
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Insights about Church Facilities

Once upon a time in the year 40 A.D., a builder named Vitruvius declared himself a Master Builder. What he did that no others had ever done at that time was to integrate the owner's budget, needs, and time frame with his own abilities as an architect, planner, and builder. The practice of employing master builders has continued for years with great success. Numerous older buildings—even churches—are still in use today.

Obviously, buildings have been built and used for churches since the 300s A.D. While in some parts of the world churches continue to meet in homes, under trees, or about anywhere a group of people can safely gather for worship and teaching, where it is possible to do so, people prefer to meet in buildings designed specifically for church use.

The importance of church buildings on the growth of a church is indisputable. As a wise person once said, "We shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us." The issues are many, but the following suggestions from Eric Knowles, Senior Vice President of Kidder Matthews Religious & Educational Facilities group, provide insights.

Impact on Church Size

It is well known that most churches today average less than 200 people at worship. One of the major reasons churches are this small is directly tied to the size of their facilities. Consider the following:

First, a church should dedicate no more than 30% of its monthly budget for facilities.

Second, assuming an average annual giving of \$1,000 per person, a church of 150 people will generate a monthly income of \$12,500.

Third, this leaves the total available for providing a facility at \$3,750 per month.

In most areas of the USA, this amount will get a church less than 6,000 square feet of space on just one or two acres of land. If a church obtains a building of this size, it will find itself stuck between 150-180 people for years.

For an evaluation of your church, Email Dr. Gary L. McIntosh at cgnet@earthlink.net for full details.

Buy or Rent?

To sustain a budget of \$15,000 per month, a church needs an average worship attendance of around 180 people. At that size the church can sustain a higher income and purchase a facility that will not stunt its future development. Until then, a church should consider renting or leasing. Renting will allow a church to move to larger facilities, as it gradually grows larger, until it can afford a facility that will not stunt its growth.

Until a church reaches 180 people, it should consider . . .

1. Sharing another church. Look for churches that use their facility on days other than Sunday's (e.g., 7th Day Adventist), or be prepared to meet at irregular times.
2. Renting a movie theater. Theaters offer large areas for worship but few options for classrooms or childcare. Churches usually have to be out of the theater by 10:30am, which means church services must be very early.
3. Using a public school. While there are some political challenges, schools offer large spaces for worship, as well as multiple classrooms.
4. Meeting in a hotel conference room. Hotels offer flexible meeting rooms, but inconsistent availability and prices.

5. Obtaining a community center. Community centers are often affordable, with good parking and space for meetings.

Considerations for Growth

When renting, it's wise to consider other issues that impact your church's growth potential. To grow, typically . . .

- a church needs one parking space for every two people it hopes to have in worship attendance (estimate 1.8-2.2 people per care.)
- a church needs one acre of land for every 100 people it hopes to serve.
- a church needs 140 seats for each 100 people in average worship attendance.
- a church needs 22-24" of space for each person seated in a pew.
- a church needs square footage equal to 17-20 SF/Person.
- a church needs childcare space equal to 30% of adult worship attendance (space for 30 children for every 100 adults).
- a church needs 40 square feet per child.

What is your church's growth potential in its current facility? How does it line up with the typical needs for growth? What are the options?

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Host a training event on

Building the Body 12 Characteristics of a Fit Church

A fit church is one that is not satisfied with merely coasting along with no problems. A fit church is actively making disciples, maturing in faith, developing strong leaders, reaching out to the community, and more.

The *Building the Body* training seminar unveils the twelve characteristics of fit churches and shows pastors and church leaders how to move their church through five levels of fitness, from beginner all the way to elite.

This one-day training event, is presented in a way that motivates rather than produces guilt, and the combination of principles and practices applies to churches at all levers of development.

Participants focus their attention on the opportunities for outreach and assimilation.... discover new possibilities...build up their spiritual hope and vitality.

Wherever a church lies along a continuum of twelve factors (e.g., outreach, stewardship, worship, disciple making), McIntosh and Stevenson give concrete strategies for advancing to the next level . . . and then the next level . . . and then the next level.

Building the Body training is a practical, informative, doable training event for pastors and lay leaders who want not only to get better but also to get as fit as possible for the good of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Gary L. McIntosh (Ph.D., D.Min.) is a speaker, writer, and professor. Phil Stevenson (D.Min.) is a writer and speaker who has served as a national and district executive, coaching pastors in evangelism and church multiplication.

Schedule this insightful training event right away to help your churches reach maximum health and growth! Your investment in the life-long learning of your ministry leaders will produce results.

To discuss the options and obtain more information email cgnet@earthlink.net today!