



Non-Negotiable's: Establishing Absolute Priorities for Your Church Building Project

A church building project is an exciting and complex journey filled with decisions that shape the future of your congregation's ministry. With so many factors to consider, it is crucial for the building committee to establish clear non-negotiable's early in the process. These are the items, principles, and limits that the committee will not compromise on under any circumstances. Defining these unassailable elements ensures unity, preserves the church's mission, and provides a guiding foundation throughout the project.

Why Establish Non-Negotiable's?

A building project often comes with challenges, including budget constraints, differing opinions, and external pressures. Without a firm foundation of agreed-upon priorities, committees can find themselves straying from the church's core mission or making concessions that lead to regret. Defining non-negotiables early in the process provides the following benefits:

- **Clarity and Focus:** The committee can make decisions efficiently without revisiting fundamental debates.
- **Alignment with Church Vision:** Ensures that every choice supports the church's long-term goals and mission.
- **Prevention of Costly Mistakes:** Avoids making compromises that could lead to financial strain or mission drift.
- **Unified Decision-Making:** Strengthens committee unity by reducing conflicts over key decisions.
- **Consistency in Communication:** Provides a solid reference point for discussing the project with the congregation, leadership, and contractors.

How to Determine Your Non-Negotiable's

The building committee should approach this process with prayer, careful study, and open discussion. Here's a step-by-step guide:

1. Gather the Committee and Leadership

- Include senior church leadership and, if needed, representatives from the congregation to ensure alignment.
- If required, secure input from financial advisors, architects, or consultants to understand feasibility.

2. Review the Church's Mission and Values

- Identify how the building project aligns with the church's spiritual and operational priorities.
- Ensure that every decision supports and enhances the church's ability to serve the congregation and community.

3. Identify Core Non-Negotiable's

Some common examples include:

- **Statement of Faith:** The church's theological stance must not be compromised in the design, usage, or funding of the building.
- **Financial Limits:** Determine whether the church will take on a loan, set a cap on the loan amount, or commit to a debt-free project.
- **Project Budget and Cost Cap:** Establish a firm limit on the overall cost of the project to prevent financial strain.
- **Worship and Ministry Space:** Ensure the design meets the congregation's core needs for worship, education, and outreach.
- **Contractor and Vendor Standards:** Maintain ethical hiring and partnerships that align with the church's values.
- **Congregational Approval Processes:** If necessary, outline how major decisions will require congregational input or a vote.

4. Write the Non-Negotiable's Document

- Clearly articulate each non-negotiable in writing.
- Use precise language to avoid ambiguity or loopholes.
- Ensure all committee members fully understand and support the document.

5. Obtain Necessary Approvals

- Depending on the church's governance structure, the document may need approval from senior leadership, elders, or the congregation.
- Formally adopt the document as a guiding principle for all future decisions.

6. Use the Document as a Reference Tool

- Keep the document readily available during meetings and decision-making processes.
- When facing tough choices, refer back to the non-negotiable's to stay on track.
- Reaffirm commitment to these principles at key project milestones.

The Long-Term Value of Defined Non-Negotiable's

By taking the time to establish and document non-negotiables, the building committee creates a strong foundation for a successful project. This clarity prevents unnecessary debates, costly mistakes, and mission drift. It also fosters trust within the congregation, ensuring that all members feel confident in the direction of the project.

A well-defined set of non-negotiable's keeps the church's priorities intact, even when faced with pressure to compromise. As the committee navigates this significant journey, having these guiding principles in place will help ensure that the final building truly serves the church's mission and future generations.