

Next

Vision Campaign 2024

 WESTERN RESERVE
GRACE CHURCH

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Case For Support

NEXT Campaign 2024
Western Reserve Grace Church

Mission of Western Reserve Grace Church:

To see the spiritually restless become wholehearted followers of Jesus Christ

Our history:

Our church began in 1985, with the mission to bring a Gospel-centered church to Macedonia and surrounding communities. Focused on God's Word and Biblical Fellowship, the church was able to buy land and build 2 of the 3 phased building project(s) during its first 15 years and grew to 150 congregants.

Western Reserve successfully transitioned from its founding pastor (Ron Boehm) to its second Lead Pastor (Jason Haymaker) in 2000. Under Pastor Jason's leadership, Western Reserve grew to over 500 congregants and the church was able to fulfill the original vision of completing the 3rd phase of building, adding a gymnasium, children's center, and dedicated church offices by acquiring the neighboring home, including an additional acre of land.

God has been faithful to Western Reserve, as its founding mission to be Biblically focused and Gospel centered was never abandoned. The church experienced the faithfulness of God post the COVID-19 pandemic. We have learned that the corporate church in America was devastated as we saw 1 in 5 church close across the country. As mega-churches exploded with the remnant members of former churches, it was the medium sized churches (200-500) that struggled to re-capture their vibrancy and stake in the communities for which they existed.

Western Reserve experienced this pressure so dramatically that, at times, it was unrecognizable from its previous days. Where once the church rang of 2 full and vibrant services, it was left with an all-time low of 15 people in attendance to a Sunday morning worship hour.

Leadership wondered what the future (if any) would be. Leaders and people prayed. We envisioned a future where God could once again show His faithfulness to us. To rebuild us. To make us vibrant once again.

But God.

Pastor Jason told the people of Western Reserve that he would see this thing through...win, lose or draw, but that he believed we were on the precipice of something extraordinary and exciting. He stated that we were unofficially "re-planting the church". Job descriptions were thrown out, every hand was needed to re-build what seemed to be lost. Volunteers rose up to lead ministries, laughter and joy continued to fill the "less-full" building. Pastor Jason predicted that it would take 3-5 years to rebuild what COVID-19 had torn down.

This is exactly what we are seeing. Three years after the "re-launch" and that dreadful Sunday of 15 people, Western Reserve has now returned to 300-350 different people that we pastor and shepherd each month. One of the brightest notes is our Student Ministry: after the pandemic, our student ministry had 4 people. Today, just 2.5 years later, it boasts of nearly 50!

But God.

The history of Western Reserve is rich. It's full of the story of God. Eternal zip codes have changed, marriages have been resurrected, and next YESes to Jesus have been chosen.

We praise God for His provision, His faithfulness and His VISION for us. He has never let us go!

Our community:

We, as a church, exemplify the median age of the surrounding community. As a church, our median age is 43 to 47 years old. The community reflects this age of mid forties. As with our church, the community has a deep integration of retired blue collar residents as well as younger professionals who are raising families.

The population of Macedonia is approximately 12,000 people. It is not expected to grow significantly larger in years to come due to development restraints.

Macedonia is a “religious” community. We know that an estimated 50% of its population identifies as Catholic. We have often said that we are called to reach the religious in our city.

Our partnerships:

In our vision development (2009), we made the choice to stay local in Macedonia. Leadership was wrestling through moving to a regional location vs. staying in a local community. With this comes a commitment to a small town where many know who you are and what you are doing.

Western Reserve has worked hard to be a part of the community through corporate events and service opportunities. One such event that we currently work with the city is our annual chili cook-off. This is a community event hosted by Western Reserve that invites our local mayor and community members to participate.

Corporately, Western Reserve partners with the Charis Fellowship of churches to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ through a global movement that includes overseas missions, leadership development, partnership in church planting, and student ministries.

Our structure:

Although part of the Charis Fellowship, we are an independent church that is solely supported by the local body of believers in Macedonia. We have a separate governing structure that is indigenous of our people. We are a staff-led church that is governed by elders (2 lay elders), who seek to equip God’s people to do the work of ministry in the local church. Currently there are over 100 volunteers carrying out the work of Western Reserve. It is important to note that when describing volunteers, we are not talking about simple greeters. Although extremely important, greeting does not require training or a professional background. At Western Reserve, our worship is lay-led, our children’s ministry has key volunteers developing and carrying out the work. At our size church, staff is assumed, but we have made the decision to intentionally exercise the gifts of people to carry out all facets of the work...for a time.

Our uniqueness:

For the past 24 years, Western Reserve has sought to hold fast to the Word of God, while understanding and reflecting the cultural make-up of the community in which it sits. This means that we never compromise God’s Word, but are willing to evaluate how we express the Gospel from a stylistic perspective. We have a unique clientele that reflects both the tradition of faith and (often seen in our Catholic friends experiences), while expressing Christ in a more progressive manner, thereby meeting the needs of the progressive and many times professional part of the community. We have found this to be extremely well received from community members as well as those transferring from other churches.

A defining uniqueness that Western Reserve has is its size. Being in a small town, a massive congregation is not a goal. However, being a medium sized church has offered us the ability to offer services and programs that larger churches offer without those engaging feeling as if they are not known. It is the benefits of large without losing the benefit of your name being known.

The problem facing the corporate church in America:

There has been a steady decline in church attendance in America for the last 25 years.

Jim Davis and Michael Graham in their book *The Great Dechurching* report that the church is in the middle of the largest and fastest religious shift in the history of our country. About 15% of American adults (around 40 million) have essentially stopped going to church.¹

In addition, they report that 86 churches are closing every week.²

Davis and Graham continue: *We learned that every possible category of people is leaving the church. Yes, some groups of people are leaving faster than others, and some are leaving earlier than others, but all groups of classes of people are experiencing dechurching at historic levels.*³

One of the primary dechurching causes is the relationship with parents and their children.

NOTE: There are several reasons why this dechurching is happening, but because of our local church's demographic of younger families, we will focus on this aspect of church exodus.

Davis and Graham call the relational problem with parents and their children *The missed generational handoff*. A combined 68% of young people that have left the church has done so in some relation to this missed generational handoff leaving only 32% of those surveyed saying their parents had no influence in them leaving.

The top five reasons that children left the church in relation to their relationship with their parents:⁴

1. All their emphasis on culture war lost me over time (14%)
2. Their lack of love, joy, gentleness, kindness and generosity (14%)
3. Their inability to listen (14%)
4. Their inability to engage with other viewpoints (13%)
5. Their racial attitudes or actions (13%)

The research and work conducted by Davis and Graham support the problem in evangelical churches covered in Reserve Nights in April of 2023.

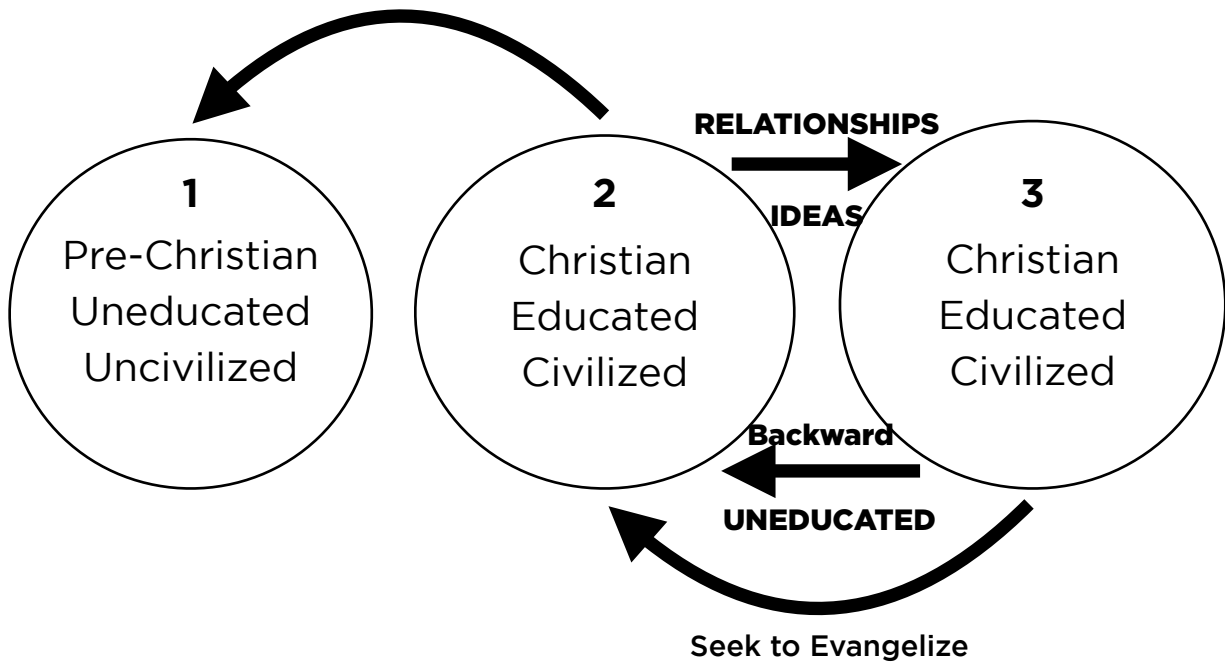
¹ Graham, Michael and Davis, Jim: *The Great Dechurching*. Zondervan Reflective Publishing; Grand Rapids, Michigan (page xxii).

² *ibid.*, 120.

³ *ibid.*, xxiii

⁴ *ibid.*, 9-10

How the evangelical church is seen by culture today:⁵



Represented in 3 circles is the progressive movement of Christianity in our modern world.

Circle #1: *This is pre-Christian*. These are individuals or societies that have no exposure to the Gospel, no education and are considered uncivilized.

Circle #2: This is a Christian set of generations who being educated and civilized sought to educate and share the gospel with circle 1. They used resources, seminars and crusades to share the Gospel. An important note from circle 2 is that they operated with an assumption that God existed and that people had a sense of right and wrong. To offer seminars, crusades, literature etc. “worked” because God was generally accepted as real and a baseline for peoples lives...even if they were not Christ-followers there was a belief that God existed. Because of this, no relationship was needed. Billy Graham was trusted and could share with thousands of people and they accepted the message...even though they had never met Billy Graham. Absolute truth was accepted and assumed by members of circle 2.

Circle #3: A paradigm shift has become evident in today’s generation. It is important to note that it did not begin with Generation Z. This has been a slow progression over the past 50 years. As noted from Graham and Davis above, the great dechurching has happened over the past 25 years, but the roots of today’s generation began to be planted with post-modernism and the doctrine of de-constructionism...potentially even further back than stated.

⁵ Sayer, Mark: *Disappearing Church*. Moody Publishers; Chicago Illinois

In circle 3, we have a generation that no longer assumes a standard of right or wrong. Absolute truth does not exist and assumption of truth should be left at the door. They come to “their” truth through relationships and shared ideas. Leadership is not trusted. Dogma and statements of anyone being wrong are rejected.

Circle 3 rejects the assumptions of circle 2. Circle 2 sought to answer questions while circle 3 seeks to ask more. The problem arises when circle 2 seeks to influence and evangelize circle 3 with the same tools and philosophies they used when influencing circle 1. Circle 3 individuals see circle 2 individuals as uneducated and uncivilized because they believe their views to be antiquated.

As we can see, circle 3 children will have great tension with circle 2 parents. This is why understanding the problem of children leaving church *because* of their parents is vital to the future of the global church and specifically the local church.

Today, the church is having a difficult time offering life changing truth to millennial parents because the church has an antiquated system of sharing the truth of God’s Word. The result will be long-term spiritual poverty of families, as the next generation of children are being born and now raised by parents who have left the church.

The group of individuals that are at the greatest risk are those between the ages of 25 and 40 who, in many cases, are having children. The families shopping at Target, Costco, and using apps to buy their groceries are the most educated and technologically advanced generations that we have known. But they are lonely, confused and insecure. Their pursuit of freedom of expression and openness to anything one desires has brought great distress on this era of mankind. They are generally lonely, stressed and confused.

Bringing a systematic answer to their problems is not the strategy. They want more ideas, more relationship, vulnerability and authenticity. They desire to consider what others deem to be true and be given the opportunity to discuss, debate and ask questions.

Situational effects of De-Churching:

Graham and Davis report that the more they interacted with people over 50, the dynamic of their children leaving the church was the normal rather than the exception. It is a painful reality. Not one that any Christ-centered parent ever wanted but are nonetheless experiencing.

The word I would use is *confusion*.

The same parents who are heartbroken over their children leaving the church are experiencing the deep trauma of their children’s addictions, destructive behaviors, gender and sexual confusion and even suicide.⁶

The inability or stubbornness of the church to see this generational shift and the inability or arrogance of the younger generations to see the heart of those gone before them has created a chasm of divide that the church must address.

⁶ Graham, Michael and Davis, Jim: *The Great De-churching*. Zondervan Reflective Publishing; Grand Rapids, Michigan (page 9).

The impacts and outcomes of the problem:

As stated above, the future of the church as we know it is in real danger. Now, the church of Jesus Christ is not...it never has been. Jesus said that the Gates of Hell cannot stand against His church. He is Lord and He is sovereign.⁷

However, the impact and the outcome of the church we see today is in stark contrast to what our church fathers would have expected. The impact of this generational shift has left many churches with empty seats AND struggling financial viability. After all, people who left the church no longer give to the church.

In addition to the internal impacts felt within the church, the external impact has created an outcome that yields no impact in the community, the schools, or neighborhoods.

These outcomes are unique to this generation. Showing up at a soccer field serving water and hot dogs with a banner that includes a cute quip with your church name on it might have worked in the 90's and 2000's, but now does nothing to move the heart of those that you meet. Even though our culture is lonely, depressed, confused and wandering, the moral compass does seem to be social justice for all. If there is any societal religion, it would surely include help your fellow man. So the church showing up to offer water is great...but shouldn't we all do that?

The overall solutions to the stated problems facing the church:

Graham and Davis outline the hope that we have, even when facing this crisis:

They report:

. 51% of De-Churched evangelicals said they think that one day they will return to church. 18% are very willing and 33% are somewhat willing⁸

In the data shared from *The Great De-churching*, there are 3 major areas that need to be prioritized if we have any chance of the De-Churched returning and the Gospel going forth to those who are not followers of Jesus Christ.

These areas are *Belief, Belonging and Behavior*.

Belief:

The De-Churched and the unchurched are demanding that we are honest (authentic) and clear about we believe (transparency). It's not that our beliefs cannot and will not offend, for that is the truth of the Gospel. We know that it is foolishness to those who do not believe. However, for many, it is not what we believe. For example, over 50% of the De-Churched and an overwhelming amount of unchurched people believe in evil and in the person of Jesus Christ.

Our assignment is not to package up our beliefs and tell them to believe it, but rather to help them see how what they (the De-Churched) already believe can be built upon and how it can affect their lives.

⁷ Matthew 16:18-19 (NIV)

⁸ *ibid.*, 120

To do this, we aren't simply inviting them to church. Rather, we are inviting them into our lives, and part of our lives IS church.

In our relationships, we invite the beliefs that *they* hold and what *we* hold to intersect...to have good, fruitful conversation. In doing so, we build relational trust.

Culture is not asking the church (ie. Pastor) to lay down their beliefs and just be *in with culture*...rather, they want you to teach what is believed, but it must be done with authentic transparency that asks questions, is honest in where people are and address subjects that they are wrestling through.

Belonging:

The church must determine if we are inviting people to an event or a family. In addition, the church must still call people to something. If the church does not call its people to something beyond themselves (which every family requires), then the church is just an event that happens, and will hold no greater value than sitting with friends around a campfire.

They must belong...they must be challenged...BUT they must be safe and the culture and posture of the church must be authentic and transparent.

We need to remember that we have what people desire, and people do see their need for it.

Behavior:

This can be the most complex of the three B's. The rights and wrongs of behavior in circle 3 people is subjective...at least in culture. So to give an objective statement of truth - let's say about mental health - is a dangerous move when trying to build relational equity and trust with people.

Oversimplifying the behavior of people or shaming people regarding their lifestyle choices will do nothing in this generation to reach and encourage their hearts. The church must listen even more than it speaks.

Another reality is that the church has become weakened because we do not have the courage to speak about cultural topics in fear that we will push people away. In a good-hearted manner, we are actually doing the pushing away by not graciously and effectively talking about what people are facing.

The issue isn't behavior...the issue is the behavior because of the beliefs...and because people do not know what they believe we must state what we do and then relationally work through how and why that effects the way we live.

Recognition and phases of solution by Western Reserve

This is not a new revelation for Western Reserve. We, as a church, recognized circle 3 people and the shift in culture.

Because of this recognition we laid out our response and plans in April 2023. All around our mantra of Get IT, Got IT, Give IT Away:



Worship: genuineness with excellency, minimizing *performance feel*:

Update August 2024:

We instituted corporate communion *during* service to encourage the body of Christ to BE the body of Christ in what I call “real time”. This comes from a desire from culture for the church to act like the church, even if they disagree with what we do. Culture longs for the church to act in transparent and authentic ways.

In addition, we made “minor” upgrades to holiday services (simply because they are mooring points for our faith and deserve special treatment), but did not try and be something that that we were not during normal Sundays. Again, seeking to be transparent and authentic.

The response after our Easter 2024 services was: *They were the best Easter services we had ever done at WR*. This response wasn't because we “got crazy”...it was because we did what we knew we could do...and invited people to join us in it (transparency).

Teaching: promote alternative (Biblical) ideas to life

- Authenticity/Genuineness
- Occasional answering of questions from platform (i.e. summer '23 series)

Update August 2024:

In the summer of 2023 and summer of 2024, we ran interactive series inviting people to ask questions of the sermon and providing answers from scripture to aid in the processing of the ideas that had been shared.

WHY? This promoted the transparency and authenticity of leadership to say...*you have more questions than answers and we want to process with you.*

The result has been many people responding with deeper questions and individuals (even non-believers) stating that it was helpful to process their faith questions.

Story: Complete vs. Fragment

Idea: combat idea that “I have arrived”...but rather “still learning...still growing.” (i.e. stories of recovery/salvation/doubt, etc.)

Update August 2024:

We began what we call “My Story” videos. These are stories of families in our church that tell their life stories, including the struggles, doubts and crisis of faith that all experience. These stories last upwards of 30 minutes. Broken into 4-6 weeks of the story in segments, we seek to close the loop on their journey so that all can relate to the reality that we are all on a journey together, but Christ is sufficient for all and in all.

The response has been phenomenal. People are known to others...there is a deep connection because many stories share similar struggles. Transparency/authenticity.

Conclusion:

We are seeing a culture develop at WR that is full of REAL life and faith. People are sharing and working through honest and transparent lives. With scripture being our foundation and our salvation being our hope, Jesus is working in and through His people to create an environment that is contagious to those looking for connection and a place to process their faith.



Equipping: current believers to be developed and trained in whole framework of scripture (i.e., Core, Apologetics, Bible survey training).

Update August 2024:

With the understanding that relationship is the new spiritual currency of culture, we recognized that we needed to build disciples that not only knew and understood how the scriptures fit together, but to also equip people to handle conversations with people who had questions and ideas.

In our Core training there was time set aside every week to discuss deep questions as well as scenarios where the truth of the teaching met the road of life, equipping people to engage with culture.



Movement from large events (only) to “let’s be equipped to do life together.”

Update August 2024:

Life Groups at WR are held in high value due to the reality of culture needing this environment to share struggle and even debate how God might work in their lives. We have over 100 adults in LGs currently.

In the summer of 2024, we did a deep dive into the structure and performance of our LGs in relation to them achieving the value of Biblical community. We found that we needed to make some adjustments to structure and leadership, so that we can protect the vision and value of Biblical community. These adjustments aren’t because people aren’t connected...they are because the type of connection that our culture needs today is not being accomplished in the current structure.

We began a mentoring program to further develop the relational connection that people need to process their lives from a Biblical perspective. In a recent review we are finding that people are engaging and responding to this space. It is providing an opportunity for transparency and authenticity regarding life and faith.

Family: High emphasis on ministry to parents and circles of influence. Begin to help with issues parents are facing that have never been seen before.

Update August 2024:

WR had staff turn over in 2023 in this department (family ministries). We decided to pause hiring in order to understand what the ministry was doing, how it was running and to evaluate the results. We found a great need for team development, teacher training, communication and discipleship.

We divide the ministry among staff members, re-organized the entire ministry and recruited key volunteers to lead.

It has been reported that the ministry has never been better. However, there are limitations to this structure and needs a full-time leader.

Begin recovery ministries for addicted and grieving individuals:

Update August 2024:

Plans and leaders are in place to begin in the fall of 2024.

Gaps in the development and phases of the solution

As WR moves through the phases of response outlined above, we find that there are significant gaps.

1) Limited Staffing:

The current staff at WR are limited in time availability, giftedness and honest calling to specific needs.

Staffing gaps that need addressed:

- . Reserve Kids
- . Worship and Production
- . Building and Grounds
- . Youth Director from part-time to full-time

2) Facility Development:

God has provided some significant updates to our building. We are seeking to be a community that invites community gatherings, moms with young children, and a place where our church can gather. We have developed a site plan that will include an industrial playground, pavilion, fire pits and recreational area for members of WR and the community.

Approximately 50% of the parking lot needs resurfacing.

3) Debt Reduction

To accomplish the above our debt must be addressed. We currently owe **\$4.3M** on our mortgage.

Endorsements and support needed to move forward

We have decided to make NEXT a debt reduction campaign

WHY?

. We have been offered an opportunity to receive debt forgiveness from Grace Financial up to \$1M. This means that if we can raise these funds we can reduce our mortgage by \$2M and decrease our monthly mortgage payment by approximately \$12,000 per month.

. This frees our budget up to hire and allow for sustainability in future years.

To reach our debt reduction goal, develop our facility and open the door for increased staffing we will need to raise **\$869,500**

Breakdown:

Debt Reduction campaign funds: \$1,000,000

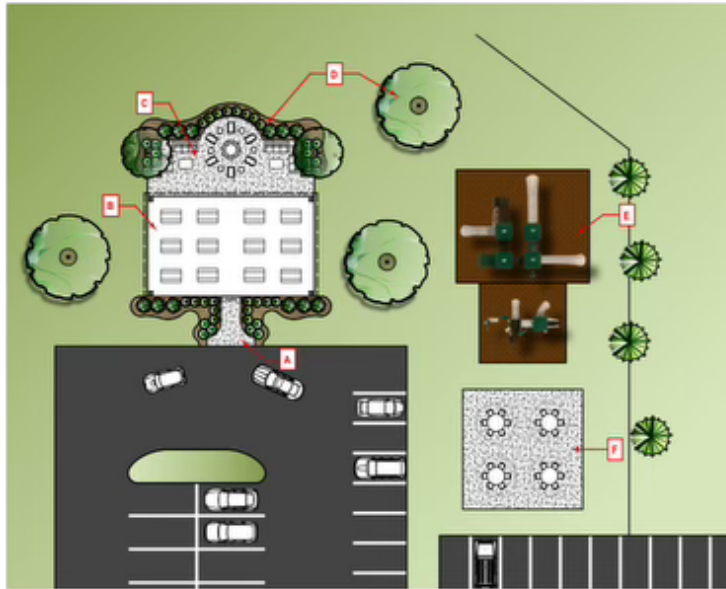
Facility Development: \$250,000

Initial WR Outlay for debt reduction (\$250,000)

TOTAL Campaign Need **\$1,000,000**

NOTE: The initial outlay of \$250,000 will reduce our mortgage immediately by \$500,000 with the loan forgiveness offer from Grace Financial. This will reduce our mortgage from \$4.3M to \$3.8M in January 2025.

Proposed Family Outdoor Space



KEY FEATURES:

- A ENTRY SPACE**
Beautiful new drop off and entrance to open pavilion and patio attached, with landscape planting surrounding the structure.
- B NEW PAVILION AND SEATING**
Installation of a new pavilion with picnic table seating and overhead coverage for comfortable hosting.
- C CONCRETE PATIO**
Outdoor concrete entertainment space attached to new pavilion, featuring a fire pit space and soft seating.
- D NEW SOFTSCAPING**
New site trees and landscape planting surrounding new entertainment areas.
- E PLAYGROUND AREA**
New playground area great for all ages! Two new kits from Rilly Goat Playground Systems, the Cedar Rapids Playground being for smaller children ages 2-5 years old, and the Brooks Towers Playground being the larger castle-like structure for children ages 5-12 years old.
- F DINING SPACE**
New concrete patio with dining tables adjacent to parking and playground structure.

SITE PLAN
Scale: 1" = 20'-0"



Vizmeq Landscape
10500 W. 120th St., Suite 100
Mason City, IA 50404
515.281.1234

WESTERN RESERVE GRACE CHURCH
10500 W. 120th St., Suite 100
MASON CITY, IA 50404

DATE: 11/20/24
BY: [Signature]
SCALE: 1" = 20'-0"

SITE PLAN
L-1

BROOKS TOWERS



Brooks Towers Play System

Children will feel like queens and kings of the castle with the Brooks Towers playset. This large and dynamic playset can accommodate nearly fifty children, making it an asset for parks and schools that receive a lot of foot traffic. The Brooks Towers features a collection of unique activities, many of which hew to a rugged theme, like the Snake Climber, Bones Bridge, and Sea Creature Climber.

No doubt, children will feel as though they've been dropped into an interactive storybook as they run across the structure's bridges and zip down the play set's three slides: two Wave Slides and a Straight Slide. Bridges include a Mini Arch Bridge and a Bones Bridge. And the structure also features ADA-compliant, ground-level activities, like a set of Bongos, a Single Drum, Rain Wheel, and Transfer Station, so children of all ability levels can join in the fun. The structure also boasts an interactive Tic-Tac-Toe Panel for some brain-strain enjoyment. The neutral and primary color palettes are available in quick-ship options.

CEDAR RAPIDS



Cedar Rapids Playground

Revel in a playset that's brimming with delightful activities and vibrant hues with the Cedar Rapids structure. Ascend the stairs to an elevated platform where children will discover a Gear Panel and a Wave Slide. A Tube Bridge connects two platforms and provides a fun crawl-between, while an Elephant Panel encourages interactive play. A Right Turn Slide, accessible by way of Elephant Stairs, will allow children to zip to the bottom where they'll find a Single Drum, Bench Panel, and Rain Wheel, all of which make the Cedar Rapids ADA compliant and designed for children of all ability levels. The Cedar Rapids is even more unique because of its whimsical toppers that elevate the design and spark imaginations. Themed turret toppers include a Monkey, Flower Face, Leaf Roof, and Parrot Topper. Kids will be transported to a jungle of fun and developmental exploration every time they come out to play!

Vizmeq Landscape
10500 W. 120th St., Suite 100
Mason City, IA 50404
515.281.1234

WESTERN RESERVE GRACE CHURCH
10500 W. 120th St., Suite 100
MASON CITY, IA 50404

DATE: 11/20/24
BY: [Signature]
SCALE: 1" = 20'-0"

PLAYGROUNDS
L-2

Campaign Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why do we have to raise funds at this time?

A: As stated in our Case for support, it is critical that we, as a body of believers, move forward to be debt free in the next 10-15 to ensure the future of WR

Q: Didn't we raise funds earlier?

A: We have done some mini-campaigns to reach budget goals and to fund targeted projects, but this is a complete organizational faith step to fund the future of our church

Q: What is our current mortgage balance?

A: Our balance is \$4.3 million dollars

Q: How did the mortgage get so large?

A: It was the current cost of the site development and new building combined

Q: What is our existing mortgage payment?

A: Our mortgage payment is \$24,400

Q: Can I give a lesser amount than what you are requesting?

A: Your gift to Jesus through NEXT is between you and Him. You give as the Lord leads.

Q: What has been done to reduce our current budget?

A: We have combined jobs (ie. Children's ministry; building and grounds), and have not hired positions such as worship pastor. Our church is led primarily through volunteers to keep costs down. In addition, there have been salary adjustments. The operating budget from 2023 to 2024 was \$60k less in 2024 from 2023.

Q: When do I have to make the payment?

A: You are invited to set-up your payment(s) according to your schedule. Weekly, monthly, annually etc. We have provided the options on our NEXT webpage

Q: Can I make a pledge for only one year? Two years? Instead of three years?

A: Yes. It would be helpful to let the office know so we can communicate with you and your schedule appropriately.