

Why a New Campus?

I became one of the pastors of New Hope Presbyterian 22 months ago with the expectation of helping lead a 5-year old church in a building project and move to a new campus. After being at New Hope a brief period and learning more about the church God had called me to serve, I had to struggle with why we were planning to build a new campus. What I can tell you today is that I am excited to see how God may use us this year where we are and in the days and decades ahead where He leads us. Below are a few of the questions and my answers as I worked out as to why New Hope should prepare to build a new campus.

First, I am committed to the vision of those who started New Hope

Presbyterian Church. On Easter Sunday 2008, a large group of people began New Hope with convictions founded on God's Word and a vision to build a new church for God's glory. Many of these stalwarts are still at New Hope. Some have gone to glory. Some have moved on for other reasons. I believe if many of these folks were honest, they would tell you that it has been more difficult than they thought. New Hope, for a 7-year old church, has been through many trials and transitions.

One of the convictions of my pastoral leadership is that we need to have a sense of what God is doing in the present, a vision of what God is able to do into the future and an appreciation of what God has done in the past. The past should never define us, but it should inform and hopefully inspire us. At the commencement of New Hope, in God's gracious providence, our present facility was available which was an answer to fervent prayer. But, the vision and conviction at New Hope's inception was to have a campus and buildings of our own. I am privileged to join in praying that God would make this vision a reality.

Secondly, it makes financial sense. We are grateful to God for our present facility and to the Brazilian Church, Assemblia de Deus who share their building with us. Assemblia de Deus is financially supported by Lighthouse Point Ministry in Pompano Beach, which is the organization that funds many Brazilian churches in the United States.

Each month we pay \$14,000 in rent, plus the total cost for maintenance along with a major portion of all utilities. The cost is high and our ability to offer our ministries is limited by the constraints of the lease. Since 2008 we have spent \$1,117,769.41 on rent payments and \$405,814.69 on maintenance and repairs. We have spent over \$1.5 million on just rent, maintenance and utilities. This does not include costs for such things as the cost of a shuttle six months out of the year. This financial reality helped me get on board with our project.

Thirdly, our present facility is limited and limiting. New Hope is not able to use the facility at all on three nights of the week, after certain hours on other nights, and on half of the Saturdays each month. During our regular activities, we are only able

to use a portion of the building. The space New Hope is able to use has increased in recent years because the Brazilian Church has significantly decreased. We have limited parking. Each week, parking is a challenge. Many of the New Hope leaders through the years have sought to have good relationships with our neighbors in this neighborhood, but it has not been without tension. This was evidenced when one of them called the fire department on our children's campfire in the park a few weeks ago.

Presently, we have 144 parking spaces. The staff and I park at a member's home, some of you park at the Country Club, others ride the shuttle (and we wish more did this)! Presently, we have no additional place, except the public park, where people can park—and this is with our attendance broken up between three worship services. Sometimes, there is simply no place to park. Our new campus will have acres of parking!

Our church staff shares office space. When I arrived, one office had 4 people sharing it which is difficult for working, counseling, and talking on the phone. In addition, our nursery is full on most Sundays. Other spaces for discipleship are filled which is currently limiting the number of adult classes we can offer on Sunday morning. All of this affects the potential growth of our church.

Fourth, we are seeking to build a church in which we can provide God-honoring worship in distinctive styles. A more traditional style of worship needs good acoustics, while a more contemporary style needs a great sound system. This does not sound like a big deal, but it is. A diversity of worship styles is one of the distinctions of New Hope. The new sanctuary is being designed to allow for multiple worship styles to be used with excellence. In our present sanctuary, there is no space for a choir or a praise band, much less other creative expressions of worship. While music is but one means of worship, it is an important one at New Hope.

Fifth, it is my hope that New Hope will one day have a family night. In my mind, a family night is an intergenerational fellowship for children, youth, and adults where a meal is served and everyone gathers for instruction, small groups, and discipleship. This is simply not possible where we are. The new facility allows for this.

Sixth, I have met with the Brazilian leadership in Pompano Beach (the owners of the building). Soon after I arrived, I drove over to the headquarters of the Brazilian Assembly of God Church (Lighthouse Point) to meet the leadership of this national ministry. I came away with the conviction that a move from our present facility was in the best interest of both Christian churches. In the end, I believe that both churches have been able to graciously coexist together these years, but because of culture and ministry vision, I believe it is time to allow them to grow their ministry for Fort Myers and for us to move to a new campus.

Lastly, I have come to believe that now is the time to re-dedicate ourselves to the Kingdom Work of God at New Hope. After being with you now almost 2 years, I clearly see that New Hope is prepared and ready to take a step of faith not only for bricks and mortar, but for the opportunity to continue to grow a Kingdom work in Fort Myers and to the ends of world.

One of the things that inspires me is that so many have held this vision, have given generously, but may not see the full fruits of the work they have envisioned. For decades to come, God's Word will go from this place as a testimony to those who have been faithful servants at this time and at this place. These brothers and sisters sought God through faith to begin New Hope Church and they continue to seek God's blessing for the generations of believers who will follow. This is the example of sacrifice for Christ, without personal gain.

My prayer is that we will do what God is calling us to do for His glory and do it in a God-honoring way. I pray that all of us will participate. Some of us will be able to give large amounts. I pray we will give generously, for God's glory. Some of us will be able to give small amounts. I pray we will give sacrificially, for God's glory. Some of us will not be able to give much money at this time, but we can still do our part, for God's glory. Mostly, I pray that *"God will do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to His power at work in us,"* for His Glory.

Great Peace in the Lord,

Pastor Eddie