

## **A New Home to Prayerfully Connect, Grow and Serve**

When a body of believers senses a call to build a new church home, there are often questions. Below you will find frequently asked questions and answers related to the facility future of River Rock Church. This FAQ document is a living document, questions and answers will be added and updated on an on-going basis.

### **What are the reasons we feel led to build a new church home?**

In order to better prayerfully connect, grow and serve both our River Rock Church family and the surrounding Rockford community, we require a church home that can better accommodate our Sunday morning and mid-week ministries.

### **What are the challenges we are facing with our Sunday morning ministries?**

There are two main challenges for our Sunday mornings together, 1) appropriate classroom space for our Kids on the Rock Children's Ministry and nursery for babies/toddlers, and 2) accessibility of the worship space for those who cannot navigate stairs.

### **What are the challenges related to our Kids on the Rock Children's Ministry in a school setting?**

There are three main challenges our Children's Ministry faces, 1) safety of the children, 2) limitations on how classrooms may be used for teaching and learning activities and 3) weekly modifications to classrooms.

### **What are the safety issues for our children?**

There are several safety concerns. First, safe children's ministries have one main entrance or access point in order to monitor to whom and when access is given to the children. The circular nature of the Rockford Christian School building and the two unlocked building doors mean we do not have control over access to our children. Second, the classrooms used for our children's ministry and nursery are designed first and foremost to be elementary and middle school classrooms for Rockford Christian School. That means there are objects and layouts in the classroom designed for older children learning during the school day. These objects and layouts can be slightly altered on Sunday, but may not be entirely safe for our younger children, toddlers and babies.

### **What limitations and modifications are there for our children being able to learn on Sunday morning in Rockford Christian School classrooms?**

The Rockford Christian School teachers work very hard to design their classroom spaces according to the learning needs of the grade school children they teach. We appreciate the teachers' graciousness to allow us into their educationally designed spaces for our Sunday morning children's ministry. We desire to be good stewards of their graciousness when we move the items within their classroom to accommodate our children each Sunday morning. That means our learning spaces are small sections of their classrooms and not designed to accommodate our Sunday morning curriculum and the age-related learning needs of our children.

### **What are the accessibility issues of our worship space?**

There are two barriers to those who require mobility devices or have challenges walking, 1) the steps down for seating, and 2) the limited number and tight seating configuration on the upper level. Wheelchairs, walkers, and crutches/canes require more width than a person walking without assistance. The upper level of the worship space is tightly configured to ensure adequate and safe seating space next to the steps. This then limits available space for individuals who use mobility devices. As a church family, we should make our family life together accessible to everyone.

### **What are the mid-week ministries that are prompting us to seek a new home?**

There are several mid-week ministries of our church family facing space needs that are limiting their ability to connect and grow, 1) youth group, 2) GEMS and Cadets (girls' and boys' clubs), and 3) women's Bible studies. Furthermore, we are significantly limited in how we can connect, grow and serve the Rockford community because of our inability to physically accommodate mid-week programs. Some examples of needs in the community (and among our family) that we could serve if we had space are, 1) MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers), 2) support groups (e.g. grief, divorce, addiction recovery), 3) food truck deliveries (e.g. North Kent Community Services), 4) exercise classes, 5) Men's ministry.

### **Some of these mid-week ministries occur in the evening, why can't they be accommodated at Rockford Christian School when school is not in session?**

We have exclusive use of our River Rock Church Offices and our Youth Group Room during the week. If we have more than one mid-week evening ministry or meeting taking place, we are not able to accommodate them within our own space. Rockford Christian School also has evening activities, such as sporting events, clubs, musical activities, parent meetings, etc. The school's mid-week needs come before ours, and rightly so as we are renting their facility; that means we are not able to effectively connect and grow some of our vital mid-week ministries.

### **How can a new church home help us to better prayerfully connect, grow and serve?**

We can pray at all times, in all ways and in all spaces; our ability to connect, grow and serve will be aided in our own church home. We will be able to connect, grow and serve our Kids on the Rock Children's Ministries by providing dedicated and safe learning spaces and nurseries. We will be able to connect, grow and serve our worship attendees with a worship space that is accessible to all. We will be able to connect, grow and serve our River Rock Family with mid-week ministries that have appropriate spaces to accommodate a variety of ministry groups during the day and evening. We can connect, grow and serve the needs of the Rockford community by providing services that are essential.

### **Why can't River Rock Church simply build an addition onto Rockford Christian School?**

There are two reasons. First, several years ago we examined with an architect and construction firm the possibility of a major addition onto the school. Their professional conclusion was that an addition would cost as much as our own free standing church home. Second, we do not own Rockford Christian School; we are renters. We cannot build a major addition onto a building we do not own.

### **What are ways that River Rock Church can continue to collaborate in our relationship with Rockford Christian School?**

There are several ways that River Rock Church and Rockford Christian School can collaborate going forward. Here are some partnerships we currently envision:

- We could share our buildings as needs arise. For example, River Rock Church could use Rockford Christian School's gym for Men's Basketball, youth and children's activities. Rockford Christian School could use River Rock's worship space for performances and larger accessible audience events.
- We could share our land. River Rock Church could use Rockford Christian Schools sports and other fields for youth and children's activities, River Rock festival, etc. Rockford Christian School could use River Rock Church's land and woods for science and learning activities.
- We could share our parking. Both River Rock and Rockford Christian School have events that require additional parking (e.g. Christmas/Easter services, graduations, school performances, etc.). We have approached Rockford Christian School (and their parent organization Grand Rapids Christian Schools) to discuss a parking partnership. We are exploring a ground lease agreement with Rockford Christian School for a section of land between

Rockford Christian School and River Rock Church's property (current baseball field) to build a connected parking lot. This arrangement would be a win-win for both us. This ground lease agreement could save us approximately \$100,000 on site development costs.

**If Rockford Christian School would sell its building in the next 10 years and we have leased the parking lot land, will this parking lot be sold with the school building?**

No. First, it is our understanding that Rockford Christian School is a thriving school/ministry and does not have any plans to discontinue its existence. Second, we intend to execute a long term lease with Rockford Christian School (10 to 30 years) such that any subsequent property owner would be subject to the ground lease in the unlikely event of a purchase of the school property.

**Has the house that was on the recently purchased property been parceled off and sold?**

Yes. We successfully worked with the township to parcel off the land. The lot with the house is approximately 3 acres in size. River Rock Church now has 17 acres of land. We closed on the sale of the Egypt Valley house on July 14. After closing costs, our net income from the house sale was \$166,791. The River Rock Church Board of Elders applied \$150,000 of that money to the mortgage on the land and \$16,791 went into to the facility fund budget.

**The original building plan presented in the feasibility study was too expensive for many in the church. What has been done exercise more stewardship of the congregation's financial resources?**

The original plan (~ \$5 million) has been scaled back and modified to be completed in stages. Stage 1 will enable us to have a church home that will meet our basic needs to connect, grow and serve both our church family and the Rockford community. We are still fine tuning the costs of Stage 1. The costs appear to be settling into the \$2-2.5 million range.

**Have we completely decided to build a new church home?**

No, not yet. We plan to have a congregational vote after we have completed the fund raising campaign. We need to have a full financial picture of the congregation's financial support. The decision to build a new church home is a family decision, therefore, we will have a vote by the congregation before we proceed with building.

**Do we plan to incur debt to build our new church home?**

The River Rock Board has been actively discussing this question. Our desire is to not have debt related to building our church home when construction is complete. We are open to obtaining a construction loan that would allow us to start building before 100% of the pledged funds are received. Another approach would be to defer "breaking ground" until nearly all of funds are received and not incur a construction loan.

**What will the fund raising campaign look like?**

At the end of July, Dave Tuit agreed to be the fund raising chair person. He is working with Breton Group, fund raising consultants, to determine the best campaign for River Rock. We do know that the fund raising campaign will be structured to allow a person's pledge to be payable over a three-year period.

**What builder and architect are we using?**

We are working with Copper Rock construction during the master planning phase of this process. Copper Rock has a successful history of working with churches and non-profits. Copper Rock hired an architectural firm, Concept Design, to help with the master plan. The Concept Design architects have worked closely with River Rock Church to understand our church family's needs and our church mission.

**Will the builder be open to bids?**

Yes, Copper Rock is willing to structure their arrangement with us in a variety of ways, including allowing members of our congregation to provide bids.

**How would we access our new building?**

We are still working on that issue. Our Facilities Team prefers our own driveway off of Belding Road. Our own driveway would serve first as a construction entrance and then be resurfaced as our proper driveway. This option will help keep our costs down rather than repairing/resurfacing Rockford Christian Schools driveway after construction traffic.

**What could I do now to be supportive?**

We would greatly appreciate your prayers. Our church home must be guided and directed by God. Please pray that God grants wisdom and discernment to the congregation, facilities task force, Elder Board, River Rock staff, and everyone involved. We seek to do God's will so that River Rock Church can be God's hands and feet in the Rockford community and in the wider world.