

Grace Covenant Church—Facing the Future

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As we celebrated thirty years of ministry as a Bible church in Austin, Texas, we began to look forward to what the Lord had for us for the next thirty years. We needed to deal with both critical needs to support growth and any baggage that was holding us back.

Our perspective in 2003:

- We were building and growth adverse. Bigger buildings would mean that more people would come. Then we'd need to hire additional staff ... which would require more money. When would the cycle end?
- We needed to come to grips that we were not a small church anymore. We were moving toward three services and had 800 families in our congregation but still acted like a church of 500.
- We had no history of a successful capital campaign. We had built in the past by selling land or carrying a debt.
- We had a great location in northwest Austin at the crossroads of three key highways. It had become the geographic center of Austin. Over 125,000 cars drove by our location daily.
- We had an ugly campus.

The church leadership needed to face:

- Our responsibility to shepherd both the current congregation and the future congregation. Slogan, "We're building for both us and them."
- Would we trust God to help us face our fears: growth, funding, building?

Looked for consultants to help us:

- Did the congregation understand the need for building new facilities and view us as being ready? We did a congregational survey with a capital campaign consultant.
- Did we have a future at this location? What was the feasibility of our site to expand our facilities? We did a feasibility study with a civil engineer.
- How big of a church could we build on our site? We did a Campus Master Plan with an architect.
- What type of facilities would we need for future ministry? We did a programming phase with an architect.

Selecting a team of consultants:

- **Seven key consultants to select for your project:**
 1. **Architect** – Consults on process of master planning, programming of church needs, building design and construction management.

2. **Capital Campaign Consultant** – Consults on assessing readiness of the church and fund raising strategies. They coach you and your volunteers through the process. This maximizes your effort.
 3. **Civil Engineer** – Consults on site planning and regulations that your property must meet with government entities.
 4. **Project Manager** – Consults on managing the project flow and the consultant team.
 5. **General Contractor** – They are the ones that will build the project once it is designed.
 6. **Attorney** – You need to know your contracts and have them reviewed to protect your interest.
 7. **Banker/Financial Institute** – Consultants on cash flow management and funding of the project while you are raising the funds from your capital campaign.
- **Key considerations in forming this team:**
 - Think of this like hiring a staff person. You will live with your decision. Design a process to select the best firm for your needs and project.
 - **Competence** – What is their skill and experience level? Have they done church work? How do they fit your project? What is the size of their firm? What unique resources do they bring your team and project?
 - **Character** – Are they Christians? Do they have to be a Christian? Does their firm reflect integrity? Do they have clear values that guide their work? What is their reputation?
 - **Chemistry** – Interview the people you will be dealing with directly, project architect, contractor’s project manager and superintendent, etc. Can you see them relating to you and to each other well? Will they listen to you to understand and connect with your values? Will you listen to them for their professional advice and guidance?
 - **Acclimate them to the spiritual DNA of your church.**

What is Spiritual DNA and how to identify it in your church

Spiritual DNA is who you are as a church. Many things shape your DNA.

- **What is the culture of your city?**

Austin is:

- Very liberal politically and socially
- Unique and off beat - “Keep Austin Weird”
- “Live music capital of the world,” Austin City Limits
- Warm climate and casual – outdoor activities, casual attire
- Environmentally conscience
- Very influential for its size:
 - Politics
 - Education through University of Texas and Texas Educational Association

- High Tech industry – Dell, IBM, Freescale, Applied Materials, Samsung, Software development, venture capital funding
- Film Industry – Austin Film Festival

- **What type of church are you?**

Grace Covenant Church is an independent Bible church. We are in a hostile spiritual environment—liberal and materialistic. Our vision is to be a courageous church where every believer is a minister equipped and united to impact people for Christ to the glory of God.

- **What is your Ministry Philosophy?**

- Grace Covenant Church is an equipping church. Our campus is a training center for believers to grow and be equipped to have a ministry in the community and around the world.
- We love the Bible and will teach it whether it is fashionable or not. We approach cultural issues from a biblical Truth perspective.
- We do not have a program-driven mindset. There is no Sunday evening or Wednesday night service.
- We have to work hard at connecting relationally.

The Bubble Diagram:

- **Your values reflected in your facilities:**

- Your ministry philosophy – Worship oriented, educationally oriented, traditional, hip and contemporary, seeker-sensitive, etc.
- Grace Covenant Church wants to look like a church and to let our facilities be a testimony that Jesus is Lord. We will build one worship center as big as we can. We have a community frontage, 125,000 cars passing per day, and a family front door. We want a local flavor, feel and look.
- Balance extravagance and prudence

Key Advise we received:

- **Prepare the ministries to expand, not just the facilities.**
 - Will you be prepared if the church doubles in size after a new worship center is open? This can start six months prior to the doors opening. How will you preserve your DNA while in a high growth mode? Hire staff before you fully need them so they are in place and acclimated.
- **How will you use committees or sub teams?**
 - One committee for the whole process.
 - A committee for design and a committee for construction.
 - Task teams that are chartered for specific aspects. Hiring consultants, master planning process, interior design, kitchen design, Capital campaign, banking, etc.
- **How will working with you be different from working with any other client?**
 - How do you reflect Christ in the process of building?
 - How do you bring a spiritual perspective into the meetings?
 - How do you handle poor quality of work by a consultant?
 - How do you handle conflict between consultants?
 - How do you do outreach to the workers?

Building is a Faith Process!