

## Directions from CTR Eldership Regarding Development Of Facilities

As elders of the church, we want to focus ourselves on the ministry of the word and prayer rather than on “tables” (as the Apostles put it in Acts 6), but at the same time, we believe God has called us to give direction to the church in all its ministries. This paper is an attempt to articulate some overarching, Biblical values that can guide practical decisions of members in our church who are called and gifted in developing the church’s meeting facilities. The concrete applications shared here are generally intended to explain what we mean, not to micromanage details of how it is to be done.

The “4 E’s” are governing values for our particular church, so any development of our church facilities should reflect and promote these four values:

### 1. **Exalting Christ –**

- a) Whatever we do should draw focus toward Jesus rather than toward us<sup>i</sup>. Furthermore, it should give Christ a good reputation in this world<sup>ii</sup> and be honoring to His church<sup>iii</sup>.
- b) The things central to our worship services should receive highest priority in our budgeting and facility development, and should be provided at a level of excellence worthy of the glory of our Lord Jesus.
- c) Our reformed faith, which emphasizes the sovereignty of God and our dependence on Him, should be reflected in the way we carry out the development of our facilities, through an attitude of faith in God rather than reliance upon man, prayerful seeking of God’s wisdom, wise stewardship of resources God provides, and thanksgiving to God for every development He allows.

### 2. **Equipping the Saints with the Bible –**

- a) All our meeting spaces should have as their goal the facilitating of Christian discipleship (i.e. nursery and worship space should be oriented toward training rather than entertainment).
- b) Our commitment to the authoritative Word of God should be reflected in our facilities<sup>iv</sup>.
- c) We also want our facilities to reflect the fact that we value people over programs. Our buildings should be built to enhance relationships among people and with God, rather than being built to enhance an institution. This should lead to making buildings comfortable for people and flexible for a variety of church uses, especially worship services, informal conversation, and fellowship meals<sup>v</sup>.
- d) We believe that every saint has one or more spiritual gifts that are useful and necessary for building up the body of Christ. So, even the process of developing and maintaining facilities should utilize as much of the body of the church as practically possible. Leaders should use building development projects as opportunities to train and develop members in fruitfulness in the kingdom of God.

### 3. **Evangelizing the world –**

- a) Our buildings should facilitate Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those who need to hear.
- b) This should have an impact on accessibility issues: are there any design issues that unnecessarily inhibit certain persons from participating? (For instance, the young or elderly, those with mobility, hearing, or vision handicaps, etc.)
- c) We should also avoid unnecessary cultural stumbling blocks to unbelievers, but this has to be balanced with making the cross and the gospel prominent and not trying to hide their offensiveness to non-Christians (1 Cor. 9:22, 2 Cor 2:16, Gal. 5:11).
- d) A balance must be kept in our financial investments between keeping facilities attractive, tidy, and useful for our purposes while also not spending too much on facilities. (We also

want to have funds to support the equipping of our members and our evangelists and missionaries to reach the world with the gospel.)

- e) Additionally, there is a balance between developing functionality for outreach to the world vs. developing the church buildings for the use of church members for worship, teaching, and fellowship. Further dialogue with the church elders would be important in developing new outreach functions such as evangelistic presentations, Bible studies, food pantry, clothes closet, etc.
- f) We want to keep the gospel workers who are supported by CTR before the eyes and in the prayers of the members of the church, so this should be considered in the development of worship services and church buildings.<sup>vi</sup>

#### 4. **Encouraging Godly Families –**

- a) Our meeting spaces should facilitate age-integration. Worship space traditionally developed with only adults in mind should consider the needs of parents and children<sup>vii</sup>. Conversely, spaces traditionally thought-of as exclusively for children (such as an outdoor playground) should contain design features that welcome older siblings and parents to fellowship and enjoy the space too<sup>viii</sup>.
- b) CTR's commitment to upholding each household as a center of the church's activity throughout the week means that our buildings should not be developed in a way that discourages the use of the homes of church members in carrying out the ministries of the church. The point of our worship center is to allow a larger number of members to gather than would be able to gather in any individual home; it should not be developed to supplant other ministries or Bible studies that could be administered better through member homes<sup>ix</sup>.
- c) Our church is a community; it is the body of Christ, and we must conduct the development of our facilities in such a way as to preserve and enhance its unity. For this reason, all member households should be included as much as practical in developing plans and ideas, and leaders should communicate developments clearly with the whole congregation. Important ministry-philosophy decisions should be agreed-upon by the elders, leaving practical decisions to others, and important practical decisions should be agreed-upon by the heads of households, leaving less-important decisions to those tasked with them. Leadership should be approved by (and held accountable by) the church in a covenantal fashion.

- i Examples of Honoring God rather than man: Church architectural designs often sweep the eye upward with features like high peaks and lofty windows; conversely, we don't want to feature a bunch of statues of church leaders.
- ii Re: Enhancing God's reputation: Trendy, gaudy, or ostentatious styles should be avoided in favor of styles that are modest and "lovely and of good reputation" - Philippians 4:8.
- iii Honoring the church might include developing a way to facilitate gatherings of multiple sister churches (perhaps in outdoor space?), although this isn't a necessity.
- iv Thus, for instance, we want the pulpit more central than the band or sound equipment. We also want to continue using text and books rather than to join our increasingly-graphics-driven culture in abandoning them. Pastor Nate would also like to curate a bookshelf-sized lending library somewhere in the church building.
- v Acoustics would be one application of this. We would not be upholding this value if acoustics were so bad that it was difficult to hear a preacher's sermon – or difficult to carry on a conversation during fellowship time.
- vi Pastor Nate and the Church Administrator have overseen the practical application of this in recent years through weekly announcement slides featuring ministries we support, as well as a bulletin board of their latest newsletters. Such displays, however, need to be carefully monitored for appropriateness for a more-public audience.
- vii Having places next to corporate gathering areas to nurse babies or to remove distracting children (note the plural "places," because nursing-space will need to be quiet and have privacy for mothers, whereas noisy children might need to be taken to a different room by their father), as well as space to stand and walk in the worship service with restless babies is important. Likewise, gathering areas should be relatively safe for little ones to explore.
- viii This could also apply to information-sharing – placing displays and bulletin boards where both children and adults can see.
- ix This is one of the reasons why Pastor Nate maintains his church office at his house rather than at the church building.