

Groundbreaking ... And Beyond

IDEAS FOR
THE CHURCH
AND THE
COMMUNITY

by Kurt Williams

After years of prayer, planning and communicating, the big event is here—the groundbreaking celebration for your new ministry facility. The construction of the new building is often looked at as the end of the journey. More times than not, the groundbreaking celebration is the first exciting step to reach out to your community and draw those who are unchurched or dechurched to your church. A well done groundbreaking ceremony, and other events leading up to the dedication of the new facility, is a fantastic opportunity to reach outside of your church family.

Communicate The Event

Communicate the celebration early and often. With today's hectic schedules, be sure to communicate the date and time at least a month and a half in advance through as many avenues as possible: the pulpit, the bulletin, the Web site, the newsletter and special inserts/handouts are all great in-house means to get the word out. The building of a new facility is an exciting time for your church body. Excitement is contagious, so don't keep it just within your church family, let the entire community know. There are many ways to get the word out to those around you: direct mailing the announcement to the community, the local newspaper, the local television station and local radio. Many times church announcements are carried by the media free of charge. Direct contact with the newspaper and television station along with a special invitation to the ceremony can lead to a complete story about your new facility, the church's ministries and community services. Site signage is important. Identifying the site where you are about to expand, and what type of facility that will be built, informs the community about your church as well as provides great photo opportunities for the celebration.

Celebrate The Event

Over the years, churches have celebrated groundbreaking events in a multitude of ways. Following are just a few creative ideas for you to use and improve:

- ▶ **Grace Missionary Church in Mooresville, Ind.** “crossed over” the street to their new “promised land.” When commercial development next to their existing building created a tremendous appreciation in their property value, the opportunity to build a new ministry center on neighboring property arose. Just as Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, so did Grace Missionary Church cross the county road to their new site. On the way, each member picked up a stone and placed it as a memorial to God's goodness and provision for their new building site. After much prayer and celebration, the ground was broken the old fashioned way, with shovels, and each member was given a baby food jar filled with earth previously excavated from the property, along with verses important to the event attached.



Each member was given a baby food jar filled with earth with Bible verses attached.

- ▶ **Charity Tabernacle in Indianapolis** celebrated their new youth facility thinking about those who will be impacted by their ministry. The Sunday service prior to the groundbreaking celebration, everyone was given a construction

stake. As the excited congregation filed into the worship service, Pastor Paul Slagle greeted them on the big screen, intermittently, as he gave live updates about the event from the jobsite similar to a breaking news report on TV. After some great praise and worship, everyone was dismissed to the building site. The entire congregation surrounded the building outline that had been painted on the ground, and drove each of their stakes in the ground. On each stake was written the name of a person they knew, who did not know the Lord, and those they would invite to the church this next year. Pastor David Gibson summed up the celebration by proclaiming, "We don't just have a vision; we are doing a vision." The celebration also included "mini-stakes" with their building program theme "Build Life Together" emblazoned upon a ribbon tied to the stake as a remembrance of the event.

- ▶ **The Church of ACTS in Indianapolis** celebrated their new youth facility in a similar way as Charity Tabernacle but with a little more horsepower. After driving stakes with the names of those they hoped to reach for the Lord, Pastor Bill Jenkins took control of a Case 580 backhoe to start the job off right!



Pastor Bill Jenkins took control of a Case 580 backhoe to start the job off right!

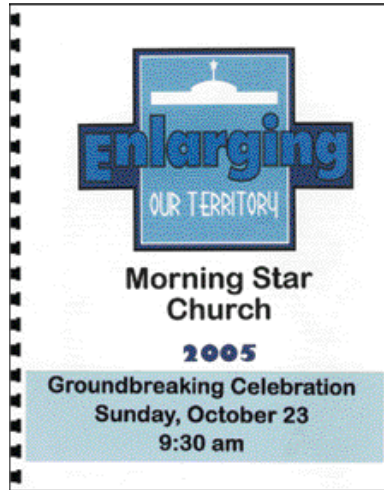
As a remembrance of the event, members were given a mini-stake with their building program theme printed on a ribbon tied to the stake.



▶ **The Cicero Christian Church in Cicero, Ind.** celebrated their new relocation with people power. Along with the excitement of a new building project comes some sentimental attachment to the past facility and properties. Pastor Larry Wiseman understood their current facility—being landlocked and not easily accessible—was not the best, but there was a well meaning group of members who were struggling with the process of relocation. At a board meeting leading up to the groundbreaking celebration, a comment was made by a member that the church needed to be pulling on the same rope in the same direction to make this transition successful. An idea was born. After a rich worship time under cover of a large tent that focused on the history and growth of the church, Pastor Larry guided almost 400 people outside to an old-fashioned farming plow with about 250 yards of rope. After a rousing cheer, all 400 people began pulling together, and in the same direction, on the same rope, to turn the first ground for their new facility.

▶ **The Oaklandon Christian Church in Oaklandon, Ind.** celebrated their new building site with an angels view. With the entire congregation gathered together, a crane lifted a photographer for a bird's eye view of the property and those who had given so much for the future of the church. The picture hangs today in the foyer as a reminder to future generations.

▶ **Morning Star Church in Kokomo, Ind.** celebrated their new youth facility with a focus on the past and the foundation laid for the future. A large tent, with almost the same dimensions as the youth facility, was placed on the site of the new building. Around the tent hung a pictorial collage of the history of



An information pamphlet was handed out to all in attendance prior to the celebration.

Morning Star Church dating back to the early 1900's, and ending with the artist's rendering of the new youth facility. An information pamphlet was handed out to all in attendance prior to the celebration. The contents of the pamphlet included frequently asked questions about the project, the ministry uses for the new building, the costs to construct, and reduced floor plans and elevations of the new building. During the celebration, several members shared how they came to know the Lord as a result of the ministry and how the new youth facility would be used to bring more people to a saving relationship with the Lord.

Continue The Event

So many times after the groundbreaking celebration the excitement tends to wear off, and most people are intimidated to walk onto a jobsite. This is just the time to reinvigorate your congregation and remind them of their financial commitments as well as their commitments to those in the community.



Members of The First Church of the Nazarene signed their names and wrote scripture verses and prayers on steel that would be more than 30 feet in the air the next day.

- ▶ **The First Church of the Nazarene in Frankfort, Ind.** gathered on the site for a steel signing party. The evening before steel was set to be erected on their new multipurpose facility, everyone gathered to sign their names and write scripture verses and prayers on steel that would be more than 30 feet in the air on the next day. Some that missed the groundbreaking celebration appreciated the opportunity to gather for a follow-up type event.

- ▶ **The Evangelical Covenant Church in Lafayette, Ind.** held several events during the construction of their new facility. Tours were held at different stages of the construction project on Saturdays. The Saturday events allowed the congregation reasonably free access to the project without the safety hazards of an active jobsite. The periodic tours also became reminders to maintain their financial commitments to the project and to generate excitement leading up to the dedication of the new facility.

- ▶ **Grace Evangelical Church in Southport, Ind.** used their tours as an outreach to the community. Flyers were distributed to the surrounding neighborhoods with information about their new facility, and when tours would be available to those who were interested. Along with the flyer was contact information for any complaint or request to be made concerning the construction stage of the project. The church was aware that the construction would draw attention, both good and bad. A simple outreach like this goes a long way to let the community know the church wants to be a good neighbor and desires to be sensitive to the concerns, and even the disruptions, that an active construction site presents.

- ▶ **Zionsville Fellowship Church in Zionsville, Ind.** reached out to the construction workers for their new ministry facility. The quickest way to a man's heart may be through his stomach. The Zionsville fellowship decided to continue their groundbreaking celebration by feeding the workmen on the site. Periodically, a wonderful lunch was provided to those who were laboring on the project. Not only did this act meet the physical needs of those on the site, there were several opportunities for church members to share why they were doing this and minister to the construction workers spiritual needs as well.

For so many of the unchurched and dechurched in our communities, church is all about rules and regulations/sack cloth and ash. A groundbreaking celebration and events following the celebration are great opportunities to draw those in the community in and to further solidify those who are already in your midst. These examples are but a few witnessed over the years. Please share other creative ideas that have been used to help those who are beginning the adventure of facility expansion with me at the e-mail address below. ❖

Kurt Williams is on the design/build team at T & W Corp. with more than 20 years of experience in the industry, 16 of those years guiding churches through the various stages of designing and constructing their new facilities. T & W Corporation is a design/build firm dedicated to serving the churches of Central Indiana. Mr. Williams is an active member of the NACDB. For further information he can be reached at kwilliams@twcorp.net.

Reprint with permission from Workhorse Publishing L.L.C.
Copyright©2007/Workhorse Publishing L.L.C./All Rights Reserved.