

imagine a church...

I was recently talking with someone who said, “When deciding whether or not to invest in a church or ministry, you should ask yourself three questions.” I was then on the edge of my seat to hear what those questions were, because I wanted to know how “The Ridge” would stand up against them!

Here are the three questions he gave me:

- Does it reflect the heart of God?
- Does it have evidence of God’s supernatural involvement and provision?
- Does it have eternal implications?

My heart immediately began to beat faster, because I knew that’s what The Ridge is all about!

Does our church reflect God’s heart? Our vision is to do whatever it takes to reach our community for Christ. I *know* that is God’s heart. That’s the message of the Bible...God doing whatever it takes to reach us.

Does our church have evidence of God’s supernatural involvement and provision? Put it this way—there is no way we could have humanly orchestrated what has happened and is happening at The Ridge! Be in church on April 19 as we talk about what God has done. You will hear 12 specific examples (of the many we *could* share) of God working to lead us to where we are today.

Does it have eternal implications? Duh! I know I probably shouldn’t respond that way, but you get the point. Eternity hangs in the balance for every individual we come in contact with at The Ridge. The good news that we want to share with them is that Jesus died for their sins so that they can spend eternity with Him!

What an exciting time to be at The Ridge!

This newsletter will begin to tell you about our next step as a church to do whatever it takes to reach our community for Christ...and perhaps the biggest step we’ve ever taken. Close your eyes and just begin to “Imagine a church...”

-Pastor Jerry



Our "Imagine a church..." Journey is going to be just that – an exciting journey. As I write this, Lou and I are planning a vacation to Florida in a couple weeks. To be honest, I'm not a big "vacation guy," but I am very excited about 10 days in Florida...and even the journey of getting there and back. (Well, at least getting there.)

I am also excited about our "Imagine a church..." Journey. I am praying that, on the other end of this journey, I will never be the same again, The Ridge will never be the same again, and that our community will never be the same again.

We would ask that you do the same...pray! Pray for what God wants for you and for your response to the teaching, for good communication and for the emphasis we will make with our "Imagine a church..." Journey over the next several weeks.

Some might say that this journey is just about money. If that's what you come away with over the coming weeks, we missed the mark. This journey is about God doing a work in each of our hearts. Any response to that, financial or otherwise, will be simple obedience to whatever God is nudging us to do.

Pack your bags, fasten your seatbelts, and set your GPS to destination: "Wherever God Leads Me," and hang on. Let the journey begin!

-Pastor Mike

P.S. Check out page 5 of the newsletter for some exciting stops along the journey.

Imagine
Imagine
Imagine



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What is our need?

Ultimately this is about "Doing Whatever It Takes to Reach Our Community for Christ." By moving, we have an opportunity to leverage all the work we have done on the "inside" over the last ten years or so to establish a new church experience which can totally change many unchurched people's perspectives on "church." The increased visibility and the sense of newness can provide significant opportunities to reach more of Columbus.

More opportunity is what a new location, new facility, and new image is about. At the same time, this will give us the chance to solve a number of problems that we experience today. These problems range from the obscure location to parking problems to space problems in our auditorium, foyer/commons areas, and a number of ministry spaces.

Who are we working with for the design of the building?

We looked at a number of firms to help us through this process. We narrowed that down to four that we took through an extensive interview/evaluation process. We selected The Aspen Group out of Carmel, Indiana. The Aspen Group rose to the top through our evaluation. The time we have spent with them since then has affirmed that decision several times over. Aspen is a design/build firm. That means that they will lead us through the process from design all the way through handing us the keys.

What are our building plans?

The leadership team has collected input from every ministry area. The results of those meetings were compiled to give our design team the information they needed to develop a master plan. The master plan is our dream facility. It is the ultimate goal, but like most projects, you start by taking the steps you can afford. The Initial Building Plans include a 30,000+ square foot facility that includes an auditorium with a potential of 650 seats, a large multi-purpose atrium/commons space, space for our youth programs (classrooms and multi-purpose gym), and administrative space. Check out the "Imagine a church..." brochure for more details.

When would construction begin?

Once we have affirmation of our financial ability (a commitment on the sale of our existing facilities and adequate funds committed via the campaign) we can begin the next steps. Once we have the financial side of this sorted out it would take a minimum of 6-9 months before we could break ground. The spring of 2010 would be the earliest possible start date.

What will the project cost and how will we pay for it?

The Initial Phase (including site work such as road, parking, and landscaping) is projected at \$4,840,000. We expect to sell our existing facilities for \$2,000,000 and raise the remainder of the funds through our "Imagine a church..." Journey.

Why are we moving ahead with "Imagine a church..." with the current economic situation?

That's a great question, and one which the leadership has spent considerable time evaluating. First, if you look at Scripture, almost all steps of faith were accompanied by what was humanly perceived as obstacles or impossibilities. That is the nature of faith. Second, because of how God has so clearly worked in the past to bring us to where we are today, the question we really need to be asking is, "Why would we *not* move forward?" Even during this economic downturn, God has continued to affirm our direction in some very specific ways. For example, we have had a new party contact the church who is very interested in purchasing our current facilities. We had not been advertising nor did we initiate this contact. This party already has the funds and is willing to work with our timetable! Finally, if we do not move forward, we are essentially making the decision for God that this is not the right time. However, if we move forward and trust Him, then He decides the outcome!

(more questions answered on the next page...)

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What are the chances we can sell our current facilities and what would we do in the meantime?

Currently, we have two parties interested in our facilities. That is a miracle in itself. We see God's hand at work in the sale of our property, so we feel very confident that it will take place. When we sell, we hope to do so in a manner that allows us the time to build and transition into our new facility before needing to vacate our current facilities. While we are not at liberty to share more at this time, God seems to be at work in those details as well.

What happens if we don't raise all the money we need?

The simple answer is that we will take a step back and evaluate what we feel God is directing us to do. The leadership of the church is absolutely committed to not putting us in a position of indebtedness that would hamper our ability to do ministry. Borrowing any sizable shortfall is not an option.

Would we borrow any money?

We would take a very conservative approach to debt. We would borrow a minimum amount of money for the shortest terms possible. Banks tend to say that a church should not borrow more than 3x their annual income. Our RSI consultant suggests no more than 2x. The church leadership feels that more than 1x could jeopardize our ability to do ministry.

What is expected of me?

Pray. Pray for what God wants. Pray for what He wants for our church and how He wants to work through you. Don't ask, "God, what do you want me to do?" but ask, "God, what do YOU want to do through me?"

Fully engage in the journey. In addition to a prayer journey, plan to make all the other stops along the way of the journey. Plan to be here each Sunday of the "Imagine a church" series. The series kicks off on April 19. Also, plan to take the devotional journey with us. We will be doing a three-week devotional series that will start April 27.

Be informed. Attend one of the planned home information meetings. Be there to hear the plans for our future and get your specific questions answered. Respond through your gifts. Refer to the next two questions for more information regarding your gifts.

What should my gift to the "Imagine a church..." Journey be?

That may be the most important question of all. Our answer is that we cannot answer that for you. The answer to that needs to be something you and God sort out. One of the sayings you will hear often over the course of the campaign is "Not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice." That phrase restates the biblical principle of proportionate giving. Not everyone has the resources to make a large gift, but every person does have the ability to make a prayerful, sacrificial gift. We are asking you to genuinely take this before God and then give whatever He lays on your heart. We will provide a "Creative Strategies in Giving" brochure that will be made available and can assist you with a number of ideas to help you respond to your personal or family giving goal.

When do we actually give our gifts to the campaign?

The short answer is "over the next three years." We will be taking a "first fruits" offering on May 31, our Celebration Sunday. The remainder of our commitments are to be given over the course of the next three years. Some will give weekly, some monthly, and some yearly or on some other schedule. Money given to the Journey will be recorded and reported separately from your other giving so you will know exactly where you are in progress toward your goal.

What happens if I cannot fulfill the commitment I make?

You will notice a statement on the "Commitment Card" that answers that question. The statement reads: "This is a statement of faith intent and can be altered as circumstances warrant." We are trusting God for the commitments and the ability for all of us to fulfill those commitments. If God leads otherwise, we will trust Him there as well.

F.requently **A**.sked **Q**.uestions



These meetings are vital to our communications with you. This is also a great opportunity for you to ask questions. Please plan to attend!

April 5-16 Home Information Meetings

Sign up in the foyer through March 29, or through the Connect Team when they call. Feel free to call the church as well. We can make sure you are able to be in one of these very important meetings.

April 19 & 26, May 3 & 10

“Imagine a church...”

Teaching Series on Sundays

May 17 and 24—

Commitment Sundays

May 31—Celebration Sunday...

An All-Church Celebration!

**MARK
YOUR
CALENDARS!**

