

Principles and Observations Concerning Space Issues

(In no particular order)

- Buildings will not make a church grow, but buildings can keep a church from growing.
- Church growth results from the work of the Holy Spirit, effective ministry and authentic relationships. Those things can happen in any type of facility, but sometimes the building can make the job easier. Buildings are simply tools to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.
- The type of building a church needs is based upon three factors ÷
 - Why do you exist?
 - Who are you trying to reach?
 - How are you going to reach them?
- At that point, the building can be designed to meet the need and do the job. Churches should allow their ministry philosophy to dictate their facilities rather than allowing their facilities to dictate their ministry.
- Churches should build for who they want, not for who they've got.
- Buildings will not reach youth and young families, but buildings will indicate to them the value the church places in them.
- When choosing a church location, consider **visibility** and **accessibility** to your target audience.
- If a church wants to reach families with children, the preschool and children's area should receive extra attention. Those will be the most important areas for them.
- Security **must** be taken into account, particularly in preschool and children areas.
- An Anglo-European church will never **average** more than 80% of its capacity in worship and adult education space. This means that the size of the building will dictate potential for growth, unless you plan for growth. *(Some ethnic groups can exceed 80% because of differences in cultural understanding of "personal space.")*
- When going to multiple services, the two biggest barriers are parking and preschool. All other areas can be double-used, but these cannot.
- Tables in adult education space reduce room capacities by 20-25%.
- Most churches could increase their capacity by 20% by cleaning out all the clutter.
- Don't skimp on sound and lighting in the worship area. It doesn't matter how good the message is if people can't hear it.
- Striped parking will increase capacity by 20%.
- One parking place for every two persons in attendance. A church does not have to own the parking, but it must be available to them. *(Texas Baptists recommend one parking for every 1.7 in attendance.)*
- Current trends in church constructions include multi-purpose, multi-media and community oriented.
- When planning, think three buildings down the road. Where will this building be placed? And the next one? And the one after that? Those other two may never get built, but need to be considered in planning. Never assume this will be the last building you build.
- Two groups must have ground level access (no stairs). Preschool is required by law. Senior adults are required because of physical limitations.
- Churches are considered commercial property under Arkansas law, and therefore must have an architect's approval on any building.
- Churches are not exempt from state fire and building codes, regardless of where they are located.
- Churches are not exempt from state handicap accessibility regulations.
- If local zoning laws are stricter than state and federal laws, then local laws apply.
- The ABSC does not officially recommend architects or contractors, but we do keep a list of architects that have been used by churches. When considering architects and/or contractors, we advise them to visit different churches. If they find one they like, ask two questions ÷
 - What architect/contractor did you use?
 - Would you use them again?
- Volunteer labor can save up to 30% of construction costs, but there is a limit to size and complexity.
- Auditorium chairs are about 60% cheaper than pews, more comfortable and provide more flexibility.
- In many churches, traditions, emotions and memories will trump logic and common sense. A wise leader will recognize that, and cast a vision greater than their memories.

For additional information on space usage and design issues, contact the Evangelism and Church Health Team at 1-800-838-2272, ext. 5114 or lriley@absc.org.