

GO PORTABLE FIRST

Why Churches Should Go Portable First with
Their Next and Maybe Every New Location



Launching a new campus is an exciting milestone for any church whether you're multisiting or planting! But it can also be a significant financial and logistical challenge. While the long-term goal may be a permanent facility, starting with a portable church model is often the wisest decision. Before committing millions of dollars and multiple years to a permanent space, launching portable first provides a strategic, cost-effective, and flexible way to establish a new sustainable presence in a new community.

WHY PORTABLE IS THE SMARTER FIRST STEP

Portability is The Most Cost-Effective Expansion

One of the biggest obstacles to launching a new location is cost with time coming in a close second. The most compelling reason to start with a portable strategy is the dramatic difference in cost and timeline compared to permanent options. Consider these approximate costs and timeframes for securing a permanent space:

Cost & Time Comparison for a New Church Location: Option	Estimated Cost	Estimated Time to Launch
New facility (from the ground up)	\$20 – \$25 million	3-5 years
Existing Commercial Space (40k SF.)	\$8-10 million	3+ years
Existing Church Purchase (Merger)	\$1-2 million	2 years
Portable Church	\$250,000 – \$750,000	6-8 months

*Generality allows for geographical differences.

*Timeframe to Launch includes fundraising, negotiations, local permits/approvals, design, build, occupancy.

Starting with a portable location allows a church to establish its presence for a fraction of the cost and a fraction of the time. Instead of investing millions upfront, a church can launch in months rather than years, begin reaching the community immediately, and assess the long-term viability of that location before making a larger financial commitment.

Portability Provides Speed to Ministry: Reaching People Faster

A new campus represents an opportunity to impact lives, and every delay means missing opportunities for ministry. Launching in a rented facility not even considered a capital purchase by most churches' standards. This lowers financial risk and increases the speed to impact—meaning your church can start reaching people now, not years from now. can happen in 6-8 months for an amount

In portability, you can start holding services in a new community within 6-8 months. This means:

- + **Faster impact:** Your church begins ministering immediately.
- + **Momentum-Driven Growth:** Your new location can begin growing organically, gaining attenders and financial supporters, before moving into a permanent space.
- + **Less Risk:** If the location isn't as strong as expected, adjustments can be made without a multimillion-dollar commitment.
- + **Community Acceptance:** while in portability, you have an option to gain recognition as a "part of the community" making it easier for approvals and zoning permits down the road when its time to move into a permanent space.

Portability Allows for Flexibility to Pivot and Adapt

Starting with a portable campus provides an invaluable opportunity to test the waters in a new community. What if the location doesn't attract the expected attendance? What if demographic shifts or economic conditions change? This strategy gives a church, leveraging their learned experience, the ability to shift to more favorable situations:

- + **Geographically,** a church could determine another location within a targeted community would allow them better opportunities and could act quickly.
- + **Within a given space,** a church could discover more effective function and flow and simply reorient their use of the current spaces.
- + **Numerical growth** might require an expansion of a particular space. The flexibility that portability provides can allow a church to add more children's environments, expand seating in worship environments, or even make the delivered system more robust.

Portability is a Proven Model: Many Churches Have Succeeded in This Strategy

Many of the most effective multisite churches in the country have followed the “Go Portable First, Permanent Next” model. than one location. This approach allows for momentum-driven growth, launching new campuses quickly and efficiently, then transitioning to permanent locations once the congregation has grown and stabilized. 60% of the fastest growing, and 85% of the largest churches have more Most include or have included portability as a significant part in their strategy.

Churches like Life.Church, Elevation Church, LiberyLive, Church of Eleven22, CCV, Union Church, Summit, Liquid, Manna and many more have all used the portable-to-permanent model to expand rapidly and successfully. These churches testify that a portable location does not mean a lower-quality experience. With today's advanced equipment, volunteers, and intentional design, portable churches can provide excellent worship environments that rival permanent facilities.

Conclusion: A Wise First Step for Multisite Expansion

Going portable first is a smart, strategic, and sustainable approach for multisite churches looking to expand. By launching quickly, minimizing financial risk, and maintaining flexibility, churches can grow new locations effectively before making a permanent investment.

Church leaders who can cast a vision that is stronger than the desire to be comfortable, can innovate their church using portability to realize significant kingdom reach!

For churches considering their next location, the best path forward may not be a building—it may be a well-executed portable church strategy that lays the foundation for future success.

PORTABLECHURCH.COM

Portable Church Industries is the leading partner in the country helping churches launch new campuses in portable facilities with minimum expense and maximum effectiveness. 95.6% of new church launches who partner with Portable Church Industries are still viable after five years.



Why Portable Church Industries is the Best Choice

There are other ways to launch a portable church, but no company offers the expertise, efficiency, and customized solutions that PCI provides.

What Makes PCI Unique?

Custom-Designed Solutions – PCI doesn't offer one-size-fits-all packages. They work directly with your church to create a tailored solution that meets your specific needs.

High-Quality Equipment – From sound systems to children's ministry setups, PCI provides state-of-the-art gear designed for portability and durability.

Expert Training & Support – PCI equips your staff and volunteers with comprehensive training to ensure a smooth setup and teardown process every week.

Efficiency & Speed – With PCI's systems, your team can set up and tear down quickly, preventing volunteer burnout and making portable church sustainable long-term.

Proven Track Record – With over 25 years of experience and thousands of churches served, PCI has perfected the science of launching strong with a portable model.

Common Misconceptions About Portable Church

Some churches hesitate to go portable because of misconceptions like:

Myth #1 – "Portable = Lower Quality"

Reality: With the right equipment and in the right system, portable churches can create a high-end worship experience that rivals the experience at any permanent location.

Myth #2 – "Setup and teardown will burn out our volunteers"

Reality: A good system, and a design built for efficiency and ease allow volunteer teams to setup and teardown with minimal time and effort.

Myth #3 – "We need a permanent building to feel legitimate."

Reality: The church is the people, not the building. Some of the most thriving church communities started in schools, theaters, YMCAs, and community centers before moving to permanent locations. And they did so stronger and without debt!