

Q&A: DR. ROBERT JEFFRESS

Q: Why is now the time for a new worship center?

A: It is imperative for our church's growth. Our sanctuary is full of cherished memories, but it presents significant challenges we cannot ignore. Many of our worship services are already near capacity. Access for persons with physical challenges is inadequate. Some of the seating capacity impairs the worship experience because of obstructed views. The acoustics limit music and other presentation opportunities. In short, the need is critical, and this is a great time to build because construction costs are relatively low.

Q: What can the church expect to gain from all the changes?

A: The transformation of our campus will dramatically increase First Baptist's ability to minister to our city. It will make room for hundreds or even thousands more worshipers and Sunday School attendees and will vastly increase our capacity for weekday groups. The worship center in particular will also be an iconic presence in the city, standing boldly as a continuation of our legacy in downtown Dallas.

Q: What are the distinctive intent and features of the new campus design?

A: The design is filled with messages about our church. The glass, the water, the light and the spaciousness of the plan speak of openness, transparency and spiritual refreshment. In a way, the glass walls have an evangelistic effect: people walking by have a view in from the street and feel drawn in. The glass also unifies the architecture of the church by extending the aesthetic started by the Criswell Center, which was built in 2006, and thus capitalizes on our \$50 million investment in that multi-purpose facility. As for long-term cost, modern technologies allow vast use of glass with surprising energy efficiency.

Q: With the current economic conditions, why tackle a project of this size?

A: In terms of stewardship, this is an unusually opportune time to build. For every dollar spent on construction, research shows that we will receive up to \$1.30 in value. Wise counsel tells us that when time comes to begin construction, the economy will likely be in recovery. There is no doubt that this is a "God-sized" project. But as Ephesians teaches, God is able to do far more – abundantly more – than we can ask or think.

Q: Will the church incur more debt?

A: Our church has the capacity to build this campus debt-free, and that is how we would like to proceed. The answer to this question will rest on the response of the membership in giving.

Q: How is the church going to raise the resources?

A: As with typical church campaigns, each family will be asked to make a three-year commitment, over and above their ongoing contributions. Although not everyone is in position to make equal commitments, all can make equal sacrifice, and we hope everyone can contribute in some way.

Q: Will the project be done in phases or all at once?

A: It would be advantageous to move forward all at once for a number of reasons. The scope of the project is based on needs our church has right now, but all parts of the plan work together. So doing it simultaneously is the best use of the money God has entrusted to us. And then there are the unprecedented savings in construction costs available right now. But if it is not possible to build everything turnkey, we will adjust our plans to fall in line with the congregation's financial commitment.

Q: What will identify the complex as a church?

A: Right now, the only thing that distinguishes our facility is the steeple on the sanctuary. In the new complex, that steeple will be restored to its original height. In addition, the cross tower and fountain in the center of the property will clearly identify our campus as a welcoming, multi-purpose spiritual center.

Q: What will become of the church's current sanctuary?

A: It will remain a vital part of the life of First Dallas as a place for classes, meetings, weddings and funerals. In fact, when buildings surrounding it are removed, it will be even more visible than it is presently.

Q: Will parking be improved?

A: Parking is an absolute priority in the plan. The new campus includes parking underneath the worship center with elevator service directly to upper floors. Senior adult classes are planned in the worship center complex, providing easy access to services. Additionally, a new parking structure will be constructed next to the planned educational building on the Cotton Exchange property, with extremely easy access to the preschool and children's areas.

Q: Will the church have room for Sunday School and other ministries during construction?

A: Yes, although some reorganization will be required. The Spurgeon Harris Building will be used for many Sunday School classes, and many classrooms will be used for two or three hours each Sunday instead of just one hour.

Q: Where will First Baptist Academy be located?

A: The Spurgeon Harris Building will be its new, permanent home.

Q. How does this new campus fit into the revitalization of downtown Dallas?

A: It will make a compelling statement of the central role of God's church in Dallas. It forms a new gateway to the heart of the city, a landmark as significant as its neighbors from the spheres of commerce, the arts and government.

Q. How does the cost of this campus compare to other recent downtown Dallas construction projects?

A: It will cost in the \$130 million range, substantially less than the Convention Center Hotel (an expected \$500 million) and the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts (\$354 million), both worthy projects. We expect our new sanctuary to take its rightful place alongside them as a world-class facility.