



Your Church Parking Needs

When did you last check out your church's parking lot on Sunday morning? If it has been awhile, you may want to review to make sure your parking needs have not increased to slow the potential growth of your church. After all, parking is one of the primary reasons churches don't attain full potential use of their facility.

It is not uncommon for a church to lose sight of their increasing need for parking. Many city zoning boards require less parking than is actually needed for a growing church. Consequently, when architects and church building committees are working together to shave money out of a building project budget, the high costs associated with preparing the area and laying the asphalt for additional parking is a prime target.

In addition, as a church grows, church leaders are often more concerned with crowded classrooms and cramped worship services than they are with cars parking in the grass or up and down the side streets around the church. As church leaders, we sometimes believe there is plenty of parking because, after all, when we arrive at the church an hour or two before services and leave the church an hour or so after the service, there are all kinds of open parking spaces! We don't think about the parking situation at the critical time of day when the largest crowd of the week is gathered.

So, how much parking do you actually need for your congregation? There is a common rule of thumb used by church planners that says you should allow approximately one parking space for every 2.5 people on site. While that is a rule of thumb, if the congregation is older in age, you drop the number to 1.9 persons.

The first thing is to determine the largest normal weekly gathering on your site. For some, this may be the worship hour. For others, it may be a major event or Sunday school hour. This is typically true if you hold two worship services and have a single Sunday school hour sandwiched in between. What you must be

mindful of is that the single largest gathering on your site may not take place in your building. It might very well take place in your parking lot. For instance, if you have a worship-Sunday school-worship type format on Sunday morning, the largest single gathering might well be as people are coming to worship while others are trying to leave from Sunday school.

Once you determine your largest gathering, invite someone to count the number of cars in the parking lot and the number of open spaces. In a growing church environment, it is recommended there be a surplus of approximately 30% to allow for guest parking and growth. If you have less than 30% of your parking area still available during the largest weekly gathering on your property, then parking space is likely hindering your potential for growth.