

Mt. Pleasant Church Plan for Growth

In the fall of 2006 a leadership retreat for Mt. Pleasant Church was held. The purpose of the retreat was to determine where God was leading Mt. Pleasant, and how we could best help accomplish His plan for our church. The general consensus was that God wanted Mt. Pleasant to be a shining beacon leading people in our community to His salvation.

Various ideas were considered on how Mt. Pleasant working with the guidance of the Holy Spirit might bring this about. It was agreed that giving God our very best effort, doing everything that we do to the best of our abilities, and stressing excellence in all our activities was essential. We decided to focus on a high quality worship service emphasizing song, preaching, and children's programs. We also realized that making our facilities and service attractive, inviting and friendly, especially to visitors was crucial. Finally it was determined that we needed to better promote Mt. Pleasant and let the outside world know what was happening in our midst.

In order to accomplish these objectives, teams were formed to carry out various aspects of the plans. Much time was spent praying for God to lead us in these efforts to grow His kingdom.

- The outside appearance was improved through landscaping, adding lighting to the building and parking lot, and a new sign.
- The leader of the praise team was made a staff position, and upgrades were made to the sound equipment and video projectors.
- The leaders for Children & Worship were sent to conferences for additional training and more help for the program was recruited.
- We started videoing every service to share with those unable to be at the service, and to provide a tool for those involved in the service to improve the quality of the service.
- Training was provided to greeters and ushers stressing the need to warmly welcome and assist all those attending the service.
- A promotion team was formed. They developed a color scheme, a logo, and helped various groups generate promotional materials for their events.
- A fantastic web site was created that provides lots of information about Mt. Pleasant Church, as well as a church calendar and sermons on line.

These efforts, along with the power of the Holy Spirit working in our midst, have brought about spectacular results. After 10 years of little or no growth at Mt. Pleasant (See chart on page 7) consistent growth is now occurring. However, Mt. Pleasant is now at a point where a decision has to be made whether to let God keep growing His kingdom at Mt. Pleasant, or to limit ourselves to our present size. Session firmly believes that God is leading us to keep growing, and our task is to determine the best way to accomplish this.

For the short term, it was decided to add overflow parking spaces, set up additional chairs in the front and rear of the sanctuary, and encourage our members to use these options so as to allow visitors to have the most desirable parking and seating available. These options are now in use and we continue to grow.

There are three Long term options we have considered:

1. Expand the capacity of the current facilities. This would involve doubling the size of the parking lot and sanctuary. Minimum cost is estimated to be in excess of \$500,000.00, which would double the size of

our current mortgage payment (which we are barely able to meet now) from \$4,000.00 to \$8,000.00 per month. This would not reflect good stewardship, even if a bank would lend us the money, which they would probably not.

2. Provide a remote simulcast in the fellowship hall. Churches have tried this option, and a few have been successful, but most found out that the vast majority of people insist on a “Live” church experience.
3. Add a third service. Mt. Pleasant currently has two services on Sunday, one at 9:40 am and one at 6:00 pm. Moving the first service to approximately an hour earlier and adding a third service somewhere in the 10:00 to 11:00 am time frame would be the option that most churches that are experiencing growth similar to Mt. Pleasants have adopted.

Since the fall of 2006, we have been diligently tracking our attendance and as Mt. Pleasant Growth Chart shows, we have seen exciting growth. Since 2007 Session has dedicated a portion of our meetings to talk about and plan for this blessing. As we studied the 2007 and 2008 numbers, we decided to form a sub-committee to address issues, concerns, and core values that would support a third service.

1. To kick things off, the Session held a retreat in February 2009. We identified the following Core Values for Worship:
 - Keep the current liturgical elements (Call to worship, hymns, etc.)
 - Children & Worship
 - Dedicated Sunday School
 - Preaching that helps us to understand God's love and help us to love Him, love others, and serve the world
 - Praise through song
 - Identical Sunday Morning Services
2. We also established a critical point where we would need to put a third service into action:
 - Sunday morning average attendance hits 200
3. Issues and concerns that would need to be addressed included:

Organizational Planning, including:

- Children & Worship x2 (Leaders / Greeters)
 - C & W Leader / Worship Elder leading this effort
 - Plans include dedicated C & W centers during services
- Sunday School
 - SS Superintendent and Christian Education Elder leading this effort
 - Sunday School teacher concerns
 - Additional Sunday School offerings
 - Plans include a dedicated SS time
 - Plans include dedicated SS rooms in the Fellowship Hall (improvements underway in 2010)
- Fellowship (Fellowship team planning... coordination with fund raisers etc.)
- Sanctuary Clean-up x2 (including washrooms)
- Greeters / Ushers / Acolyte / Liturgist x2
- Praise Team / Sound Team x2
- Pianist / Organist x2

- New members / receptions
- Baptisms
- Staff for nursery during service / Sunday school
- Congregational meeting... after last service?

A team from the sub-committee reviewed several churches in the Beaver Butler Presbytery that have experienced the same growth and visited Four Mile in the Beaver / Brighton area:

4. Finally, the committee drafted several service plan options and recommended the following to session:

“Plan G” – See Details on following page

Basis:

- Holds to the core values set by the session including a dedicated Sunday School time
- The sub-committee strongly believes that we will see a significant growth in the Sunday School ministry by having a later time. We also believe there will be opportunity for additional Sunday School offerings.
- In addition, this format offers additional serving opportunities for those who are willing and called

Recommended Plan

PLAN G	Pre-Worship	Worship	Transition	Sunday School	Transition	Worship	Post-Worship
	30 mins	1:15 mins	5 mins	45 mins	10 mins	1:15 mins	30 mins
Insert Time Here	8:15-8:45a	8:45-10:00am	10:00-10:05a	10:05-10:50a	10:50-11:00a	11:00-12:15p	12:15-12:45p
Element(s)							
Parking Phase 1							
Parking Phase 2							
Parking Phase 3							
Praise Team Sound Check	█			█			
Praise Through Song		█		█	█		
Worship		█	█			█	█
Praise in Worship			█			█	
Nursery			█	█		█	█
Children's Worship Set-Up		█					
Children's Worship			█	█		█	█
CW Parent Pick-Up							█
Children's Worship Tear-Down							█
Sunday School Set-Up							
Sunday School				█	█		
Sunday School Tear-Down							█
Fellowship Set-Up							
Fellowship				█	█		
Fellowship Tear-Down					█	█	
Sanctuary Clean-Up				█	█		█
Daycare Set-Up							█
Greeters	█	█			█	█	
Liturgist		█				█	
Ushers		█	█	█		█	█
Acolyte		█				█	█
Pianist		█				█	█
Organist							
Video Team							
Sound Team							
Slideshow Team							
Fundraisers							
Special Fellowship Dinners							

Why Grow

Growth is not easy or without change and disruption, so why should a church desire to grow?

1. Jesus said to: Go make disciples of all nations/peoples
2. Bringing others to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior shows God how much we value what He has done for us.
3. Church growth makes our community a better place to raise our families
4. Church growth creates an atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement
5. Churches that do not continue to grow stagnate and eventually die.
6. Church growth provides greater opportunities to develop new friendships with people with similar interests.

Common objections to growth and answers:

1. I don't like change. Change in one form or another is unavoidable.
2. I don't like not knowing everyone. People don't know everyone now - once attendance exceeds approximately 100 it is impossible to know everyone.
3. I like to worship with my friends, family, and those that I am familiar with. Worship is about honoring and praising God, not engaging in a social visit.
4. I think that growth encourages various factions and disrupts the unity of a congregation. The unifying factor in a congregation is love of Jesus Christ. After that a church should be comprised of a cross section of the community that it serves if it expects to reach all the unsaved in its area.

Note that the reasons for growth focus outwardly, on taking the gospel to our friends and neighbors, while the objections focus inwardly on what I like and what makes me comfortable and happy. How fortunate for us that Jesus did not focus on himself, but on what he could do for us no matter how uncomfortable it was for Him. Can we not tolerate a little discomfort to help spread His gospel to those among those in such desperate need?

Limits to growthⁱ

The Seating Range of the Sanctuary

The impact of the physical space in which worship takes place should be given consideration at this point. I am addressing the perceptions the worshiper has in response to the surroundings during the worship service. Generally speaking, the experience of corporate and dynamic worship takes place in sanctuaries that are comfortably filled.

With respect to the perceptions of space, there are four types of sanctuaries: uncomfortably crowded, comfortably filled, comfortably empty, and uncomfortably empty. Several factors contribute to a sanctuary being perceived in the comfortable seating ranges: a wide center aisle or aisles, wide side aisles, a large vestibule, short pews, and a spacious chancel at the front of the sanctuary.

Wide aisles obviously contribute to the ease of entering and leaving the sanctuary. Additionally, the roominess they provide allows freedom to stop and greet someone as you pass without obstructing others as they move to find their seats. The visiting and fellowship before and after the worship service enhances the sense of togetherness and community.

A large vestibule further contributes to the possibility of establishing relationships through visiting, sharing, and caring. Importantly, the large vestibule gives worshipers a strong sense of spaciousness.

Short pews, seating up to eight people, are more desirable than longer pews in a sanctuary. Many people even arrive early in hopes of finding available aisle seating. Some people will step past those on the aisle to sit

somewhat more toward the middle of the pew, but generally people don't like to feel "trapped" in the middle. Visitors are particularly sensitive to claustrophobic seating.

The chancel area is another significant factor in the sense of spaciousness in the sanctuary as a whole. The more spacious and open the chancel area is the more likely people are to feel comfortable in their seating, even if they are in fact somewhat crowded. In a comfortably filled sanctuary, a cluttered and crowded chancel causes the sanctuary to be perceived as uncomfortably crowded.

Most people prefer to worship in a sanctuary that is comfortably filled. Next, people prefer a sanctuary that is comfortably empty. Then people prefer a sanctuary that is uncomfortably empty. Last of all will people be willing to put up with worshipping in a sanctuary that is uncomfortably crowded. They will do so mainly on Christmas and Easter because that is to be expected. From Sunday to Sunday people prefer not to worship in a sanctuary that is uncomfortably crowded. (Note: Surveys show that the #1 complaint and reason for not shopping at Wal-Mart is that "It's too crowded"). People are willing to drive extra distances, and pay more money to avoid feeling crowded.

A church that has an uncomfortably crowded sanctuary would be wise to add another service or expand the size of the sanctuary – or consider building a new sanctuary. It is generally not possible for a church to sustain an uncomfortably crowded worship attendance Sunday after Sunday—unless they are simply turning over a lot of visitors each Sunday.

The chart in Figure 3.1 will enable you to ascertain the maximum "comfortably filled" seating capacity of your sanctuary. Rural sanctuaries in town and country settings tend to become comfortably filled at 50 to 70% of total seating capacity. People who have chosen to have substantial elbow room in everyday life tend to want a stronger sense of spaciousness their sanctuary than people who live in urban apartments and homes.

Figure 3.1 Maximum "Comfortably Filled" Seating Capacity Formula

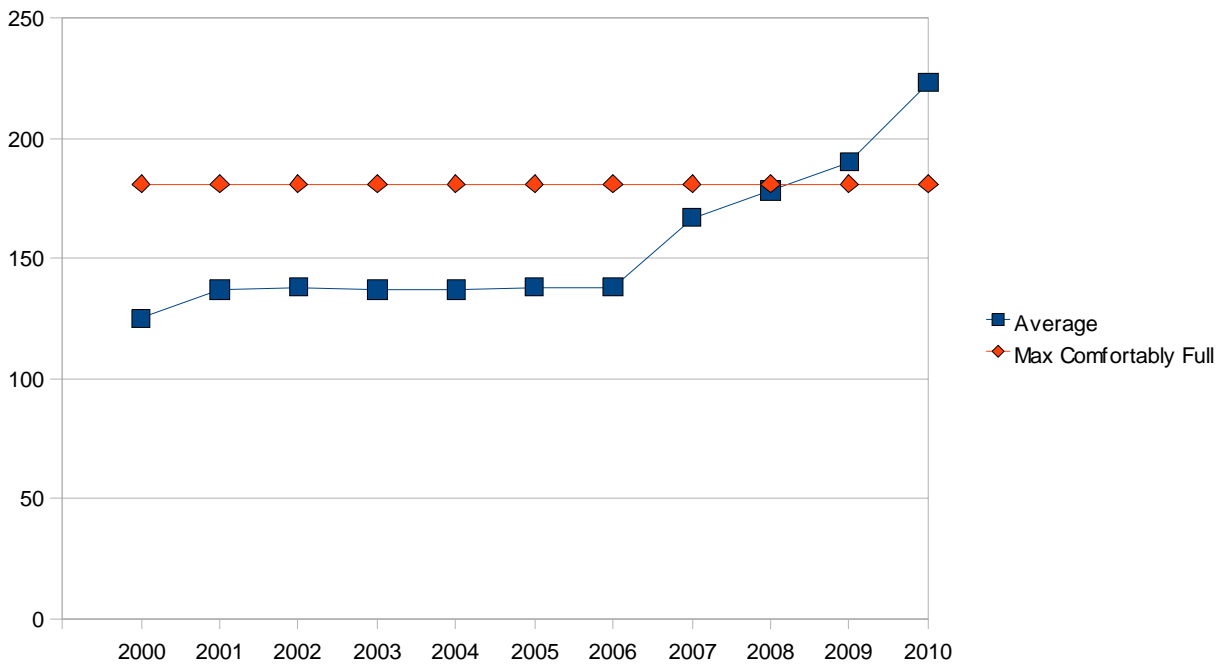
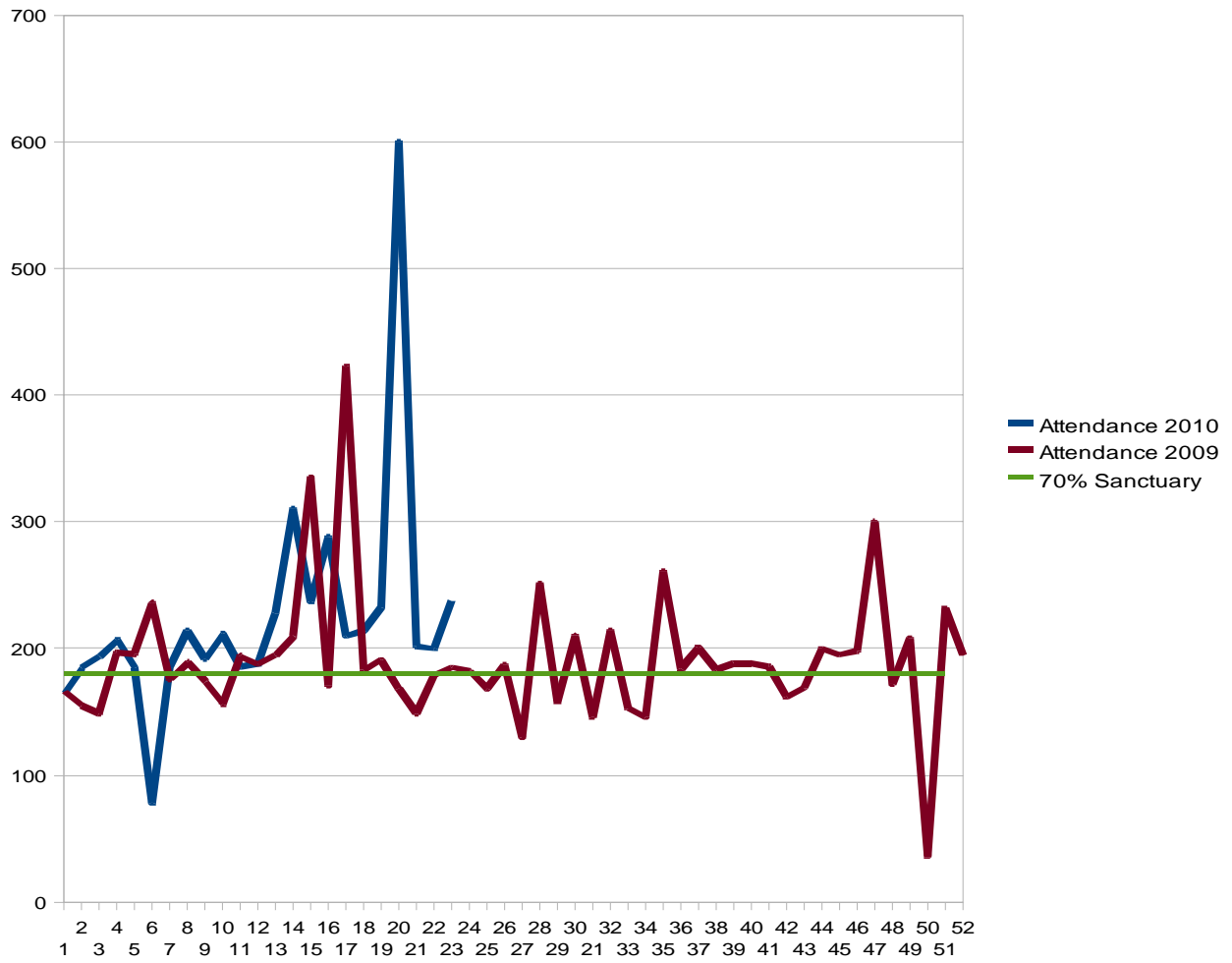
There are four kinds of sanctuaries: uncomfortably crowded, comfortably filled comfortably empty, and uncomfortably empty. Work through this formula to determine the "comfortably filled" seating capacity of your sanctuary.

1	Main floor seating capacity(Omit front pew unless a railing is present.)	240
2	Choir seating capacity	0
3	Balcony seating capacity	0
4	Overflow seating capacity	18
5	Total gross seating capacity	258
6	Comfortably filled urban (80% of total gross)	206
7	Comfortably filled rural (60% of total gross)	155
8	Mt. Pleasant median (2010)	207
9	Days over 200	14 of 23

Available Parking

Some researchers suggest that it is important for a church to have approximately 20% of its visible parking area empty on a given Sunday so that the large hidden sign that is hung out front says "Come on in; There is room in the inn for you." The further point is made that when the parking is full it has the same net effect as a sanctuary that is uncomfortably crowded. That is when the parking lot or lots are full; the big hidden sign hung out front is "There is no room in this inn for you."

Available designated spaces - 105. Number of days over 105 in 2010 year to date - 11.



Additional Resources

“How To Grow A Church” Authors Donald McGavran & Win Arn Published by Regal Books Glendale, CA

“Strategies for Church Growth” Author C. Peter Wagner Publisher Regal Books Glendale, CA

“Church Growth And The Power Of Evangelism” Author Howard Hanchey Publisher Cowley Publications Cambridge, MA

“Understanding Church Growth” Author Donald A. McGavran Publisher William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI

The Pastors Church Growth Handbook” Author Dr. Win Arn Publisher Church Growth Press Pasadena, CA

“How To Break Growth Barriers” Author Carl F. George Publisher Baker Books Grand Rapids, MI

These books as well as many others are available from Pastor Rich

ⁱ This report is based on an excerpt from “Twelve Keys to an Effective Church” Author Kennon L Callahan Published by Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA

The numbers on the graph represent actual figures for Mt. Pleasant Church for the years 2009 & 2010 to date



Keeping Up With the Spirit: A Proposal for Continued Growth

On June 20th, 2010, following the morning worship service, the congregation will gather to discuss the possibility of adding a third worship service. The attached information will allow you to get a glimpse of some of the why and the what of session's proposal. On the 20th there will be a three part presentation followed by a time of question and answer to allow for feedback.

The congregation will not be voting on the proposal. This is an informational meeting. None of the decisions are final at this point. The session is genuinely open to being responsive and flexible as we move forward. Our desire is to discover and act according to God's will. Please keep our church and its leaders in your prayers.