

# When the mission field comes to *you!*

By Rodney C. James

If you've ever lived and led through a renovation, expansion or building project in your church, you know how painful the process can be.

But what if we viewed every project as a **mission field opportunity?**

We all know building projects are noisy and inconvenient. There are piles of supplies everywhere — and oh, the dust!

Naturally, there will be tensions and stress among some of your folks who are displaced from their classrooms and meeting spaces. You might even have to work from temporary offices or relocate your *entire* worship experience until the work is completed.

And let's be honest, construction workers might use 'colorful' language. Plus, they can't help but track dust and debris throughout your facility. Taken together, their demeanor and actions can seem disrespectful to the holy place they're helping to build.



## I could keep going

Over the years, you'd be amazed how many pastors and church leaders have told me how difficult the building process is on their people and their ministry.

As a result of the inconveniences, I've seen them and their church families behave in contradiction to our faith and calling — and I get it! As I said, construction can bring out the worst in the best of us.

## So, how can we do better?

If you want to make every building project a worshipful experience, and even an opportunity for ministry, how can you make sure it honors the God who gave you a vision to build?

With intentional preparation by church leaders. By "preparation," I don't just mean preparing to find another meeting room, or understanding that the church will be worshipping in the gym for the next six Sundays, or being aware that an entrance to the church will be closed off for several months. I mean preparing for *mission* and *ministry*.

As I partner with churches, I'm passionate about helping pastors embrace every project as a mission field opportunity that comes to their church campus every day, whether it's a renovation, facility expansion or new build. Imagine the impact your body could have in light of 2 Corinthians 5, reconciling people to God, being His Ambassadors because He abides with you and your people.

What if the entire congregation prayed, every day, for every worker who steps foot on the property over the next six to eight months?

What if the church became intentional about speaking a kind word, thanking the workers for their effort to improve the facilities, or even doing acts of kindness throughout the project?

I see a tremendous opportunity: your church can impact the lives of men and women who are loved by our Father in Heaven and sent by God into your facility to experience His love through you.

When I was a pastor overseeing a building project, a group of ladies in the church noticed the workers sat on the tailgate of their truck each day at noon to eat lunch. Their "tables" were overturned 5-gallon buckets.

The women caught a powerful vision: to engage and organize small groups to provide water and snacks. They also created a "breakroom" for the workers in a nearby classroom. Then, they decided to prepare or buy a meal for the workers once a week. This continued for the entire project.

Some of the construction workers had never set foot in a church. The impact brought me so much joy, and it fulfilled God's calling for His people.

## Move forward, thoughtfully

During your next project, challenge your leadership and congregation to get creative and be in prayer about how to serve the workers.

As you do, remember to respect their purpose on your campus; they're there to work, not stop and visit. Be mindful of their schedule, not yours. If you provide lunch, be aware that some of the crew might eat at 11 a.m., while others don't take lunch until later in the afternoon.

Finally, as church leaders, don't force the process. Let God lead you and your people. Let Him stir hearts, give the vision, and call His people to find purpose in serving and loving on those He sends your way.

One day in Heaven, wouldn't it be awesome if someone approached a church member and said, "Because of your kind words, your smile, and the way you modeled Jesus while I was working at your church, I'm here"?

May God richly bless your ministry, your next building project, and the men and women He brings to your campus to experience His ministry of reconciliation. **CE**

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