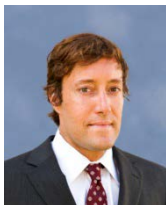


CNL Sees Uptick in Religion, Education Real Estate Markets

By [Jennifer LeClaire](#)



ORLANDO-In the face of a religious real estate revival, **CNL** is setting up permanent shop in California. CNL Religious & Educational Real Estate has added real estate veteran **Chris Bury** to lead the company's West Coast operations.

Led by principals CNL **Matt Messier** and **Nick McKinney**, the team has more than 40 years of experience serving churches and faith-based organizations. CNL is currently representing clients in more than 25 states, including more than \$30 million worth of properties on the West Coast.

"The market looks good for growing congregations right now," Bury, tells GlobeSt.com. "Our economic situation has given a lot of churches a chance to think about their real estate needs more efficiently."

While some churches are leasing real estate rather than purchasing a site, he continues, other groups experiencing growth are finding this buyer friendly market very appealing. And several churches are outsourcing facilities maintenance or just seeking more overall advice to make sure they are getting the most and best use out of the real estate they have. This, Bury says, has accounted for the increase in activity that CNL's Religious and Educational Real Estate group.

Since its inception, the team has assisted more than 1,500 churches, schools and other organizations with the purchase or sale of real estate. The firm has also expanded its service offering to include acquisitions, dispositions, property management, development and project management.

"Religious organizations are widely different from business users in how they view real estate," Bury says. "There is an emotional aspect to these properties. This is where people were baptized and married, where they held funerals for their loved ones. You don't get that kind of emotional attachment with an office building."

Bury notes that the properties are also more about serving a community and a ministry. As he sees it, brokers in this market need to understand that and be able to connect with the people they are working with on a much different level than an office broker might.

Bury joins CNL as a vice president from **Church Development Fund**, a lending organization with more than \$650 million in total assets. Bury will broker sales of churches and other religious and not-for-profit properties as well as consult in areas such as property due diligence, church real estate mergers and site selection. That answers the question "why Bury?" But CNL also has a strategic reason for its timing.

"Several of our key clients have headquarters in Southern California, so this move will allow us to serve them better," McKinney tells GlobeSt.com. "Southern California also has a very active church market and establishing a permanent presence there will help us build stronger relationships with our existing clients and assist more local and regional non-profit organizations."