

WORTH IT!

When Zack Zbinden became the pastor of **Salem Baptist Church**, in the rural area of Goochland County, Virginia, the previous pastor had already cast a vision for relocating the congregation in order to be more visible and to reach more people. In 1995, 30 acres of land on Broad Street Road were purchased for some \$250,000. Broad Street is the road that takes you from the city of Richmond and heads west through Short Pump and finally into Goochland County. The demographic studies projected that there would be growth in that area in the coming years.

Upon Pastor Zbinden's arrival, he shared the same vision. As a matter of fact, he had an idea that would put the new land to use almost immediately — enter the the Christmas presentation called "Bethlehem Walk." To this day, there are thousands who attend this journey each year to view the replicated streets of Jerusalem, the stable where Jesus was born and all the way to Calvary's hill, where He died on the cross.

On the same property, today, in the near distance, you will find the brand new Salem Baptist Church. The 35,000 square foot facility is a full-service facility with a drive under portico, an open foyer for gathering, office suites, secured pre-school and children's wing, youth and adult educational space, a worship center that seats 300 and an expandable wall to accommodate even more, a fellowship room and a commercial kitchen. It also features security entrances and the latest technology.

Pastor Zbinden said, "It was worth the wait, worth the investment and worth the drive."

Worth the Wait

The church intentionally waited until they had at least half of the money on hand before building. In addition to donations from church members, they were able to sell the existing facility to another congregation as well as sell some of the land they had previously purchased. They also decided to save money by using volunteers for the construction. An organization called Nail Benders helped them construct the shell of the building while volunteers from 17 churches over a two year period helped them complete the interior. About 15 men in the church volunteered to oversee the ongoing project. Zbinden says, "Yes, it is ongoing project because now that we have met the building regulations and have an occupancy permit of the county, we still have 9,500 square feet to finish. This construction route took us several more years, but I would not trade the relationships that we have built with Nail Bender volunteers and the lasting friendships we have made with other churches that have helped. And, now, our church volunteers have a bond that is not easily broken," he added.

Worth the Investment

The building today is valued at close to \$5 million. Pastor Zbinden says, "But praise the Lord that the debt is just under \$1.2 million." The story is really not about the building as much as it is the relocation of the church in order to reach more people with the Gospel and to make disciples. Today, Salem Baptist Church is reaching out through their Awana program, Precepts Ministry, which video conferences people in from other states, and by hosting a Classical Conversations Homeschool Co-op. There are already other

Christian organizations and institutions seeking to use this state-of-the-art facility with its Wi-Fi and live streaming capabilities. "This facility is an investment that is meeting the needs of the current congregation and the community — and it is worth it," says Zbinden.

Worth the Drive

The facility is several miles east of the original location. But since the time of the purchase of the land, Broad Street has extended west with housing and commercial properties all the way to the intersection of Interstates 64 and 288. So, now the church is just over three miles from one of the busiest shopping areas and an ever-growing housing market in the Richmond region. Pastor Zbinden says, "In addition to God's provision, this was His timing. We might not have believed the projections many years back, but today, because of God's timing, we can see it come to fruition. There are more people to reach, more people to share the Gospel, more people to disciple. As a matter of fact, we are participating in the *Bless Every Home* strategy to pray, care, share and disciple our neighbors. Our location has expanded our reach and our vision so much so, that we are planting a new church and sending out one of our own to do so in the Short Pump area. People are driving a few miles to be a part of the work, but it is so worth it." ■



Pastor Zbinden