

November 2, 2015

Murray Street Proposal

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42–47, ESV)

Biblical Perspective and Priority:

Before we make any decisions as a church, we need to make sure we are doing so from the right place. We need to ensure we are making decisions in accordance with the word of God. That means we need to have the *perspectives* and *priorities* of Scripture.

From Acts 2:42-47 and the description of the early church, we can see their perspective and priorities as a church:

1. They were devoted (wholeheartedly committed) to the Apostle’s teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers:

These were not things that were ‘added’ on to their lifestyle. These things took radical effort, sacrifice, and priority. These things were a matter of life and death for the early Christians, not preference. It was part of being a Christian.

2. They were unified (“together and had all things in common”):

The early church was ‘together’. They were one. They found their new identity in Christ meant that they were also one with each other. One of the most powerful witnesses to the gospel, in a world of hatred, animosity, isolation, broken relationships etc., is the unity of the church in Christ.

3. They were sacrificial and generous:

They gave up whatever they had to help others. They didn’t hold back. It cost them, but they believed the better word of Jesus that it is better to give than to receive.

4. They were thankful:

They were marked by a profound sense of gratitude. All they received they were thankful for. They didn't complain or grumble. They didn't think of what they were owed, but thankful for all they had.

5. They met together daily:

All of this happened together. Not via live stream. Not via text message. Not via facebook group. They prioritized being together, because they knew how important it was for their growth, how important each of them was to each other.

These priorities are the fruit of the gospel taking root in the life of individuals, and need to be the values and priorities of our church.

By God's grace, this radical vision of the Church is what we are praying for, and seeking to become.

Practical:

The question, then, regarding *where* and *when* we meet is considered with this perspective in mind:

1. We need to be devoted to the instruction of the word of God, to fellowship together, to breaking bread together, and to praying together. This means we prioritize this over our comforts, our other priorities in life, etc.
2. Our decision is made in a unified way, *as a church*. We don't only consider what's best for us, but what's best for others.
3. We assume and expect that the Christian life, and the priorities of the Christian life will require sacrifice on our part. We cannot be devoted to Christ and the Church without sacrifice. We cannot simply 'balance' interests. If we realize and expect sacrifice, we are not surprised when we actually have to. This might not mean enduring physical hardship, but it could mean changing our own schedule, offering rides, taking more time for others, etc.
4. We receive the gift of the church as a gift, not a burden.
5. We make fellowship with each other, teaching, prayer, serving, giving, eating together a part of our daily life. This is hard, and requires sacrifice. But it is invaluable.

Church meeting space is not about the building, but what it is used for. We are the church, the body, the temple of God. But because of who we are, we need to meet

together, and thus, need space to do so. We don't see our identity in our physical space, and yet, out of our identity, make use of physical space.

Proposal

The members and board of Murray Street Baptist Church have generously and eagerly offered the use of their entire building, including their sanctuary for worship, for a minimal rental fee (what we pay now).

The proposal for consideration:

Accept the offer of MSBC to meet (separately, different congregations and times) for worship Sunday evenings at 5:00pm, with full use of MSBC throughout the week as available.

Positives

1. Gospel-Partnership: Experience generosity of MSBC

The mission of the Gospel cannot be accomplished alone. MSBC understands this and has offered to provide some of what they have (space) to aid us in this mission. While it is **absolutely clear** we are **distinct congregations with distinct values and practice**, they do want to help us. This is a great example of 'loving across lines' for the greater cause of the gospel.

We cannot overlook the generosity of other Christians. God's kingdom is much bigger than us, and our decisions can't be entirely focused on ourselves. If another church is willing to be so generous, we need to consider if it is a gospel-partnership that is pleasing to God. What a great testimony for a gospel partnership that is so rare. We have prayed for years to be more connected to and working with other churches; this could be a practical way.

2. More stable meeting space:

While we are grateful to God for his provision of our current space, and thankful to KPRDSB for their hospitality, it is clear that we don't have the same priorities, and our meeting space is less than stable:

- i) Changed date in May to book a school-wide event.
- ii) Asked to move our storage space, now costing money

With MSBC, our interests are very much aligned; the spreading of the gospel.

3. Weekly Meeting/Training/Eating space:

At PCVS, we pay for only 4-5 days a month. With MSBC, we would have more use, for everyday activities, including:

- i) Sunday Worship and Children's Ministry permanent space
- ii) Church luncheon/dinner space
- iii) Corporate space to pray during the week
- iv) Training/meeting space

4. Proximity to serving Ministries:

MSBC is central to several services, including the Warming Room.

5. More Accessible:

PCVS is the only school in Peterborough without wheelchair access. This is part of the reason they moved, and has come up numerous times within our membership. Between the stairs and the chairs, it is not very accessible for people with special physical needs.

6. Great Corporate worship space:

The sanctuary in MSBC is well designed for corporate worship. It is easily accessed, comfortable seating (instead of chairs), air-conditioned in summer, heated in winter, requires little to no sound set-up. It is also simply beautiful.

7. More open to public: MSBC is a well-known church in the Downtown. It is much more known than PCVS, and visitors and outsiders are much more likely to attend.

8. Designated Children's ministry rooms:

There is a nursery and large children's room, each with a washroom.

Questions for Consideration

1. What impact would the time change have? (5:00 pm)

We used to run an evening service, and it was our largest attended. However, since we've grown to include families and those older than students, time matters in different ways.

Positive:

- Students who are away can often make it back for a Sunday evening. Most are back in town by Sunday evening.
- Outsiders are pretty open to an evening service, especially downtown. Our Christmas service had 30-40 visitors.
- 5pm is early enough to get home for a later dinner/get kids to bed (6:30), but late enough to eat before as well.
- Could be nice to take the morning with your family

No time is perfect for everyone. It will take sacrifices on everyone's behalf to prioritize meeting together. We need to serve one another to help each other gather.

2. Does this change our identity and values we've been working so hard to build?

3. MSBC is soon going to be in a season of looking for a Minister. Does that mean an unstable future?

4. Cost:

One thing we value as a church is sustainability. We don't want to do anything that would unnecessarily hinder us from gospel ministry. Building ownership comes with a big cost, and a lot of churches rent. This is good, but can be unstable. Having the option to rent a church long-term is a great balance of interests. We keep our costs low and sustainable to our size, and have stability and functionality of Church corporate space.

5. Why change a good thing? We've been through a lot of change.

Our church is 5 years old. It is very typical of churches to go through transitions until they find a permanent space. If you were to go through the history of the churches in Peterborough, you would find a similar story. It takes a lot of work, and focus on what's important:

The gospel, the Word of God, prayer, our love for each other, our love for and witness to the lost, our maturing in the faith, our unity, etc. It takes a lot of work, but God honors it.

Timeline and Time of Congregational Discernment

1. Prayer:

Above all we want to continue to make all of our decisions as a church family with much prayer. We want each of our members to commit to prayer for this opportunity, for unity, and the advance of the gospel in and through us.

2. Testing:

We want to have an opportunity for our whole church to worship together at MSBC and see the space. We've booked November 22nd for an evening serving at 5pm. We would like all our members (and non-members!) to come attend.

3. Conversations:

We welcome the input of members, and invite you to get in touch with the elders if you have questions, comments, concerns, encouragements, etc. We need to walk through this decision with unity and openness and communication.

4. Member Decision:

This is a decision our members must decide on. We would like to have another meeting early December once we've seen the space, had some feedback etc.

FAQ