended excessively on the whims of private housing markets. Weaknesses in these bedroom suburbs have emerged as they have reached middle age. As with human beings, maturity brings some strength. But maturity is also the threshold for deterioration, sometimes rapid, sometimes slow and persistent. Hence, the vitality of these bedroom suburbs is vulnerable to changing fashion and to the next, more geographically dispersed, round of housing opportunities.

Of course there are exceptions. If you own a home in a wealthy suburb, things may not change so much. Some neighborhoods renew themselves and revitalize in the sense of new construction and renovating their old buildings. It is rare, but it happens. However, there is usually some contributing factor — culturally, economically, or in regard to its location — that helps make it a special case. But for every exception, there are scores of neighborhoods that are in transition.

Of course, people still live in most of those houses on old Diaper Row. It's just that the new residents are not like the people who lived there 40 years ago. Socially, economically, ethnically, or racially — in some way they are different. So when we speak of a neighborhood having a lifespan, we do not mean it dies and ceases to exist. (Unless, of course, they tear down the houses to build an airport or something.) Instead, the neighborhood simply ceases to be exact the kind of neighborhood it once was.

A Church Like Ours Can Reach Folks Like Us

Assume yours is an upper middle class family. You and your wife graduated from a major university. You have nice jobs and work hard. You have just moved to a new sub-division and into a new home. Your subdivision is located in an area that used to be out in the country. There are several churches around, but their members are all blue-collar workers who have lived in the area their entire lives. The music is old fashioned and the preacher takes loud breathes between long sentences. He preaches with a very loud voice. The people there seem to enjoy their services. And while they are very friendly, they are a little less polished than your family. How likely are you to visit again?

Now imagine the additional factor that you aren't believers. You are not particularly interested in religious matters. But you gave it a try; how likely are you to come back?

OK, now add to your imagination – in addition to the factors above – that you moved to this area from a very cosmopolitan area with highly educated people. And you are African American. All those blue collar workers in the church are white. They listen to country-western music. During the winter months they have hunting rifles in the gun rack of their pickup trucks. How likely are you to search for the ultimate meaning of life in this context?

Modify the scenario just slightly to say that now your primary language is Spanish; your company, based in Mexico, recently transferred you here. Do you feel a compulsion to join this Anglo fellowship?

Shift gears again: Now, you are from a poor family. There is a huge, well-kept church building down the street. As you drive past, you notice people getting out of nicer cars than you can afford and wearing what you would consider expensive clothes. You don't know any of them or even see them during the week; they drive in from other parts of town. How likely are you to feel comfortable visiting that church?

If someone from another culture and whose primary language is something other than English (or whatever language you speak) knocks on your door and talks to you about religious beliefs, how receptive would *you* be?

People with a common heritage form tight bonds and close communities. They like to speak the language from the old country, especially in matters of the heart. If they go to church, they prefer to go to church together with people of the same culture.

It's not the color that makes the difference, it's the culture. Colors blend when cultures are similar. How many times have you been around people who were the same color as you, but who came from a different class or background? ...And you felt terribly out of place?

Rick Warren stated in an interview on Pastors.com

(www.pastors.com/RWMT/?ID=50&artid=778&expand=1 — Link no longer available):

The church that claims to reach everyone is only fooling themselves. No style of church can possibly reach everyone. Take a close look and you'll find that every church has a "culture." This culture is determined by the predominant kind of people who make up the congregation. Whoever your church has right now is who you're likely to attract more of — whether you like that fact or not.

New groups to reach new peoples

Evangelism Strategy means we gear our church toward reaching those people we can best reach. Our worship style, our outreach events, and our staffing are all done to play to our strengths. It DOES NOT mean anyone is excluded. All comers are welcome. If you feel like you fit in here, then you do.

We are who we are. How many kinds of churches can one church be at one time? For example, even a blended worship style is still really just one style, a blended one. We are who we are, but if you wish to join us, then welcome aboard!

Once, in a transitional community (at that time, not changing racially, but in ways more socio-economic), the churches had a combined evangelistic effort. At a training meeting, one of the pastors urged all the ushers to wear a coat and tie. He felt this would help the meeting be more effective. Those passing by would see people standing in front of the rented high school auditorium *looking sharp*. The only people in that town who owned coats and ties were those who were already attending church. This dress code would be more likely to keep people away! But this pastor didn't realize it! He was sincerely describing what in his sub-sub-culture, at that time, would make a good impression. Inadvertently, he had given advice that was 180 degrees out of phase. And that's what churches often do when trying to reach new groups.

How do we reach those who do not feel that they fit in with our group? We start *new* groups. We find people from that group to co-labor with us; together we start a new life group (Sunday School Class) or, if needed to span the culture gap, a new church. We don't snob anyone. We just try to meet them where they are!

This principle concerns *strategy*. We're talking about the attitudes of the people we wish to evangelize, not those of the evangelist. It is about being sensitive to those who do not yet believe.

It is not about *who* we are willing to reach, but about *how* we will reach them.

Is it possible for church members to hide behind this principle, to say, “O well, we can’t reach that group; so I guess we give up...”? Yes, that’s possible, and it’s been done. And when done, it’s sinful. But people hide behind good concepts all the time. That’s not the goal here. We are aiming to think like missionaries. To think about the people in our communities. To understand they’re not all alike. To find ways to meet them where they are. First Baptist, Tallahassee has this principle as part of its “church principles”:

Because people are most effectively reached for Christ together with others of like interests, we shall identify and concentrate on reaching out to "people groups" within our community.

What we need to see is that a city, even a small town, “is not a homogeneous whole, but rather a mosaic made up of hundreds of segments of society, a few responsive, many indifferent, and a few highly resistant.” (Eight Keys To Church Growth In Cities by Wendell Broom, Citing Donald McGavran in Understanding Church Growth, pp. 285 ff. <http://web.ovc.edu/missions/msb/citykeys.htm> — Link no longer available).

This relates to church relocation in this way: Are the people in your community like the people in your church? If they are different, here is the cold, hard, fact: you will probably never reach them. Stop blaming the pastor because the church isn't growing. And, if you're trying but failing, stop blaming yourselves.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus tells us, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” Nations is a word for people groups — all the people groups of the world. He doesn't say that such distinctions are artificial, but to make disciples of all the groups. Recognize they exist and reach them all. We see the pattern in the book of Acts; the heritage of each people is explained and acknowledged. Sometimes, special cross-cultural ministers are required to reach them — Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.

So, if your congregation needs to relocate to be more effective in making new disciples, then who will you partner with to reach the unreached people who remain?

The Church and Neighborhood Transition

As neighborhoods age, they transition to another kind of population. The churches in the neighborhood didn't cause this to happen. Their presence didn't prevent it from happening. If the church relocates, their absence will do nothing to speed the process.

An often-asked question: Shouldn't the church have had a greater impact on the community? After all, we have the Word of God, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and we are empowered with spiritual gifts. We have every spiritual resource to make a difference. So why is the church the one being impacted, instead of the one doing the impacting?

There are many reasons for this, but some of them include:

1. As time goes along, the population in the community is increasingly different from the members of the congregation. The congregation grows less able to relate to the residents. And even more significant, the residents are unable to relate to the church. Remember, *a church like ours can reach folks like us.*
2. Because the neighborhood is transitioning to a different kind of population, a cross-cultural gift-mix will be needed to reach them. Missions and cross-cultural ministry are interchangeable terms. Most Christians — even selfless, generous, Bible-believing Christians — are not suited to be missionaries. And it's not a slam on them that they're not.
3. The church, like the neighborhood, may have a high percentage of senior adults. They have seen more change in one lifetime than any generation in the history of the world. They have had it with change — and they adapt to the new dynamic too slowly and reluctantly.
4. As people moved out, there was a talent-drain in the church. The reduced membership alone means there is less talent from which to select leaders. The church is left with a lack of innovative, visionary leadership.

Sometimes — depending on the new population group — snobbery or racism in the church can be a significant contributor to the congregation's inability to reach their community. However, in most such cases, even the most loving church couldn't reach the new population.

So, it isn't a matter of having good people in the church, it is a matter of having the right strategy. In the increasingly multicultural world in which we live, our congregations must think more and more like missionaries.

Options for a Declining Church in a Transitional Community

Just as someone left us a legacy—the faithful believers who went before us and saw the need for a church and started one to reach our community—we also should leave a legacy. We should leave a legacy for the Kingdom... for Southern Baptists... and for the work of our Association, which stood beside us through the years. Leaving a legacy is like planting a tree under whose shade we will not live to sit and enjoy. When we plant trees, we cannot foresee exactly how they will grow, nor can we control their shape as they grow. We can only sacrifice and plant, in the footsteps of our forefathers in the faith. It is one thing to enjoy a legacy we have received, but people of faith also want to leave a legacy to those who come behind them. However, for those leaders of churches in a transitional community, it can be difficult to determine how to do this, exactly. Here are some possible options:

Replant From Within. This is the first option most church members would say they are going to take. However, this is not saying we are going to keep doing the same things in the same ways... but now get different results. This is not an option without change; this option could represent the most change. Many churches have said, “We are going to stay at this location and minister to the community.” But adding a clothes closet, alone, will not reach the community. Interpersonal connections with people in the community and ministry will have to take place off-campus. This is a total reorienting of the congregation to reach the community. If your members are too elderly to get out and do the work of ministry in the community, this ship has sailed; it’s too late.

Merge With Another Church (or other churches) to Reach Critical Mass. This necessitates at least one of the churches be willing to leave their present building. Also, this works best, in terms of community impact, when there are young adults in the churches. You aim for a make-up to match and reach the community as it now exists – or some significant segment of its population. Mergers are not a matter of one church assimilating another; they create new churches with new leaders, new cultures, and new goals.

This is much more difficult to do than it may sound. Since some members of each church remain only to preserve their memories due to “place attachment,” if their church’s building isn’t used, they drop out. So it is not going to be a case where $100 + 75 = 175$. It could be more like $100 + 75 = 110$.

Some communities are full of neighborhood churches; this may be a good option for them. If the people in the congregations match the community. If the people are humble enough for the give and take needed to blend two church cultures. If they are willing to adapt to reach the community.

A variation of this approach is to merge and then relocate to another location together.

Share the Building with Another Congregation (two churches at one location). The two congregations, of differing demographic make-ups, meet at different times and share the expenses of building upkeep. Over time, the new congregation may increase, as the other decreases in attendance.

Create a Multi-Faceted Ministry Center: Steffan Carr took this approach at Bruce Outreach Center in Westernport, Maryland. He bought a closed high school, started a church, and bases multiple church ministries to meet the needs of the community in the facility. Mission teams from other churches have repaired and renovated parts of the building to repurpose them for the new ministries, as they have been added. This approach requires an entrepreneurial leader who will spend much time cultivating relationships with partner churches and raising support — in addition to community ministry and witness.

Call a Pastor from the New Demographic Group in the Community. He will be better able to reach the group of people who live there and make up the bulk of the congregation. He will lead you with a new style and in new directions and you will be like the launch team for a new church plant. This option requires great flexibility and adaptability on the part of current church members.

Adoption by a Larger, Stronger Church: The larger church brings its resources to bear on the situation and nurture the declining church. The weak church gives the title and control to the larger church. It is, in effect, a very friendly takeover.

Partner With Another Church as a Campus for Their Multi-Site Ministry: The multi-site church is essentially taking over the worship style and branding of the church. This church assumes many of the costs of operation. Your church is partnering by providing the building itself. You will feel like you are attending a totally different church.

You Go Multi-Site — One Church at Two Locations: Many congregations have gone multi-site to expand their outreach; for them it has nothing to do with being landlocked or located in transitional community. It is part of their strategy to expand their influence and to have a larger evangelistic impact.

It may be possible to use a Stay AND Go approach. The seniors, who could not bear to part with the old location, may stay at the original location and the pioneers may establish the

new work. The two locations have one staff and treasury. Legally, they are one church. Perhaps they have one service each week with everyone from all locations present.

This could be a way of transitioning gradually from one site to another with the original location ultimately being used by a congregation that could effectively reach the population in the community. There are many possible variations of this approach, but each would require you have the financial resources necessary to success.

Give The Property to a Healthier, Thriving Church That Needs It: Of course, we would want this to be a church from our own denomination. And this is a key: you must make such decisions while you are still strong enough to ensure that the new church which gets the building will carry on the same message as your congregation.

Give the Building to a Church Planter So He Can Start a New Church: This has the advantage of seeing that the beliefs of your congregation continue in your location. Again, we would want this to be a church from our own denomination or, at least, of like-faith.

Relocate: Everyone goes and you *sell* the building.

Sell The Property to Another Ministry at a Huge Discount: You can help a good ministry and still have some monies to place in a trust fund to support missions or scholarships for ministers.

Sell The Property and Donate the Proceeds to the Association. Sometimes, the building is sold to a church of another denomination, but the Association receives helpful ministry funding.

Close Your Church and Give the Property to the Association. Change nothing. Attempt no new outreach. Just keep the doors open for as long as possible for the existing members. When that is no longer possible, the church dies. But, in your will, you leave the facilities to the Association, which assumes ownership and determines the use or sale of the facility.

When Transferring Your Facility to Another Church or Ministry: Several approaches to doing this have been listed above. However, you want to avoid transferring extensive repair bills to the new owners. You are trying to help them get off to a good start. Some churches have left their new owners with unexpected repair issues which cripple them instead of launching them.

It can be hard to turn loose. However, that is exactly the cost of giving your building to another congregation. New works must be self-governing. If we are to leave a legacy, we must allow new leadership to lead the new work in reaching the community in its new make-up.

Do Nothing. Tragically, this is the option selected by most congregations.

Everyone hopes the situation will change, that some unforeseen event will happen to turn things around, but the congregation refuses to change anything in the way they organize or minister. They refuse to do anything until it is too late. Here's what will happen if you choose this option:

- ◇ Godly and talented staff will leave your church to go serve congregations that want to do something that matters in the kingdom.
- ◇ Your adult children will move their membership to livelier churches where their children (your grandchildren) will have ministries provided for them.
- ◇ The age of your average member will continue to increase, making it more difficult to attract young families.
- ◇ You will adopt an ingrown, maintenance ministry. You will keep the grass cut and have the building painted – and think you are really doing something.
- ◇ You will die a slow, painful death. Eventually, a handful of people will have a final service in the building. You will have even lost control of who gets the building.

“If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited.” — Proverbs 24:10

“But the people who know their God will be strong and take action.” — Daniel 11:32

The Critical Questions for a Church in This Situation:

- ◇ *Does our mission involve more than keeping the doors open?*
- ◇ *Does our mission mean more to us than having control?*
- ◇ *Does our mission mean more to us than our memories?*
- ◇ *Does our mission mean more to us than our comfort level?*
- ◇ *Does our mission mean more to us than having things done in a way we are used to?*
- ◇ *What mission? The Great Commission! Either a church is on mission or on hospice.*

Estimating Your Growth Potential

In studying the possibility of relocation and in developing ministry plans and building plans, you need to know how many people you can reach... if you are hitting on all cylinders, if you have the right plan, if the devil doesn't get into the church, if everyone buys into the vision, and if the people are willing to work. What you could you *reasonably* expect to *average* in attendance? You will need to have a rough idea of this number for your present location and for any new location you are considering. Look at demographic data and secure the assistance of the State Office or a consultant to establish this estimate.

For Pastors Who Suspect the Need to Relocate

If I were a pastor who suspected his church needed to relocate, what steps would I take? I would start with prayer — heavy duty, concentrated prayer. I would call my mother and all my close preacher buddies (out of the area and whom I trusted to keep my confidence), and ask them to pray. And then I would listen to hear from God.

I would begin to lay the groundwork. These preliminary steps could include:

- Strengthen the prayer life of the church. If you can't do this with an ongoing program, do it with emphases or events.
- Preach on the nature and mission of the church. I would be careful to discuss the headship of Christ and His ownership of the church. I would also be sure to discuss Who the church exists *for*.
- Have guest preachers talk to your leaders about what is working at their church. For example, when we had guest preachers, I would ask him to share about church health and growth during the Discipleship Training hour. Deacons and key committees were expected to attend, but all interested members were invited.
- Early on in my ministry in Tallassee, we had Vision Banquets and we asked a cross-section of members to give testimonies and share their dreams for the church. It was understood that each person was speaking only for himself or herself. It served to get us thinking in the right direction.
- You may consider a “New Vision Revival” with the services geared toward spiritual and mission renewal. Have supper meetings each night before the service for consultants to train selected committees and ministry teams. There could be a session on Sunday School, one for greeters, one for the building committee, etc..
- I would get the church membership roll as accurate as I could get it. Some churches are amazed at the number of inactive members who show up for votes on controversial issues, to “save the church.” If you have a capital campaign later, it will also make it easier, since your roll of resident members will serve as your visitation list.
- Visit chronic absentees. That way, during the capital campaign, you won't hear comments along the lines of, “I haven't received a visit from the church in three years and now they come asking for money!”
- I would address the bylaws with this kind of vote in mind. Should that people who haven't darkened the door of the church in years should have the right to vote? What kind of super-majority will be required for big decisions such as relocation, and how is it de-

terminated when a super-majority will be required?

Those who pull the wagon should be the ones to decide the direction of the wagon.

Some churches amend their bylaws, in advance of any controversy, to prevent the problem of inactive members showing up to vote in important business meetings:

For a member to be eligible to vote, he/she must have attended at least one regularly scheduled Sunday worship service each month for the prior six months. Those who have been members for less than six months must have attended at least one regularly scheduled Sunday worship service for each of the months that they have been members.

- Start collecting data: Plat maps, demographic studies, information on where your members live (so you can generate a pin map), church history, previous long-range plans for the church, business development studies for your area, etc.
- Study your building. Know your capacities for each age group, and how you compare to the Rules of Thumb.
- Do NOT say the “R-word” to anyone until you have your ducks in a row.
- Keep your ear to the ground. Know what your people are saying. Don’t try to pick the fruit before it is ripe!
- We ought to be doing things like this anyway, and not just for relocation.

I would lead my church to develop a Ministry Plan (also called a strategic plan)

This will need to be done by a team or committee. Members should be capable of *analyzing* your situation and opportunities and of *articulating* their recommendations. You *must* have people who can explain and defend their recommendations before the congregation. Members should be the “bell-cow” members of your church, people whom others follow. They should be representative of the overall church body. They should be supportive of the pastor. Most of all, their commitment to Christ — to serve Him, cost what it will — should be beyond question. As you meet, address the following issues:

Define who you are. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a congregation? What is God blessing that you are doing? What is your congregation’s niche in the Kingdom?

- Define how your church is doing. Are you growing, plateaued, or declining? Courageous honesty will be required.
- Evaluate your building and parking. How many people do you average per vehicle?
- Define the population in your community. Are they like the people in the church? If not, what are they like?

- Define where your community is headed – in what way, if any, is it transitioning?
- What are you doing there? What does God have you in this community to do? Or is it *He* who has you there?
- What will it take to reach the people in your community?
- List all the possible options (page 14), and the strengths and weaknesses of each option for your church.
- Where does the Lord want you to go? What future does He have in mind for your church? This is both analytical *and* *prayerful*.
- What steps will it take to get from where you are to where God wants you to go?
- If your team feels that relocation should be considered, have them ask the congregation for permission to explore that option and to report back to the church.

I would help my church develop a process to decide relocation

As the congregation approves the relocation study:

- Establish ground rules with the congregation for discussing this important subject (see page 22). Enter into a covenant concerning your attitudes in this decision-making process — in advance.
- Get an experienced consultant to help walk you through the decision-making process. Your consultant will interpret that data you collected to the committee.
- Periodically report your findings to the congregation. Have your consultant speak to the congregation about the various issues involved. Give the information to them in bite-sized pieces so they can digest the information. Possible presentations could include:
 - ◇ Principles of Church Health and Growth
 - ◇ Profile of the unchurched people(s) in our community.
 - ◇ Our Church: Our history, our heritage, and our mission (It is very helpful for a congregation to see how the changes being considered are actually consistent with the church's founding vision.)
 - ◇ Evangelistic Effectiveness: How effective are we at impacting this community?
 - ◇ Our community/neighborhood: where will it be in ten years?
 - ◇ Cross-cultural Ministry: Do you have what it takes?
 - ◇ Turnaround Churches: What it takes to make a comeback
 - ◇ Outside-In: How outsiders perceive our facilities from the community and from the parking lot, to their seat (presented by a new member or outside guest)
 - ◇ Space: The Growth Frontier: A study of our education and worship space (and location, acreage, parking).

- Have a fair, open process for this decision. Have listening sessions with small groups where your consultant can find out where the larger church body is on the questions involved. Brace yourself. This discussion may be more stressful than you thought.
- Have a *Prayer Emphasis* for the committee before their final presentations begin – and for the congregation once the congregation begins considering relocation. This is a good time to use the devotional book, *Going Places with God*.
- Eventually, your committee will need to make a presentation in which they make the case for relocation, anticipating every objection, and presenting a plan to meet every obstacle.
- Give out well-written reports. Try to answer questions before they are asked: “That’s a great question. We wondered the same thing. We looked into it and here’s what we found out.” Always address any misperceptions or misrepresentations concerning relocation – but do so in a matter of fact way that does not attack those in opposition.
- Don’t bring the issue up for a vote until you are confident it will pass. Have in place, in advance, a plan for collecting ballots and insuring that only members in good standing are allowed to vote. We used two envelopes. On the outer envelope we had members write their names. A committee verified that the person was eligible to vote. The first committee never saw the ballots. Then the verification committee handed the unopened, unsigned privacy envelopes which contained the ballots to a counting committee. This committee never saw the names of those voting. They opened the ballot envelope and counting the votes. We required a 75% vote, as that was the largest super-majority required by our bylaws (to call a pastor).

Relocation Fever

Beware of relocation fever. That's when someone "gets it in his head" that relocation is the answer to *all* his church's problems. Sometimes, a church will have a highly successful relocation and other area churches begin to think that is the answer for them also. Relocation can acquire glamour and a halo. However, relocation won't fix *everything* for you.

If your church isn't trying to minister where you are, you won't minister in the new neighborhood. If your people aren't willing to work hard where you are, they won't be willing to invest the strenuous effort required for a successful relocation. Neither a new building nor a new location will reach people for you. If your church is dead at your current location, reinterment at a new grave site will not produce a resurrection. If God isn't in it, don't attempt it in the flesh. It is quite possible to place our faith in a strategy or a program instead of Christ. We should move because the Spirit is leading, not because we have an "idea."

Are you still having a significant impact on your community? If your effectiveness in reaching your community has died, then you are right in wanting to bury old attachments to your current location. But if you are having an impact, and you have the space required to reach your potential, then stay there. As Major Thomas used to say, "*Sent plus went equals put.*"

Have you finished doing what God has called you to do in that place? Jesus finished the work the Father had given Him to do (John 17:5). If your church has finished the work the Lord has given you to do there and Jesus is no longer working through you in that place, then it may be time to "Proclaim the good news about the kingdom of God to the other towns also" (Luke 4:43). Be certain that the work there is finished before you leave.

Have you received a clear word from God that it's time to move? This is the way God led His people through the wilderness: "At the Lord's command the Israelites set out, and at the Lord's command they camped" (Numbers 9:18). Until you know, wait. When in doubt, don't. When you see Jesus, obey promptly.

You don't have relocation fever if your building has become a fortress instead of a base camp for outreach. If your community is having an impact on you, but you are unable to have an impact on the community, you don't have relocation fever. If no amount of prayer and effort seems to get you anywhere, you don't have relocation fever. But if you are looking for an easy choice or a quick fix, this isn't it.

The Ground Rules for Discussion

*“One who isolates himself pursues selfish desires; he rebels against all sound judgment.
A fool does not delight in understanding, but only wants to show off his opinions...
The one who gives an answer before he listens— this is foolishness and disgrace for him.”*

— Proverbs 18:1-2, 13

No one wants to be wrong. But sometimes we want something so badly, we don't care if we are wrong. We simply want what we want! Does this apply to churches who are considering relocating? It sure does. Sometimes there are people who have gotten it in their heads that their church needs to relocate and are emotionally involved with the idea. They just can't see it any other way. Sometimes, members are angry that relocation is being discussed at all — and they have the attitude, “Don't confuse me with the facts; my mind is made up.” Here are some warning signals that you are on the wrong track:

- If the best you can do to make your case is to call “the other side” names, you are acting out of the wrong spirit. Don't assign evil motives to those who disagree.
- If you cannot cite any evidence to support your position, but feel those with a different point of view are crazy, you are the one in the wrong state of mind.
- If you refuse to read any of the information provided by the committee (perhaps saying, “I don't need to read that; I already know what we need to do”), you have the wrong attitude.
- If, as your church considers relocation, you don't participate in the prayer emphasis, but you are ready to vote right now, you have the wrong motives.

On the other hand, if you want to decide this important matter in a Christ-like manner, here are some ground rules for discussion:

1. Everyone is expected to do their homework. Each member should read all the information provided to the congregation. Feel free to do your own research.
2. Everyone is expected to have the courage of their convictions and address the issues in the appropriate forums. Secret strategy sessions and voter turnout efforts are out of bounds.
3. Everyone is expected to provide evidence or a rationale for their positions. Simply saying, “I disagree” or “I just feel we ought to...” is not good enough.
4. Everyone is obligated to deal with the facts, and not attack persons or their motives.
5. No one will be expected to prove their case beyond any doubt. That would be unreasonable. Remember, we walk by faith, not by sight.
6. A congregation makes decisions together as the Holy Spirit leads them. The Spirit's leading should not be confused with sentimental emotions. Thus, each member is responsible to pray with an openness to the will of God, conscious that their initial impression may be mistaken.

Relocation: Please do not attempt this without adult supervision

In relocation, finding a suitable location, developing a master site plan, getting a good phase I floor plan, and running a successful capital campaign are all child's play compared to making the decision to move. It is very easy for a congregation to get stuck in the decision-making process.

At First Baptist, Tallassee, we couldn't figure out a process for deciding this in our church. We knew it had to be studied, information provided, and the subject discussed openly. Then, I stumbled on a brochure by Glenn Akins, then with the Illinois Baptist Association. I was working on our web site and going through the various Baptist state convention web sites looking for materials to link to. Glenn's brochure mentioned relocation and I e-mailed asking if he had anything else he could send us. He replied that he could come consult. Securing his services was one of the wisest decisions we ever made. We call it providence.

We would have never made it over the hump without his help. Everyone liked and trusted him (even opponents of relocation) and he knew the right things to do to help the congregation process the decision. Glenn made presentations to the congregation (specific to our congregation as well as explaining general principles of church growth and health), interviewed the congregation in small group listening sessions, did a demographic study of the congregation and of the community, and met with the committee on several occasions. Then, he would send us written reports after each visit. Very cool and deliberate, Glenn always knew what to say.

Your state convention office has people who can help with this at no charge to you. In Alabama, you would contact the Office of Associational Missions and Church Planting (www.alsbom.org). Who you get to help and how much money you spend to get that help will depend on the amount of time and trained expertise you need.

Many churches have a skepticism about consultants — “What would he know about our church?” “He's not from our area; how would he know?” However, your church is not so different as all that. The problems you will face will be similar to those encountered by other churches. Further, the Bible affirms the value of getting wise counsel:

Proverbs 1:5; 11:14; 12:5; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20-21; 20:18; 25:5; 25:5; 27:9; 29:12

Contact your state convention or denominational office and seek out an objective, experienced person to help you.

Principles of Congregational Persuasion

Principle 1: You can lead a Baptist Church anywhere they already want to go.

Principle 2: The fewer people a congregation hears calling for radical change, the easier it is for them to dismiss it.

Use consultants, give out books and send links to podcasts. Don't be the only one saying it — or people can dismiss your recommendations out of hand. They will conclude that you're just an odd duck.

Principle 3: Prepare presentations as if you were going to trial.

Some members will want you to prove it beyond a reasonable doubt, and some want you to prove it beyond a scintilla of a doubt. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29, NKJV).

When recommending significant change to your congregation, there will be some who just don't want to do what is being recommended. They are hard to persuade because they don't want to be persuaded. Understand this going in. In a rapidly changing world, many people want one thing in their lives that does not change — and many pick church to be that thing.

Principle 4: Sometimes your task is to prove the obvious to the oblivious

The chandelier story comes into play here. For those who haven't heard it: Most churches have a member like the guy who stood up in business meeting and spoke against spending \$10,000 for a new chandelier. "First, it costs too much. Second, we ain't go nobody who can play it. And third, what we need around here are some lights!"

Winston Churchill remarked, "The problem is not in winning the war; it is in persuading them to let you win it."

Principle 5: There's a reason they put you on the committee.

Remember that the people on your committee were chosen because they are smart people and process information quickly and decisively. Conversely, those who are not on the committee and who were not part of the prayer and study process will take much longer than your committee to embrace the same conclusions.

The bottom line: First, give the congregation the information they need. Go slow. Give multiple reports. Allow people time to digest the information and to think of the questions they want to ask. Give them the opportunity to ask their questions. Anticipate a high level of emotional opposition that simply defies logic. This will be a decision of the heart as well as of the mind. Give them time to work through the stages of grief as they come to accept the unacceptable. Be patient; don't try to pick the fruit before it is ripe.

Questions for Those Who Oppose Relocation

- Where would you say our neighborhood is now in its life span? And where do you believe it is headed?
- If the presence of our church in this community didn't prevent this from happening, what reason is there to believe that our continued presence will turn it around?
- As you see it, what is it you are protecting by opposing relocation? From what?
- If we stay, will our grandchildren benefit from our decision? Or, are we talking about keeping the doors open long just long enough to bury us?
- If we are not currently reaching significant numbers of residents in our community, is there any evidence a few minor adjustments on our part will enable us to reach them in the near future?
- Is there any reason to believe that the current residents of the community are open to being reached by us?
- Can you name four or five aspects of your plan to reach this community?
- We have tried to give you picture of what it will look like if we relocate. Can you give us a mental picture of what it will look like (over time) if we choose to stay and take the steps you suggest?

When Relocation Will Not Work

When can you rule out relocation as an option?

I did not consider relocation an option in a transitional community where I once served because none of our members were driving in from outside the community. They all lived there. Where would we relocate to?

The aforementioned community has as many churches per square inch as any place I have ever seen. All the Southern Baptist Churches were trying to be basically the same kind of church, and with the community transitioning, were sharing smaller and smaller slices of an ever shrinking pie. With a million "If's," merger may have been a better option.

Additionally, I believe you can rule out relocation when too high of a percentage of the members are elderly. You will attract more of what you already are; folks aren't interested in joining nursing homes. So what happens when you move? This congregation has waited too late to be open to it for this option to work.

You can rule out relocation when too many of your dreamers, darers, achievers, thinkers, risk-takers, and workers have gotten so fed up with the direction of the church they left. They are essential in such a bold move. If all you have are "company men" and stubborn hold-outs, it probably won't work.

You can usually rule out relocation when your "bell cow" members are opposed to it. These people lead your members. You don't have to win all of them, but you have to win over most of them for relocation to work. Think in terms of the various "groups of thought" within your church, the little constituencies. Who are their leaders? The group that is closest to you, who appreciate your ministry, may not be enough. You are going to need a super high percentage vote to relocate. If they won't vote for it, they sure won't help pay for it!

It may be that relocation is an inevitable need of your church, but it is too soon. It can be ruled out *for now*. Consider that it may be your job to raise the issue of relocation now, though you know it will fail. Your Strategic Planning Committee may need to present a report stating that "one day" to help them prepare for when it *is* time — and then not delay until it is too late. If that's your church's situation, set the stage for later.

If you cannot relocate, or relocation is not the best choice *at this time*, then you still need to ask, "What do we do now?"

Finding Your Next Site

Your church has decided to relocate and now you are looking for a new site. What are you looking for?

You are looking for **Visibility**. That is, not in the back of some residential neighborhood where no one could find your building with a map and a police tracking dog.

You are looking for **Accessibility**. I'm not speaking here of handicapped accessibility, though that is certainly important. I mean is it possible to have a visible location that isn't accessible. I have seen a number of churches clearly visible from an Interstate, but I couldn't figure out how to get to the campus.

You are looking for **Expandability**— I mean by that enough acreage to grow. Be careful not to underestimate how much land you will need. Think about it: you are moving to grow. So what if it works? You will need a place to put the new buildings. You will need an acre for every 100 cars. The rule of thumb is that you need one acre for every 100 to 125 people on the campus at one time. This includes buildings, parking, everything. Zoning ordinances, including codes calling for green areas, may lower that number. Multiple services can impact your total attendance — how many people will be on your campus at one time?

You are looking for **Durability**. Will this location be a good site for your campus in 20 years? Unless your congregation is willing to move from location to location for many years, you need a good site that will stay a good site for a long time. It's been hard enough to move the first time now hasn't it?

Are you looking for **Affordability**? As a good steward, of course you are. However, you may find God will intervene in ways you never expected. Don't jump off any financial cliffs and expect God to catch you — that's putting Him to the test. But don't rule out the provision of God in advance, either.

A Master Site Plan

A Master Site Plan outlines a logical phased growth plan to achieve the maximum potential usage of the site. It shows how new buildings will be added in stages, as growth warrants. It anticipates how the buildings will connect, balance between parking, worship, and education space, balanced space between the various age groups with their specialized needs, the flow of hall traffic as new buildings are added, etc..

A Master Site Plan answers the question: What if it works? It says, if we grow, this is how we will expand our facility for maximum ministry effectiveness and with the best possible stewardship. If we don't grow to need the next phase, then we don't build it until we do.

So many churches build something and say, "This will do for now." They solve one problem, meet one building need, at a time. And they end up creating problems for the future that will cost ridiculous amounts of money to fix. A Master Site Plan is an investment that will save you many times what it costs in future work-arounds.

DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP.



The Milton Springs Church was desperately in need of a master plan.

Capital Campaigns

A Capital Campaign is a consultant-guided church-wide emphasis that challenges members to give offerings over-and-above the tithe over a three-year period.

Such campaigns use a steering committee of members who, in turn, will involve other members in the emphasis. There is a period of training, a six-week period of emphasis, and then the ingathering of commitments. Costs can vary widely. Denominational assistance is much less expensive. Commercial firms are more expensive and can be a little pushier.

Most campaigns distribute a major brochure, telling about the building program and the need for it. Four or five weekly newsletters are mailed to each family. During the main emphasis, the worship services feature messages by the pastor and members' testimonies of how God led them to their commitment amount. There is a special Sunday School lesson. And the climax of the campaign is a really nice church-wide family banquet.

Sometimes, someone will say something like, "If every family will give \$5,000 each, then we can pay for the new building. However, not everyone can give the same amount. Some senior members on fixed incomes could never give a large offering. And some wealthy members would be giving only a token amount. Some can give a little. Some can give a lot. But, to have a good offering, everyone must give something, sacrificially and consistently.

While most members cannot give large amounts in a single offering, church members are often amazed to see how their giving adds up through consistent weekly (or monthly or twice per month giving — depending on how they're paid) over a 36-month period.

The average church will raise from one to two times last year's non-designated income over the next three years. Three times is not uncommon, especially for a new worship center. Most churches receive between 92% and 115% of the amount committed. Growing church gain new members to give and some members will give more than they pledge.

One of the unexpected blessing in these campaigns is that you are challenging members to ask God for his definite leadership concerning what they should give (no one suggests an amount to a family during the campaign). Many church members have never had the experience of praying and asking for the Lord's specific leadership in this way. It is an experience in spiritual growth for them to learn to hear the voice of God.

For such campaigns to work, you need to select the right consultant for your church and follow his advice. Many churches want to cut corners to reduce costs. These church members have never led such a campaign. Urge your members to trust your consultant since he has done this before. And understand: to raise big money, you have to spend money.

What Do We Build First?

In a relocation, congregations don't generally replace all the space they have. It took the church decades to build all the space they had at the old location. It is a rare congregation that can afford to replace every foot of their space all in one phase. More than likely, you will have to make some hard choices. Here are some examples:

- Do we build a worship center in the first phase, or worship in a multi-purpose facility?
- Do we have a fellowship hall used for that purpose alone, or build one with moving walls to create Sunday School rooms? (If so, who will move the walls each week?)
- Do we build an office suite on campus, or use offices elsewhere?
- We have a recreation facility on our present campus; can we afford one on our new campus?

You will want to sit down and list your priorities and decide what is most important to your congregation. Consider what it will take to keep the church's support and where they are willing to show patience and flexibility. List and rank your priorities. Determine what you must have for the ministry to continue and what you could do without, at least, for a time.

The highest ranking priority is a given — growth space. Growth space includes: Sunday School/Small Group space, the space in which you worship, and parking. Within your Sunday School space, preschool space should receive the highest priority.

As you work through the process, communicate these choices and priorities to the congregation. Some will get the impression you are on your way to the promised land and moving into a palace. Help them develop a realistic picture of what it will be like when you move into the new facility.

For your first phase, you may need to design some space that can be easily and inexpensively converted from one kind of space to another. For example, you could have a first phase multi-purpose building to be used as worship center and later be converted to a fellowship hall or to education space.

Remember, you are not wasting space on wide halls — if, after future phases are added, additional foot traffic will be flowing through those halls.

It is very important to select an architect who understands churches to draw your Master Site Plan and Phase I floor plan. He will know how to work with you in planning your multi-phase plan so you can meet your immediate needs and expand as your attendance grows. However, he will need your informed input.

Balanced Space

There are other important kinds of space in a church facility. There is fellowship space, office space, and storage. These are all important, in their different ways.

Growth space includes: parking, the education building, and the worship center (sanctuary). In the education building, there are different kinds of space. There are rooms for pre-schoolers (birth through kindergarten), children (grades 1-6), youth (grades 7-12), and adults.

Your church needs balanced space. Balanced space means the capacity in each kind of space properly complements the capacity in the other kinds of spaces. Balanced space means:

- Your parking lot supports the maximum capacity of your worship center.
- Your education space supports the capacity of your worship center.
- Your education building has the right mix of spaces for the various age groups.

Your worship center should have a capacity of 110-120% of your education space. More people attend worship services than Sunday School. Some members are elderly and have health concerns that mean they can attend for only one hour, so they elect to attend the worship service. Others simply don't want to attend Sunday School. People looking for a new church home will usually visit a worship service before visiting a Sunday School class. So, worship attendance is generally 110-120% of your Sunday School attendance. You don't want to get below that. If your worship center capacity is too far above that, then you could have a half-filled room and it would impact morale.

Your parking lot should support the maximum capacity of your worship center, just as a Wal-Mart parking lot has enough parking spaces for Christmas eve.

Those who attend Sunday School get the first pick of the parking spaces. Those who arrive later for worship have to take what's left over. If there isn't a good space – or a space they can easily locate – they will often give up and go home. They simply won't drive around your parking lot seeking the last remaining parking space. In most places, the average is a fraction less than 2 people coming to church in one car or truck. Teenagers often take their own cars. Sometimes, it may seem a family of five will come in four cars. So, churches have to provide more parking than we used to.

To calculate how much parking your church needs: Count the cars on your highest attendance day of the year – Easter or homecoming Sunday. If that Sunday is eleven months off, then count the cars for several Sundays. Take the attendance and divide it by the number

of cars — that's your average number of people per vehicle. Then, take your largest attendance for the past year and divide by the average number of people per vehicle. That's the number of spaces you will need. Don't forget to add extra spaces for growth.

Your education space should support the capacity of your worship center.

While more people attend worship services than Sunday School, most of the people who attend Sunday School stay for worship. If your education building has a capacity of 60, that would not be enough to fill a worship center with a capacity of 120. Most congregations won't have enough people coming in just for worship to make up the difference. Certainly, special occasions in the worship services, such as homecoming, will be exceptions. However, a church with unbalanced space, as this is, will not fill its worship center on a week-in, week-out basis.

Your education building should have the right mix for the various age groups.

In rough numbers, a church will often have 15% of its Sunday School attendance in pre-school classes, 15% in children's classes, 13% in youth classes, and 57% in adult classes (exact percentages vary). Each age group has its own needs in relation to their rooms and require varying amounts of space.

Preschool Space (Bed Babies to Kindergarten)

It surprises some at first that the younger the person, the more space they need. However, as we think about it, it makes sense. Adults go into a classroom, sit in a chair, and won't move until the class is over. Little ones would find that to be a form of torture. Preschoolers learn by playing and need room to move around. In younger preschool rooms, changing tables and baby beds are needed. We could put three adults in the space taken up by one baby bed. The older preschool rooms need kitchen sets, tables, bookshelves, toys, etc. For preschoolers, 35 square feet per child is the standard. In our state, 32 square feet is the minimum required by law in day care facilities. This is what parents are used to seeing provided for their children. When they consider joining your church, this is what they will be looking for. To get a picture of what this amount of space looks like, imagine each child getting his or her own playpen. That's the amount of space you need in your preschool rooms.

Children's Space (Grades 1-6)

Children need a little less space than preschoolers – 25 square feet per child. Like preschoolers, they need to move around. You will need room for tables, equipment, and learning activities.

Youth (Grades 7-12)

There has been a trend toward the student pastor teaching all the students together in one big group on Sundays as well as Wednesdays. The approach you choose to use will determine what kind of space you need to build. This decision may be determined by how many other adult leaders you capable of influencing youth in the faith, and how many adults you want to teach them. Whether you believe in having some time for boys and girls meet separately and you want someone the opposite sex of the student ministry working teaching some of the students. This is an example of how building plans are driven by ministry plans.

In classrooms, youth need at least 12 feet per person in their classrooms. Adult rooms work fine for youth.

Most churches want a big room for fellowship before everything gets started and to use for the midweek Bible Study. The ideal is 15-18 square feet per person in these dual-use areas.

Adults

Adults need 12 square feet per person in their classrooms. However, if a classroom has a table for a coffee pot, decorative furniture, a piano, etc., you have to deduct the space they take up from the total square feet in the room. There is nothing wrong with those things, but naturally, we can't sit on top of the piano. If adults sit around a table, then the capacity of the room is the number of chairs you can fit around the table, regardless of the number of square feet in the room.

Preschoolers need almost as much space as all your adults!

Say you have a church that averages 100 people in Sunday School. Say the preschoolers average 15 in attendance. That doesn't mean they need 15% of the total floor space in your education building! We have seen why preschoolers and children need more square feet per person. 15 preschoolers with 35 square feet per person adds up to a total of 525 square feet. By comparison, the adults are averaging 55. At 12 square feet per person, they will need a total of 660 square feet. So the preschoolers need almost as much space as all of those adults put together, even though there are far fewer of them. Yet, in many churches, preschoolers are assigned the smallest rooms in the church.

Children may not care about their space, but their parents do

Some may say, "But the children don't care what kind of space they are in!" But parents do... a lot! Moms and dads are more particular than ever about the quality of space their children are in. If it's not clean, fresh-smelling, attractive, and roomy enough, the parents will not bring them back. The preschool class will not be the only class hurt by poor preschool space; the young married class loses the parents as potential members, also. One of keys for reaching young families is quality preschool and children's space.

The size and quality of the room impacts the learning environment in ways neither we nor the children may realize. At our church, a class of preschoolers was in a room that was much too small. We were in a building program, and just had to live with the inadequate space until the new building was completed. It was noticed after the class moved into the new space that the children seemed happier and cried less frequently.

Unless there is ample room, there isn't room

The "80% Rule" states that when any space is averaging 80% of its capacity, for growth purposes, it is full. Summer vacations and holiday weekends will be lower than 80%. Other Sundays will be higher. Easter Sundays will fill the room to capacity. But over the course of the year, 80% is the pretty much the best you can hope to average—unless revival has broken out or you are in a building program and there is "light at the end of the tunnel." This rule of thumb applies to every Sunday School class, the worship center, the parking lot, and even the choir loft.

People don't like to pack in like sardines. A full classroom (or choir loft) communicates to prospects that another person isn't needed. If a visiting family walks into a worship center they will all want to sit together, but if they can't find that many seats together, for all practical purposes the room is full. Put another way: If you are looking for a new classroom for a class that averages eight, you need to find them a room that will hold more than ten.

If you are planning a building, build for where you are trying to go, not for where you are now. Establish what you think you can average in attendance. Then, using the 80% rule, build 125% of the space needed for that average. For example, if your church expects to average 80, build enough space for 100 — multiply 80 by 125% and you get 100. If you build for 80 people, you will soon average only 64.

Is there a "space choke-point" for your church's growth?

If any one kind of space is too small for your church, then it can serve as a glass ceiling for your church-wide attendance. Sometimes things get to going really well in the life of the church for a while and attendance may rise above this ceiling. But then attendance settles back down to the old "normal" level. No one seems to be able explain what happened. It is a subconscious thing, but people are adjusting the crowd size to fit the building. One kind of space can hold back the entire church. This could be the parking lot, or a particular age group in Sunday School, or the worship center. But if the space is out of balance, growth will stop when the smallest space has reached its capacity.

Recommended Action Steps

1. Study your space. Know the capacity for each classroom. Know how many adults, youth, children, or preschoolers you could put in each classroom. Do you have room to grow?

2. Decide whether your space is balanced or not. Consider parking, the worship center, and each age group in Sunday School.
3. Consider whether you need to reassign classrooms to overcome a “space choke-point” and get your space back into balance. Determine if unused rooms could be converted to classrooms to provide room for growth.
4. Consider whether you need to build new space or expand your parking.

What to Do Between the Vote and the Move

It isn't typical for a church to vote on one Sunday to relocate to a new location and to actually move into the new facility the next week. So, what do you do in the interim? The answer, of course, is to get ready! You are getting ready not only for a larger building, but to be a larger church. You have to get more than the building ready. The construction process itself is very, very consuming. You will be tired and want to rest. This is not the time for rest! As much as possible, you want to "advance across a broad front." It is important to find ways to equip the church to "be the church" in the new facilities.

Here are some ways to do get ready for the move:

Pray!

Just pray. For the community. For your church, its ministry and evangelistic impact.

Study Your New Neighborhood:

Study the demographics and the psycho-graphics. Talk to the Chamber of Commerce, the School system, the mayors office — everyone who seems to know the town well. Identify the pastors who wouldn't consider your church to be competition and ask them to describe the community. Look to discover the local culture, the population segments, the needs, and the opportunities there. PrayerWalking is praying on-site with insight. If possible, this can be very enlightening in addition to the obvious merits of praying for the community.

Develop a Plan to Introduce Yourself to the Community:

You don't want the community deciding who you are off of first, perhaps mistaken, impressions. You want to be the one to explain who you are and what your church is about. This includes such things as your web site, direct mail, and Facebook ads. Do something to the exterior of the building to communicate a fresh start, even if its just adding banners.

Train Your Members:

You want to bring people from outside your church to inside your building and fellowship — and you want to do so in a way that allays their fears and makes them feel right at home. The State Office can assist you in training workers in numerous skills at no charge.

- **Train your First Impressions Team.** Welcome Center hosts will need to know where all the classes are. Team members will need to know their way around the new building.
- **Train your Safety Team.** It's a different building, so security will have to be done in a slightly different way. It's also a good time to freshen up the team's skills.
- **Train your Sunday School / Small Group Workers to reach, teach, and minister.** Review the basics of Sunday School and reaffirm its purpose. It is a great time to reorganize your Sunday School classes. We had two senior ladies classes that had needed to

combine for some time. With the move their rooms were assigned together and that worked beautifully.

- **Develop a Plan to Start New Classes.** As you study the community, identify possible new classes your church can create to reach the various pockets of people who live there. Start with the one you believe has the best opportunity to succeed.
- **Choir:** Our choir loft was over twice the size of our previous building. So several months before the new move, we began a choir enrollment campaign. On dedication Sunday, the choir loft was full (a totally cool, mind-blowing experience for everyone!). At cruising speed, we averaged 150-160% of the old loft's capacity. Interestingly enough, this is 75% of the new loft's capacity, bringing our average to around the old 80% rule. The 80% rule applies even to the choir loft.
- **Two Ways to Get This Done:** You are in the midst of a building program and a capital campaign. You have so much to do on top of your regular ministry. How could you possibly do more? Here are two possible ways of equipping your church during this time:
 - ◇ **Part-time, Short-Term Interim:** We had training events to help up prepare to move to a new level. However, one thing I wish I had thought of was to bring someone in to help with the preparation. Our church was located 40 minutes from the State Convention office and the folks at the State Board of Missions are allowed to serve churches for limited periods in an interim capacity. Other variations could be a retired Minister of Education or Director of Missions or even someone trained as a Transitional Pastor.
 - ◇ **A Calendar of Trainers:** Meet with state missionaries from the various offices of the State Board Office and, together, develop a calendar of training events led by people from the various offices. A variation of this is leadership from your association or regional pastors with a reputation for specific areas of church ministry.

Master Staffing Plan: Just as we have a master plan for our site, showing where future buildings will sit as we build the next phases, you can develop a Master Staffing Plan. In the Master Site Plan we build the next building phase as growth warrants it — we don't build just because we come to a certain date. However, we know what to build next and where to place it. The same is true of the Master Staffing Plan. Just before our personnel committee presented the Master Staffing Plan (it was in the works, but not ready to present), we mentioned new office space in church conference one night. Our people were shocked - some wondered, "What would we need new offices for?" We had never been this large before and it didn't register that, as we grow, we will need more staff as well as new buildings.

Now, with a Master Staffing Plan, when you come to them to explain it is time to add a new staff member or secretary, it will make sense and will be part of the unfolding plan.

Plan Special Events and Services During the First Few Months:

Kickoff events need to be reflective of who are as a church, but they need to be on the more exciting end of that spectrum. These events say, if you become a part of this church, this is what you will experience.

The Congregation: Your members will need help getting an accurate picture in their minds of what moving into the new building will mean. Help them set realistic expectations. When you get into the building, things won't be perfect. There will be ongoing adjustments to the sound system for a while or there will be some lingering items on the punch list to be worked. It will be better, but it won't be heaven. It will be a great tool, but it won't do the ministry for you. Your members may also be tired and ready for a rest. They may be over-dosed with change and ready to get settled in. However, if you will push through at this point, it will bless you for decades to come. It's not about us or our comfort. It's about Jesus and our mission.

Dedicated to Jesus Christ
Head of the church and its only Owner

Relocated September 26, 2004

IT'S ABOUT JESUS

“He is also the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He might come to have first place in everything.”
Colossians 1:18

“At the Lord's command the Israelites set out, and at the Lord's command they camped”
Numbers 9:18

Dedication Plaque: First Baptist Church, Tallassee

Kick-Off Events at Your New Location

There are numerous ways to announce your presence to the community at a new location. Consider the culture of your community. If you are in a community with large homes built around a nice golf course, a Free Red Beans and Rice give-away may not be the most effective event to go with. Another thing to consider is you are making a first impression. So, a block party to establish neighborhood watch groups may be effective in year four, but it could insult your new neighbors in year one.

Block Party: Free food with games for the kids.

Food Truck Night: Bring in food trucks with varying food items. Don't use this for a fundraiser. Instead, pay a certain percentage of each meal and promote 20% off, courtesy of the church.

Free Red Beans and Rice: Give people bags of red beans and rice, no questions asked. While giving them the red beans and rice, you can also give them a free New Testament.

Vacation Bible School Registration: Do this outdoors with bright banners and bounce houses to attract the children.

Single Mom Car Care: Free oil change. Appointments will be needed so you can have the right size oil filters and know how much oil in the varying grades you need to purchase. Many of the cars you see will also need windshield wiper blades. You could arrange a deal with a local parts store to give gift cards to these drivers. The parts stores install wiper blades. Because the church will pay for this, the gift card will need an expiration date.

Free Car Wash: Refuse all offers of donations. Have QR Codes on large signs linking people to information about the church.

5K or 10K Run: Well organized with good prizes, and a T-shirt for every participant.

Some of these events are more expensive than others. So, pick some you can afford to sponsor. As you will notice, these events are all outdoors. This gives people in your community the opportunity to see who they'd be going to church with. Through these events, you want to communicate that we are people with whom you can relate. Yes, we're all about following Christ here, but you'll fit right in with us!

Kick-Events for the Church Family: Consider the events you couldn't have had at your last location due to the size of your worship center or your fellowship hall. Schedule guest preachers or concerts or banquets that will enable your members to experience the benefits of their new facility.

Appendix: Table of Contents

Relocation Decision Process on One Page..... Page 41

Strategic Planning: Getting Started, by Glenn Akins Page 42

Evaluating Your Space, by Glenn Akins..... Page 44

Actual Costs of Building Page 46

Estimating What You Can Afford to Build..... Page 47

Can a Shelled-In Building Save You Money?..... Page 48

Unpleasant Changes: What To Do, by Stephen R. Yarnall, MD Page 49

A Relocation Testimony:
First Baptist Church, Tallassee, by Derek Gentle Page 51

Sample Sermon:
And Next to Them, Nehemiah 3 Page 56

Sample Sermon:
Where is Jesus Telling You to Drop Your Nets?, John 21:1-12 Page 58

Recommended Reading and Resources Page 59

Relocation Decision Process

Processing the Decision: Should Our Church Relocate to a New Location?

1. Community

- Who lives here?
- Is this community changing?
- Congregation match the community?
Is our church made up of people from the community?
- Would the community folks feel comfortable in our church?

2. Location

- How visible is our location?
- How accessible is it? How easy is it to figure out how to get to it once it is seen?
- How safe is our location & parking lot
- Will this be a good location in 20 years?

4. Space

- Does our facility have good curb appeal?
- What is the capacity of our education space and our worship center?
- What could we realistically expect to average in attendance in each?
- Are the parking, education space, and worship center capacities in balance?
- Do we have quality space (especially for preschool & children)?

3. Site

- How much land do we have?
- How large could our church grow to be on this site?
- How much off-street parking could we have on this site?
- Do we have a master site plan?

Consider Staying If...

- You're the best ones to reach the people in the community
- Location is safe, visible, & accessible
- You have enough land to build/expand

Consider Relocation If...

- You aren't the best ones to reach the community as it is (or is becoming)
- Your location is becoming dangerous
- Your location has low visibility or is inaccessible
- Your site is landlocked and is too small to accommodate your growth potential

Strategic Planning: Suggestions for Getting Started

Glenn Akins

For a church to grow and thrive, it needs to engage in strategic planning. Sometimes, this is called long-range planning; vision is a related word. It refers to seeking the leadership of the Holy Spirit and planning ministry. Churches that coast reach a plateau. So a congregation must regularly renew its commitment to Christ. Ministry does not just happen; it must be done intentionally. Generally, a team or committee is given this task by the congregation. Here are some ideas for getting started from Glenn Akins.

As you begin...

Call the congregation to prayer – The “dream team” should spend as much time in prayer as you do in evaluation and planning. Understand that personal renewal precedes corporate renewal.

Involve others and listen – Involve approximately 30% of your church’s leaders in Vision Sharing Groups. Have town hall meetings to gather input. Carefully plan how and when you will listen to your congregation. (Remember, the most important One we are listening to is God.) Report your findings to the congregation as you go along.

The 3 basic parts of strategic planning:

- Describe your current reality – (here and now) what are your strengths and weaknesses? Where are you?
- Describe your preferred future – (there and then) where does the Lord want you to be? Paint a clear picture of where the Lord wants you to go. Describe the picture so clearly that the congregation will be willing to sacrifice to help get there. “Give them a picture and provide the frame.”
- Develop a ministry plan – Give the congregation a road map from the current reality to your preferred future.

The issue is, *are we going to make decisions on the basis of our future or our past?*

There are four questions that churches need to ask themselves:¹

- **Whom do you seek to serve?**
- **Who is our client? (Who are we here for?)**

There are two groups of answers: There are our primary clients and our supporting clients. Our primary clients are the unchurched. Our supporting clients are our current members.

When a church makes their current members their primary client, they have gotten it backwards. Because then, personal convenience and “What I am used to” become the primary concern. That is not a Kingdom perspective.

- **What are the needs of the people in our community and in our church?**
- **What ministries or strategies are needed to respond to their needs?**

Start with your Vision: Vision is not just the purpose of the church at large; it is your local congregation’s particular niche in the Kingdom of God. It is about what your church is good at in ministry; you build on what’s working. It represents that population segment and culture you are best at reaching, as well as your church’s personality and style. What exact part in reaching the world has God placed you here to have? Then, based on this vision, establish the following:

Objectives – example: Starting a congregation for every people group in Our Town.

Long Range Goals – example: Start five new congregations.

Annual Goals – example: Start a Korean congregation to reach the new influx of that population group.

Action Plans – example: List what it will take to start and staff a Korean congregation. This leads to item 4, next...

What resources are needed to implement the strategy?

The most important resources you need to coordinate are:

- Budget
- Workers
- Calendar

It also includes: professional staff, facilities, and location.

“Get someone on base.” Get some quick, easy wins under your belt. Don’t wait until you can do the big things. Early wins build confidence and morale.

¹ Questions adapted from [Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool: Participant Workbook](#), Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Evaluating Your Space

Glenn Akins

There are different kinds of space which create barriers to growth and set growth ceiling for a church:

Parking is the first: How much parking do you need? (The national average is presently around 1.7 people per vehicle.) How close are the parking spaces to the entrance? Is it spread out around different parts of the building, where it is convenient? Is it out front and visible?

The second is Worship.

Third is Education Space.

Fourth is Fellowship Space

Fifth is Recreation Space.

Does your building present any of the following problems?

Complexity – Do you have a series of buildings, which have been strung together over a period of years? Does your building have such a complicated layout that makes it harder to find classes; there are units you cannot get to in a straight line? Unchurched people don't like that.

Commitment – Do people who attend your church have to have a higher level of commitment to put up with your space? Unchurched people don't have that commitment.

Anxiety – Children like to know where their parents are (and vice versa); if they don't, they feel anxious. Being far removed in different buildings adds to that anxiety.

Unbalanced Space – Does your building provide an uneven distribution of people? That is, you have enough space for adults, but not enough space for preschoolers – or you have more worship space than you need, but not enough education space – something like that. The different kinds of space – parking, fellowship hall, preschool, adult space, everything – should provide balanced space so that it all comes together.

Your congregation will probably be “space-blind” to these issues. You will be so used to your building, these things will be hard for you to see. So, seek outside help to get an objective insight into the quality of your space.

Spatial Matrix

The following spatial matrix is helpful in determining whether your congregation needs to relocate:

Two Dimensions: Facilities & Location

Space and Facilities	Good	1. Good Space / Poor Location	2. Good Location / Good Facilities
	Poor	3. Poor Location / Poor Space <i>Time to Relocate</i>	4. Good Location / Poor Space <i>Time to Renovate</i>
		Poor	Good

Location

This Spatial Matrix is the creation of Glenn Akins, all rights reserved. Used by permission.

Remember, relocation is a means, not an end. A church should relocate when it can no longer fulfill its mission at its present location. And a church that relocates cannot sit by and think the new building will do ministry for them. That is where strategic planning comes in.

What about your community and the church’s part in keeping the neighborhood from going down? There is nothing you can do as a church to control the quality of your location. Your church’s presence has not prevented your neighborhood from experiencing decline. Your church’s leaving will not be responsible for further decline.

Note: Gary Nicholson remarks:

- When you are in **Box 1**, your choices are: (1) Revise your ministry strategy or (2) Relocate.
- When you are in **Box 2**, then stay put, implement your ministry strategy plan, and grow!
- When you are in **Box 3**, your choices are: (1) Reduce your vision for growth, (2) Revise your ministry strategy, or (3) Relocate.
- When you are in **Box 4**, your choices are: (1) Enlarge your site, (2) Reduce your growth vision, (3) Renovate, or (4) Relocate.

Of course, reducing vision for growth is never an acceptable option.

“I Can Build It for \$12 a Square Foot”

What does it cost to build a building? Sometimes you hear someone say a building could be built for so many dollars per square foot. What does that include? Often, when someone gives this kind of price, they are thinking about what the general contractor will charge you, not your total project budget. Construction costs will usually be only 70 to 80 percent of the total construction project budget. Here are some costs that may not be included in that amount, depending on the project and your contracts with your architect and general contractor:

- Purchase of Land
- Topographical Map
- Civil Engineering
- Legal Fees for Zoning Changes/Waivers
- Master Site Plan
- Costs of Capital Campaign
- Architect and other fees (6 to 12 percent)
 - ◊ Drawing the construction documents
 - ◊ Inspections (if you don't have a contract that includes the inspections, you will have to pay a fee for the on-site visit and reimburse travel expenses)
 - ◊ Engineering such as structural, electrical, heating and air would normally be included in the architect's fee reflected in the 6 to 12 percent shown above.
- Site Preparation (cost varies, but this would typically be included in your contract with your general contractor.)
- Furnishings (5 to 15 percent)
 - ◊ This would include kitchen equipment, which can be expensive.
- Landscaping (5 to 7 percent)
- Contingency (5 to 10 percent)
- Construction loan financing (varies)
- Financing closing costs (varies)

So, if someone tells you they could build the building for a certain amount, ask exactly what they are including in that amount. If they are referring only to the building, you can multiply the amount they give you by 125% and 145% to get a rough idea of the range of the total project cost.

How to Estimate What Your Church Can Afford to Spend

Part 1: Cash on Hand

How much does your church have in your Building Fund (or similar accounts)? _____

Part 2: Property Assets (If you are going to sell your present facility)

What could you realistically expect to get for your present property? _____

(Unfortunately, a church building will usually bring pennies on the dollar. This may not be true in your situation, but if you want a conservative figure, take the replacement value on your insurance and multiply times 20%.)

Part 3: Capital Campaign

A. What were your undesignated receipts for the last full budget year? _____

B. What percentage of your members voted in favor of relocation? _____
(If you have not voted yet, enter a conservative estimate)

C. Multiply the percentage in B times the budget receipts in A: _____

D. Multiply the amount in C times 1.8: _____

E. Multiply the amount in C times 2: _____

\$ _____ to \$ _____
D E

The amounts in D and E represent a very rough estimate of the range you could raise over three years in a capital campaign. If you have some special circumstances, factor those in and revise this range.

Part 4: How much can you afford to borrow?

F. What were your undesignated receipts for the last full budget year? _____

G. Multiply the budget receipts in A times 2: _____

H. Multiply the budget receipts in A times 3: _____

\$ _____ to \$ _____
G H

It is recommended no more than 25 to 30 percent of annual income go to loan payments (fast growing churches may go as high as 35 percent since growth can reduce the percentage each year).

How to Estimate What Your Church Can Afford to Spend

(Continued)

PART 5: POSSIBLE RANGE FOR TOTAL PROJECT COST:

Bottom Range: Part 1 + Part 3 (Line D) + Part 4 (Line G) = \$ _____

Upper Range: Part 1 + Part 2 + Part 3 (Line E) + Part 4 (Line H) = \$ _____

This is a very rough estimate of the range you can afford to spend, not factoring in any special circumstances.

Can a “Shelled In” Building Save You Money?

Sometimes a congregation will consider purchasing a metal building with the idea of doing the finishing work themselves. It is important to compare apples with apples when estimating your total project cost.

A “shell” doesn’t include interior walls, air conditioning, light fixtures, carpet, etc. on the inside or brick on the exterior.

Windows may cost extra—and you really don’t want to build a building without windows!

A rule of thumb is that the “shell” is about 20% of the cost, and the “shell” itself can vary 50-100% depending on configuration, finistration (windows), and materials used (like brick/wood siding, or metal roof/composition shingles). The difference can be 3-5 times the original quote for the shell.

Unpleasant Changes: What To Do

By Stephen R. Yarnall, MD

When things don't go our way, we typically go through 10 stages, which are a normal part of the coping and healing process.

1. **Denial**—"It can't be," "It can't happen to me," "It's not true".... The first stage of reaction to any sudden, unexpected event tends to be denial. Denial is normal if it lasts a short time, but persistent denial is unhealthy because it blocks further growth and healing.
2. **Anger/Blame**—"Whose fault is it?" "This makes me mad," "This isn't fair," "Why me?" The second stage of reaction looks backward in hopes of finding the cause and someone or something to blame it on. Although nothing can be done at this point to change the past, it's nevertheless a normal response. Like the stage of denial before it, the anger/blame stage is unhealthy if it persists for an unreasonable amount of time.
3. **Despair**—This stage tends to be characterized by tears, negative and hopeless/helpless thoughts, and a feeling of total emptiness and loss. Sleep and eating disturbances are common as the "reality" of the situation sets in. Relationships with other people can become more difficult at this time, but understanding and compassion must be given and accepted if one is to move beyond this stage.
4. **Perspective**—In this stage, the individual begins accepting the change and is no longer caught up in denial, anger, blame, or despair. The problem is seen in its proper perspective. Although the sense of loss may be significant, the individual does not feel that "all is lost."
5. **Relationships**—Coming out of the withdrawal and isolation that is inherent in the previous stages, the individual is able to talk and relate to other people and participate in normal activities.
6. **Spiritual Changes**—The individual's relationship with the spiritual side of life is strengthened as a result of having lived through (and survived) the experience.
7. **Acceptance**—This stage involves the restoration of self-esteem, and the acceptance of the consequences and boundaries of the new reality.
8. **Humor**—Smiles, laughter, and a sense of humor return to the individual and help in the healing process. There's a renewed sense of joy in life.
9. **Activity and Action**—Where once the individual had been restricted or immobilized by

the change, he or she now returns to activity, action, and improved productivity. Travel and group activities become more interesting.

10. **New Goals**—In this final stage, the individual is able to focus on the positive aspects of whatever change occurred, and on new goals and activities. He or she takes comfort in Ashley Brilliant's line, "I may not be totally perfect, but parts of me are excellent!"

When faced with an unexpected, unpleasant change, you may not go through all 10 of these stages in this order, but it helps to keep them in mind. While it can seem as if life changes nearly drown us at times, by and by we see that it's only through meeting the challenges of change that we can grow.

Our Note: *You may have noticed your congregation facing some of the same feelings and reactions as your church faced unpleasant changes within your congregation or community. Where, if anywhere, is your congregation in this process?*

Our Relocation Testimony

By Derek Gentle, First Baptist Church, Tallassee
2008

One of our deacons called and asked me to come by his house. When I arrived, he had aerial photographs, plat maps and a legal description of property next to his home. He described how, when he had helped his sister-in-law move to a nearby town, he noticed a church there had moved to nice new facilities. He recounted insights from the building committees training conference. And then he told me that he realized that our church needed to relocate. He and his wife were offering to sell us seven acres, next to their home, on the main road through town.

This was the exact moment when we turned the corner on the issue of relocation. And it was the answer we had been praying for. Only weeks before, I was walking the property at our old location and praying. As I came from the overflow parking toward the alley, I prayed, "Lord, if you want us to relocate, put it on someone's heart to offer to sell us some land." Then I added, "It doesn't have to be the person we'll buy from, just someone to get the ball rolling on the subject."

We had been trying to expand at our present location. For five years, the most regular item on the deacon's agenda was a report from the property acquisition committee. It was an exercise in futility. One owner would agree on a price, but then wouldn't close. Another stated that he would sell his house for the appraised value, but it turned out that it appraised for less than he anticipated. Other owners rented out houses near us; they wanted much more than seemed right to spend. While we were able to secure three properties (church members sold us nearby houses which we were able to use for overflow parking and adult Sunday School classes), we were land-locked.

Finally, the deacons, frustrated with the lack of progress, instructed the building committee to build on the back parking lot. We would just have to find parking where we could. As the building committee studied the matter, however, it turned out that we wouldn't be able to fit the next building we needed and wanted in the back parking lot. There was an alley and the building code called for setbacks; it simply couldn't be done.

Everywhere we turned and everything we tried failed to produce. The doors all seemed closed. This was our situation as I asked God, if He wanted us to relocate, to have someone offer to sell us some land.

The news was out in our congregation that the property had been offered to the church for

sale. Some other members told us that while they weren't trying to compete, they would sell six acres they owned down the same road, if that location would be more helpful. Before it was over, the deacons were on the church bus touring both of the available properties and looking at other possible sites. Coming down Friendship Road, someone asked, "What about this property?" Everyone on the bus knew the place. It was near the new elementary school and the new hospital. The land is on the top of a hill, but was fairly level. Our chairman of deacons, agreed to inquire. Within four months we owned 25 acres, 18 on the south side of the road and seven acres on the north side. It had been sold to us at a fair price and without difficulty in closing.

We didn't get everything we wanted in the phase one building. In phase two, we will have to add more education space and some specialized youth space. However, the Phase One Building more than replaced the usable floor space at the old location. The new building is more attractive and cost efficient. Our preschoolers are no longer be sacrificing for the convenience of the adults. And we will have enough land for growth. In future phases, we won't have to concern ourselves with as much site preparation. We have a future at our new location.

Growth has come with the new building. After four months, Sunday School is on track to increase by 11 to 13% over last year. And we see more visitors than we have ever had—most of them prospects.

Four months after moving in, our Phase Two Team has already been elected and working for over a year. They are responsible to observe the transition into the new building and to see what the most critical needs are. Our growth has been steady enough to present us with a "moving target," and moving targets mean constantly having to make adjustments. They will fine-tune and make recommendations for the second phase of the building project. One thing that has helped us in this whole process is we haven't stopped after completing a step to rest. Instead, we have just put in "fresh troops" and gone on to the next step.

We are took our stained glass windows with us. The frequent comment is that they look better in the new building than they ever looked at the old one. We installed six of the windows and we are storing others for use in the permanent worship center to be built in a later phase.

We collected \$812,360 through the *Challenge to Build* campaign. Even though some opposed relocation we received slightly over 1.5 times the previous year's general budget receipts. For us, every rule of thumb worked out just as we were told concerning how much we could expect to receive through the capital fund drive.

The Lord has been providing, sometimes in ways we could not have foreseen when we voted to relocate. First, we sold our two overflow parking lots—and the new owners allowed us to use them until we moved. Then, before we even put the buildings at the old location up for sale, we were contacted by a private school for children with extreme learning disabilities. We sold them the buildings for a very fair price.

We have sold two acres across the road from the new campus and have five more for sale. We have people in our congregation who do site preparation for a living.

Less than a year after getting into the new building, we began plans for the Phase II. In August 2005, we followed the Challenge to Build Campaign with another capital campaign. We moved into this education space in April 2007. It features a youth suite, six classrooms for children, grades 1-6, and three large adult classrooms. This building helped us reach “critical mass” in education space. Back-to-back campaigns were hard, but again, we received approximately 1.5 times our previous years’ budget receipts.

We are still on this journey. However, we are confident that God will continue to direct our steps and to provide everything we need to do His will.

Lessons We Have Learned So Far

Obviously, pray hard.

Make certain the church is focused on the mission. Every church ought to be focused on its mission, whether it is relocating or not. Only the most mission-oriented churches should even consider relocation. When the mission is the driving force, people will ask the right questions and arrive at the right conclusions for their church.

Teach your people the “Rules of Thumb for Church Buildings” and the 80% Rule. The 80% Rule states that when your space is at 80% of capacity, for growth purposes, your building is full. It applies to all growth space: education space, worship space, and parking. We were emphasizing this material before relocation was even being considered and it ended up helping people to see the need. Also before relocation was being considered, we were taking groups to the state convention training for building committees. In a stretch of four out of five years, we had different church members there. One year, someone asked our folks where they got their notebooks. We had sent them with copies of the notes typed up from previous years. Around 10% of our adults had attended this one training event. Over time, it helped our people to see things in a new way and to talk about it.

Get help. The Bible says, “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Proverbs 15:22). Our town is located a half-hour away from the state office and we decided to see our Cooperative Program dollars at work. The

Sunday School office, the LeaderCare office, the Leadership & Church Growth office, and the Associational & Cooperative Missions Office (they do the building training and consultations) all helped us in some part of the process. It was helpful to have Glenn Akins assist us in exploring relocation as an expert and as an objective outsider. However, he was able to repeat much of what our members had already heard from others. The final decision required a cumulative effect.

Know your church's history. Even in a church with no vision, usually someone in their past had vision. Perhaps it was the founding generation or the members in a golden era in the church's history. Be prepared to show how taking the proper steps at the present time, continues the heritage, instead of breaking with it. One of the discoveries we made was that the subject of relocation had come up in the past, repeatedly. Every time a new long range planning committee looked at the church's ministry, the topic came up. However, our congregation at large was unaware of this fact. One sign that a church needs to consider relocation is that the subject won't go away.

Do your homework. The question concerns whether relocation is right for your church. You will need to research local building codes, area population trends, demographics, etc. You will need to know exactly how many cars you have in your parking lots and on the streets at your present location, and lots of other things.

Be prepared; this is a sensitive subject. Our use of our buildings is driven not merely by utility, but also by emotion and memories. And while people will move to larger, nicer homes themselves, they will often desire that the church building be the a "stability place" in their lives. Memories and emotional attachment drive this. Many churches need to face the reality that their present location is landlocked, or for some other reason, is no longer in a viable location for growth and ministry. While necessary, it is still painful. However, failing to face painful realities is a leading cause of death.

Timing is very important. There are two extremes when it comes to timing. One is "Paralysis by analysis." This is when the group continuously prolongs the process by studying the situation a little more, but never acting. They know with their minds that relocation is the only smart move, but their hearts won't let them say so. "So it is not surprising," as Kennedy said of going to the moon, "that some would have us stay where we are a little longer, to rest, to wait. But... this country of the United States was not built by those who waited and rested and wished to look behind them. This country was conquered by those who moved forward..."

The other extreme is "trying to pick green fruit." You can lead a church anywhere they already want to go. You don't want to call for a vote on relocation until you are already cer-

tain it will pass.

A vote on relocation that failed by a slim margin would be a disaster. Those who opposed relocation would consider the matter resolved. Supporters of relocation could become so disappointed they might consider leaving the church.

A vote to relocate that passes by too small of a margin would also be a disaster. You could end up with a significant number of opponents to relocation who, although they cannot prevent the motion from passing, can prevent relocation from succeeding. Some could quietly sabotage the process.

So, keep your antenna up and listen. Wait for the ripe moment.

Be patient, it takes time. We voted to relocate on August 26, 2001. We occupied our new building on September 26, 2004. Even though we never delayed between steps in the process, it took three years. From the time we purchased property, it took three and a half years. And from the time relocation was first mentioned, it took decades.

A Message for Groundbreaking: And Next to Them Nehemiah 3

In September 1962 John F. Kennedy was making a speech at Rice University in support of the space program. You may remember these words as one of my favorite quotes.

"But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why climb the highest mountain. Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas? We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard..."

The building program that we begin today is also a challenge. We savor the fact that the task God has given us is hard. And to get it done, we will have to work together.

The book of Nehemiah tells the story of how God's people, who having returned to Jerusalem from shaming punishment and exile, rebuilt the city walls. These walls were a means of defense and a symbol of civilization. With the walls down, the city was left vulnerable and embarrassed. So God sent Nehemiah to call the people to rebuild.

We read the thrilling story of how God moved to get the work under way... and then we come to chapter 3. It's one of those passages one is tempted to skip over. It seems to be nothing more than a list of names we can't pronounce... a "nothing" chapter... just boring detail and data. But on closer examination, we discover that Nehemiah 3 is a roll call of faithfulness and valor.

It is proof that God takes note of what we do for His name's sake. It is evidence that our labor in the Lord is never in vain. Even if we are not the wealthiest or the most powerful persons, God knows our names and records our service.

To make repairs, various groups accepted responsibility for different sections of the wall – and they all worked simultaneously. 40 different groups are listed as participating. 28 times one reads phrases like, And next to them, Next to him, After him, Beside him. Section by section... side by side... they each did their part.

Some had larger sections... and some smaller. Some repaired parts of the wall. Some worked on towers and others hung new gates... There were different kinds of work to be done.

Different kinds of people were involved in the work.

Priests and Levites and temple workers completed several different sections of the wall. There were

men from the city of Jericho. There were people representing all the trades and professions. There was Hannaniah the perfumer. There were goldsmiths and merchants. Most worked sections in front of their own homes. Shallum worked on his part of the wall, "together with his daughters."

There was Malchijah and Ezer, rulers over their districts. Working on another portion of the same wall was Shemanaiah, the guard of the east gate. ...Leaders and followers working together.

Section by section... side by side... they each did their part.

Two notations are of singular note... While the workers from Tekoa repaired two sections, "their nobles" are singled out for the only negative comment in the chapter, because they "did not lift a finger to help." In contrast, Baruch has the honor of being described as having diligently repaired his section.

Every list has its first entry and the first wall builder listed is Eliashib the high priest. Verse 1 tells us that he, along with his fellow priests, "began rebuilding." Every great work of God has to have its beginning and its beginners. And that's what we do today... we begin. And that's who we have the privilege of being today... the ones who begin the work.

By families, we will go to the wall we have set up. It will serve as a temporary monument to mark the beginning of construction. Photographs will serve as a lasting memorial. As each brick, with each name, is included into the wall... it will signify that each of us is ready to do our part... and to work together... section by section, side by side.

Where is Jesus Telling You to Drop Your Nets?

A Sample Message on Relocation by Derek Gentle

John 21:1-12

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus have taken place, but Peter is having to sort out all his feelings. So he announces that he is going fishing and the group goes together. Notice:

1. A Long Night of Catching Nothing

Vs. 3 “They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.”

Your church may be going through a long night of catching nothing. You are not growing, but are plateaued or are in decline. There has been a lot of hard work, but disappointment and frustration. It has been a dark night indeed!

2. Jesus is Present, But Unrecognized

Vs. 4 “When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore. However, the disciples did not know it was Jesus.”

You may be wondering where the Lord is in all this, but He is there. He has seen and heard what you have been going through. You may not have recognized His presence, but He is present and He cares.

3. Jesus Confronts Us with the Reality

Vs. 5 “‘Men,’ Jesus called to them, ‘you don’t have any fish, do you?’”

While we would like to avoid the unpleasant truth, we have not been very effective in reaching our community. But Jesus won’t let us dodge the hard question. He won’t spare us the embarrassment. He asks us to come to grips with the truth: “You don’t have any fish, do you?”

4. Sometimes Jesus Tells Us to Change the Place Where We Fish

Vs. 6 “‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat,’ He told them, ‘and you’ll find some.’”

He told the disciples to move their nets to the other side of the boat. He may be telling our church to move our nets to the other side of town.

5. When We Obey Jesus, It Works

Vs. 6b “So they did, and they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish.”

Admittedly, God sometimes sends people to labor faithfully whether they see results or not. However, congregations should listen to the Lord for His strategy for their church and then follow it. Most churches would see more results if they did!

Recommended Reading & Resources

Overview of Strategic Planning (audio)

www.smalltownbaptist.net/audio/strategic_planning_overview.mp3

Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders, 3rd edition, by Aubrey Malphurs, 2013, Baker

To Dream Again: Growing Healthy Congregations for Changing Futures (updated edition) by Robert D. Dale, 2018, Nurturing Faith

Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches by Mark Clifton, 2016, B&H

Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying and Divided Churches by Brian Croft, 2016, Christian Focus

Rules of Thumb for Church Buildings & Facilities — Texas Baptists

www.texasbaptists.org/ministries/church-architecture/fact-sheets-english?msclkid=adefbe78c63911ecbc15d03793668a44

Challenge to Build: Capital Campaign — Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

www.alsbom.org/challenge-to-build

Going Places With God

Devotional Guide for Churches Considering Relocation

www.smalltownbaptist.net/pdf/going_places.pdf

Recovering Church Health Devotionals

www.smalltownbaptist.net/recovering.htm

Replant: North American Mission Board

www.namb.net/church-replanting |

To contact someone for assistance or consulting, email:

replant@namb.net

