

“The Venue”

By Gene Tanner, Lead Pastor, Valparaiso, Indiana, Church of the Nazarene

What: *The Venue* – a unique worship service, which meets in our church gymnasium at the same time as our other worship services.

Why: We decided to offer *The Venue* as a worship service option for two reasons: 1) to open up some space in our main sanctuary (we had previously been at capacity on Sunday morning) and 2) to offer a service that was different from our other services in order to reach a wider variety of people in our community.

How: The core group who lead and attend *The Venue* came from our offsite worship service, *Common Ground*, which needed to be moved to a facility that offered more space. We renamed this service *The Venue* and moved it into our gym. This service offers a unique atmosphere for worshippers. Black fabric is draped along the walls to disguise the fact that the room is a gym. Greenery and trees are illuminated with special lighting to offer calming ambiance. People sit at round candle-lit tables and are served coffee, pastries, and bagels. The focal point of the room is staging and multimedia side-screens. The music is guitar-driven and edgy, and the teaching is geared to relate to people with little or no church experience.

Results: 1) Space problems have been resolved in all our worship areas. We’re in the process of building a new worship facility, but *The Venue* has been so successful that we plan on offering it as a worship service option even after our new facility is constructed. 2) *The Venue* has helped to foster wonderful life transformations in Christ for people who might not have felt comfortable in our other worship services. *The Venue* has also helped serve as a bridge for these people to attend our discipleship ministries and the other programs in our church that are designed to help believers grow and mature in their faith.

For more information, visit www.valponaz.org.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use the following questions as discussion starters with your staff or worship leadership team.

1. Discuss the two reasons for starting *The Venue*. Do either of these reasons exist in your church? If so, what ideas can you glean from this article?
2. Is there anything about the setting and décor for *The Venue* that could make your worship space more attractive or user friendly?
3. Would everyone in your community feel comfortable in your worship service?