



## HERMITAGE CHURCH OF CHRIST, Nashville, TN

### Proactively managing transition, as good stewards of Christ's church

#### A Rich Congregational History

The Hermitage Church of Christ was planted in the 1940's on the outskirts of Nashville, Tennessee, moving to Hermitage in 1967. Over the next several decades this congregation grew into a large, dynamic church. But eventually, the congregation experienced a general, continuing decline in membership because of community demographic changes, fewer converts, less new people placing membership, existing members getting older and members simply moving away. Additionally, the expenses required to maintain their aging building were rising significantly, consuming ever larger portions of the church budget or items needing repair

After spending 50 years at this location, the leadership felt the need to 1) be good stewards of Christ's church, and 2) to seek new ways to reach their community for Christ. So, how could this congregation please their savior with the talents that God had given them?

Instead of waiting until the congregation had lost all momentum and could only serve itself while their building slowly deteriorated around them, they determined to be proactive and become a congregation that could effectively impact their community for Christ.

#### A Courageous Decision

So, after many conversations and much prayer, the Hermitage Church of Christ leadership decided to sell their building and move the congregation into the nearby DuPont Tyler Middle School. The leadership recognized that this strategy would significantly reduce expenses and free thousands of dollars for community outreach and spreading the Gospel. This decision, while initially difficult, allowed the congregation to prioritize their purpose.

Hermitage Church of Christ had just made a very important decision. As a congregation, instead of focusing only on taking care of their existing members, they can now concentrate their efforts on attracting "the lost sheep" in their community, much like the parable of the shepherd in Matthew. As one of their elders, Andy Borchers stated, "*We asked ourselves 'where would we be in 5 years?' Without a significant change it was clear we'd be smaller in number, with further deteriorating facilities and little of God's purpose accomplished in our community or the broader world.*"

#### A Challenging Process

Hermitage Church of Christ had made a courageous decision, but now they needed to execute their plans. The leadership decided to "rebrand" their congregation as New Garden Church



([NewGarden.church](http://NewGarden.church)) and relocate to their new middle school location. Additionally, they procured an interim loan and listed their building for sale to fund these plans.

Their strategy was aggressive and biblically sound, so it deserved a strong results-oriented execution process.

Hermitage Church of Christ's leadership team had a strong skillset in organizational strategy, but limited experience in the unique intricacies of commercial real estate. They wondered how to price the property, how to manage the selling process, and which contractual conditions were appropriate within their marketplace. To help them navigate their real estate challenges the leadership elected to seek advice from Heritage 21 Foundation for this process.

Over the next several months, the property was successfully sold. New Garden Church was able to pay off their interim loan, set aside funds to fund their local growth and, also re-allocate significant dollars to fund other new church plants in the United States.

### **In Summary**

Hermitage/New Garden's bold move reminds us of the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25. Instead of allowing their valuable asset to be buried in real estate, in an effort to be good stewards of Christ's church, they elected to reallocate those assets into greater opportunities for success in evangelism.