

Chapter 7

PREPARING THE BALL FIELD:

Facilities

One night the pro football team in our town played their third preseason game. The next afternoon a game was scheduled for the professional baseball team. Overnight the grounds keepers transformed the field from a long, rectangular surface with horizontal lines and hash marks, to a diamond shaped arena with two long lines, bases and a mound.

Whether the game is soccer, football or baseball, the quality of the play is related to the condition of the field. Similarly, in the game of Christian education, the better the facilities the easier it will be for the teaching team to perform well.

What is a good teaching facility?

A good teaching facility is one that enhances the learning process. An elaborate, super-equipped facility is not essential. A busy classroom can hinder learning just as much as a barren classroom. A good learning environment does not call attention to itself, but quietly complements the teacher's work with the students.

An effective teaching environment is clean and cheerful. It minimizes visual and auditory distractions. It allows students enough space for personal involvement in the learning process, but is not so large it sidetracks their interest from activities. Learning aids in a good classroom should be easily accessible to both the teacher and the students.

A classroom at the church becomes a home away from home. For the preschooler, it is that secure place of love and affection; for the child, it is that familiar place of acceptance and growth; for the teenager, it is a comfort zone for the testing of values and the building of relationships; and for the adult, it is a center for Biblical instruction and fellowship. From books and bulletin boards to carpets and coffee, a well-equipped classroom helps students feel welcome in their place of learning.

How do we determine how much space we need for our church's educational program?

While many schools function well with less than an ideal amount of space, square footage recommendations are available as a general guide. Because young children learn through play, their classrooms should have enough space for learning centers and sufficient room in which to move around. Children and teens need slightly less space per pupil because most of their activities are in large or small groups. Adults can function with the least amount of space, especially where large group lecture or discussion is predominant. A teaching arrangement that seats class members around tables necessitates double the amount of space.

The square footage suggestions below are determined by age-level teaching methodology:

Early Childhood (2-Kindergarten):	35 Sq. Ft. per Pupil
Children (Grades 1-6):	30 Sq. Ft. per Pupil
Youth (Grades 7-12):	30 Sq. Ft. per Pupil
Adults (College age and up):	12-25 Sq. Ft. per Pupil

The square footage requirements above assume that classroom space is not used for extraneous storage. Cluttered rooms are aesthetically unattractive, and they hinder the usefulness of a facility. Old furniture which takes up valuable floor space should be replaced with wall mounted cupboards or portable storage bins. A well-planned room will maximize its space to help the learners for whom it was designated.

What equipment is needed in the classroom?

A *nursery* must provide cribs, changing table(s), cupboards, diapers, baby wipes and linens. Other useful equipment includes a sink, toilet, refrigerator for milk or juice, washable area rug, adult rocking chairs, baby swings, washable toys, Bible picture books, sound system and a private space for nursing mothers.

Preschool Departments (2's-K) will need low tables and chairs for learning centers, and a story rug for group time. Cabinets for storing blocks, puzzles and table games can double as dividers between learning centers. Bulletin boards and whiteboards should be mounted twenty inches from the floor. Learning centers (such as a nature center or home center) also enhance the classroom.

The *Children's Departments (Grades 1-2), (Grades 3-4) and (Grades 5-6)* will also need tables and chairs, whiteboards and bulletin boards. A tack strip for displaying the students' work should be mounted thirty-two inches from the floor. Storage and book cabinets for materials, Bibles, reference books, maps and a picture file are beneficial. Some classrooms may have a keyboard to accompany singing.

Teens and adults need classrooms that offer flexibility. Learning activities may be in large group, small groups circled in chairs or students working at tables. Whiteboards, screens and other displays should be placed forty inches from the floor. A lectern and overhead projector or laptop and monitor (for Power Point) should be available for regular use. A serving table is convenient for classes that begin with refreshments.

How important is kid-sized furniture?

Since children live in homes with adult furniture, some people argue that they do not need smaller furniture during the hours they attend church. However, careful observation will reveal that children do spend more time in surroundings adapted to their size.

Some youngsters attend preschools which use down-sized furniture. Elementary age children spend all day at desks manufactured for their particular age. And when children are home, they frequently sit on the floor or on a chair or sofa with their legs tucked under them. The height of a standard chair (designed seventeen inches from the heel to the back of the knee) is not natural for children.

When new furnishings are purchased for a room, and the facility is used mainly for a specific age, thoughtful consideration will lead to the purchase of appropriate chairs and tables. Low toilets can be ordered for the preschool bathroom. Learning center tables should have legs no higher than twenty inches. Children will more easily notice visuals that are displayed at their own height.

Chairs are manufactured beginning at six inches, and increasing in two-inch increments to the adult size of seventeen inches. While some schools may desire exact sized chairs for each age group, most can function smoothly with ten-inch chairs for preschoolers, fourteen-inch chairs for children, and seventeen-inch chairs for youth and adults. If a school prefers to only purchase two sizes of chairs, a good combination is twelve-inch chairs for the younger grades, and sixteen-inch chairs for the older grades and adults.

Tables should be set ten inches higher than the chairs in a classroom. For example, a class that uses fourteen-inch chairs for their fourth-graders will want table heights of twenty-four inches. Although initially more expensive, tables with adjustable legs offer a flexibility that may prove less expensive in the long run.

A Christian education facility that provides two or three sizes of chairs, tables with adjustable legs and visual boards at the learner's level is well on the way to maximizing learning for students.

How should classrooms be arranged to facilitate learning?

We said previously that preschoolers learn through a world of play; children learn through Bible activities and games; youth learn through small group interaction; and adults learn primarily through discussion. Room arrangements should complement those learning methods.

Preschool classrooms should have enough space to allow movement by the children. If learning centers are used, the room arrangement for young learners should include several round (or kidney shaped) tables separated by cabinets or portable dividers to create a variety of spaces for learning. By locating these centers at the perimeter of the room, or at one end of a room, a separate area is maintained for story telling and group activities.

Primaries and juniors are also benefit from classrooms that are arranged for small group and large group activities. Clusters of eight to ten children with their teachers can

be positioned in the corners or a classroom. Tables will aid their Bible study, writing and other learning activities.

If there are more than ten children in an age group, subdividing the group is profitable. However, because of the competition factor of sound distractions, three or four groups work better than two groups. For instance, three groups of six children will be more compatible than two groups of eight children. While this will necessitate another teacher, the noise factor of the three groups will actually be less distracting than the competition of the two. Even with the best of dividers, the story telling or instruction of one teacher will naturally draw away the attention of some students from the second group.

While most of the teaching in the childhood division will take place in small groups, students typically come together for worship and other activities. Since few schools are able to afford two chairs per pupil, the assemble time should be near the center of the room where pupils can regroup with the least amount of confusion.

When it comes to youth rooms, it seems that almost anything goes! Some high school groups meet in the church basement where the teens have been allowed to paint murals on the walls and furnish the area to their preference. Some youth groups have been given the upper floor of an educational building where a sound system plays contemporary Christian music before and after the teaching sessions. One senior high room was equipped with air hockey, ping-pong and bumper pool; another group laid claim to an old garage and converted it into their own place. Many groups, however, still meet in conventional classrooms.

A youth room should be large enough to allow students to study in both large and small groups, and also to mix and talk informally with one another. A centralized teaching area with a screen for media is also important.

The arrangement of an adult classroom will vary according to the number of adults in attendance. A whiteboard or overhead projector or laptop and monitor will probably be used frequently by the adult teacher, so a configuration which brings students around the teacher will enhance the learning process. A dozen adults may enjoy sitting in a circle. When the teacher joins them in the circle, he or she can participate both as a group member (during discussion) and as a leader (during lecture).

The circular arrangement, however, loses its effectiveness beyond seventeen members. The group dynamics, such as freedom to share personal concerns, will decrease as the group gets larger. For groups numbering over eighteen, semi-circular seating will draw people close to the teaching center, yet permit them to face each other during discussion. If buzz groups are desired, chairs may be circled for sub groupings. Again, three or four groups work better than two in order to avoid individual competing voices.

Where space permits, tables are a nice feature in adult classrooms. On the flat surface of a table the adults can open their Bibles, complete handouts and even set their coffee. In addition, sitting around a circular table draws group members together in close proximity, yet the table keeps them from feeling on top of one another.

Should we keep teaching supplies in one central location, or should they be decentralized into each classroom?

There are two important factors regarding teaching supplies—availability and control. Supplies must be out where the teacher can use them, but they must be controlled for the purpose of inventory and proper use. A central supply is advantageous regarding control, but decentralization has the advantage of making the supplies handy to the teachers. Churches that have a problem getting the materials to the teacher may want to try placing frequently used supplies in each classroom. Sunday Schools that have trouble with control may prefer a centralized location. Local factors determine which procedure is best for a given education ministry.

Many churches have found it beneficial to have a central supply for a comprehensive inventory, but also to keep individual classrooms stocked with common supplies. A wall-mounted cupboard, located above a media table or other equipment, or a plastic three-drawer storage unit on wheels, will provide ample storage. Pencils, crayons, markers, tape, art paper, glue, rulers, old magazines and other consumables can each have a location within the cabinet. This arrangement is a little harder on program leaders who have the responsibility of inventory, but it will keep the materials closer to the students who are the focus of attention.

Our room is shared with a week-day school. How can we best maintain our own identity and suitable teaching environment?

Churches and Christian schools that share facilities occasionally feel the discomfort of their joint arrangement. However, as good stewards of the resources that God has given, churches that share space can rejoice in the effective usage of their facilities. Most corporations do not construct a building that is used only three hours per week. How, then, can churches dare to convert the gifts of God's people into brick and mortar that stand idle each week day. Expanding the use of our educational rooms is wise, and careful procedures can minimize the problems of divided ownership.

Mutual respect must be practiced by both groups who share a facility. At the conclusion of class, teachers should prepare the room for the next group. However, they should also arrive early enough before their next class session in case the other staff did not reciprocate the courtesy. A custodian who knows the room arrangements of both groups can enhance the cordial relationship. A pastor, or the staff person in authority over both groups, may also have to remind both ministry teams of the equal value of both programs to the life of the church.

Some churches have solved their supply problems by maintaining separate, lockable cabinet space for each group. Bulletin boards are also divided between the school and the church teachers. Each group assumes responsibility for their own materials.

In one church, occasional resentment surfaced between the church staff and the school staff because the Sunday School teachers used the supplies of the nursery school. After trying several arrangements, the staff finally came up with a new suggestion. For one year the church and school monitored the supply expenses of the Christian education program of the church. In subsequent years, the school purchased all the supplies and

maintained the inventory, but at the end of each fiscal year, the church program reimbursed the school for their part of the supplies. The resentment over borrowing and maintaining enough supplies was minimized by this practice.

We are a small church and only have one building. How can we best run our educational program?

When churches plan their first building, they usually design it with flexibility in mind. Typically there is a large meeting room with classrooms either in the basement or on both sides of the assembly room. In situations like these, the multi-purpose room must be kept attractive (for it is used for worship), yet practical (because it doubles as a teaching facility). Flexibility is also important in the selection of furnishings. For example, comfortable stacking chairs can be locked together into straight rows, moved into circles, or set aside in a corner.

Where only one large room is used for several classes (especially if classes are across age divisions), distractions are a common problem. To deal with this problem, some churches have constructed sound proof, “L” shaped dividers which subdivide the large room into classrooms. After Sunday School the dividers are pushed into two corners, neatly tucked inside each other. Other churches have put hooks into the walls of their multi-purpose rooms. From these hooks whiteboards and bulletin boards are suspended during teaching hours, but prior to worship (or youth fellowship, special dinners, or weddings), the boards are lifted off the hooks, placed on a cart, and rolled into a storage area.

Regardless of what size church, every fellowship needs to maximize its facility usage. One church had a large sanctuary, but inadequate Christian education space. Under the leadership of a new pastor, they framed two large classrooms in the rear of the auditorium, providing additional educational space and bringing the people closer together for worship. This church has already decided to offer multiple worship services when growth necessitates a change, but if the larger auditorium were needed, reconversion of the sanctuary could easily be accomplished.

Growing churches often struggle with space problems, but these problems are signs of life. Some churches have tried to solve their problems by bringing portable classrooms onto the church site. Some fellowships place classes in the homes of members who live near the church. Where the only facility available to the congregation is their one building, though, flexible seating with movable partitions is essential.

Is there any benefit in renting facilities or using facilities away from our church campus?

Facilities are not sacred. It is the message of the Scriptures that is sacred, and our goal is the teaching people that message. There is nothing wrong with renting facilities or meeting away from the church campus. A youth group may use the family room of a nearby home, or a singles class may use the banquet room of a restaurant. In fact, the atmosphere of the restaurant is a great halfway situation where seekers may be more willing to study the Bible.

Sensitivity must be given to which groups are located off campus. Senior highs, singles or young marrieds without children are better choices for relocation than first graders or senior citizens.

Since the nursery and children's classes are best located near the sanctuary, supplemental classes should be located close to the church so that valuable time is not wasted in travel. Using facilities near the church property is economical; it offers a more relaxed atmosphere for learning; and it is a good strategy for reaching out to the unchurched.

I heard that some churches use their facilities in double or triple sessions. How does this work?

When space becomes a problem, the quickest and least expensive solution is to use the facility more than once. Many churches have accommodated an increase of worshippers by offering an 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. service, with a 9:45 a.m. Sunday School in between. This arrangement doubles the seating of the sanctuary, but does not enlarge the educational space.

When additional space is needed in both worship and Sunday School, many churches have adopted a "double session" schedule. In the double session arrangement, two identical worship services are conducted at 9:45 and 11:00 a.m. While each of the two worship services is being conducted, Sunday School classes run concurrently.

Sunday Schools over 500 may have enough students to offer two sections of each learning group (i.e. 1st and 2nd graders or young marrieds at both the first and second hours). Adults may have a choice of electives either hour or a stage-graded class either hour.

Smaller churches that need double sessions but do not have enough people to offer each age group a choice of study hours, predetermine which hour classes will meet. The worship service in which people participate will therefore be regulated by which hour they attend Sunday School. A careful scheduling of adult life-stage classes, or the offering of electives, will assure parents the possibility of participating with their younger children in worship.

An example of the double session arrangement is given at the end of the chapter. In the schedule, junior highs attend worship at 9:30 a.m., and then meet in the youth room for class at 11:00 a.m. Senior highs begin their morning in the youth room for study, and then participate in worship. Both the sanctuary and the classroom double their usage in this plan.

The key to moving into a double session schedule is good planning and thorough communication. One church began in June to publicize their new fall schedule. It began by emphasizing the need for, and the benefits of, the double sessions. A monthly newsletter answered typical questions that were asked about the new format. The promotional information that this church used is also included at the end of this chapter.

I heard of a church that uses an observation room in their educational program. How does this work?

Very few churches can afford the space to build an observation room, but where this type of facility is possible, it offers several benefits. One church I visited had two

classrooms separated by a 10'x20' observation room. One-way glass mirrors were built into the walls between the classrooms and the observation room. People in the observation room could see what was happening in either classroom, but the students saw only the mirrors.

This type of facility can be used in many ways. Program leaders can observe both teachers and students, and use their observations to offer commendations and suggestions for the classroom activities. Leaders can also use the room for prospective teachers to study master teachers prior to assuming their own classrooms. Dads and moms may observe a three-year-old class, noting how a teacher uses guided conversation in directing the child's thoughts toward spiritual things. Parents and teachers can also develop a strategy to help a child with a behavioral problem. The school and parents are partners in the learning process, and most parents are eager to help their child who demonstrates a special need.

Churches that cannot afford a special room for observation can still place 4' x 4' one-way glass mirrors between two of their classrooms. During regular class use, curtains can cover the window-mirror. An observation room is available when needed, however, by simply reassigning one of the classes or perhaps combining for the day with another group.

We are thinking of constructing a new educational building. What suggestions might you give us regarding its design?

Many books provide details for classroom arrangements and give square footage requirements. An education building should not just provide adequate space, however. It should also follow a master plan. Rather than building simply to increase classroom space, an architect familiar with church construction can prepare a design which is complementary to the worship, fellowship and evangelism purposes of the church.

A master plan will minimize foreseeable problems. One church began their building program near the rear of their property, anticipating their final sanctuary position at the corner/intersection. In subsequent years, however, they learned that their township would not grant them a building permit because they did not have enough green space and parking. An architect can eliminate these kinds of problems by helping with building codes and special requirements, as well as by designing a building that will be aesthetically pleasing and functionally efficient.

A second suggestion regarding construction is to plan as much flexibility into your building as is affordable. One church in California constructed a five story education building without any internal bearing walls. The inside wall sections move on tracks in the floor and ceiling and have a high sound barrier rating. While this type of facility is financially out of range for most churches, the principle of flexibility in construction is important.

Another church built a Christian education wing that had four 30' x 30' classrooms with internal bearing walls. A few years later they changed the groups assigned to those classrooms. When they realized that 900 sq. ft. rooms were not essential for their new ministry, they wished they had six 20' x 30' rooms (600 sq. ft.) rather than the larger four rooms. If the internal walls were originally designed with non-bearing

studs and sheet rock (or better yet, portable walls), they could have made the internal adjustment, and had an additional two rooms.

One last comment is in order. A factor that is sometimes overlooked in the planning phase of a building program is that furnishings will cost 10-15 percent of the overall expense of a new building. These furnishing costs must be planned into a project for a realistic picture of the overall building expenses.

Summary

A number of years ago I was playing softball on a church team. On one occasion I moved in to grab a ball on the first hop when to my surprise the ball took a twenty foot hop, going over my head, and rolling to the fence. Each fall the field was used for football and the yard lines were cut into the grass. While the etching process allowed the recreation department to easily chalk the field, it did not help the fly ball that landed on the edge of a line during our playoff game.

That game was not won or lost, however, on that particular play. Likewise, the game of discipleship isn't won or lost on the condition of one or two classrooms. However, when we are in a position to enhance our facilities, a good teaching environment will contribute to maximizing learning for our students.

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SAMPLE DOUBLE SESSION SCHEDULE

MORNING SCHEDULE FOR WORSHIP AND EDUCATION

Trinity Church provides two identical worship services. The same worship and Bible message are given at both the 9:30 and 11:00 hours.

The educational program runs concurrently with the worship hours with some classes meeting at 9:30 and others at 11:00.

If you attend worship only, you may choose either the early service or the late service. If you attend Bible School and Worship, your worship hour will be determined by the scheduled time of your Adult Bible Fellowship. You will attend worship the opposite hour that your class meets.

This quarter all adult classes will be studying the Gospel of John. If you have a conflict with the hour your class is scheduled (i.e. your children's schedule), feel free to choose a class the alternate hour.

<i>AGE GROUP</i>	<i>TIME OF BIBLE CLASS</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>
Newborns & Toddlers	9:30 & 11:00	Nursery
2 ½ & 3 year olds	9:30 & 11:00	Lower Auditorium, #3
4 – Kindergarten	9:30 & 11:00	Lower Auditorium, #2
1 st Grade	11:00	Lower Auditorium, #1
2 nd Grade	11:00	Youth Building
3 rd Grade	11:00	Administration, 2 nd Floor
4 th Grade	11:00	Administration, 2 nd Floor
5 th Grade	11:00	Fellowship House, 2 nd Floor
6 th Grade	11:00	Administration, 3 rd Floor
Junior High	11:00	Administration, 3 rd Floor
Senior High	9:30	Administration, 3 rd Floor
S.A.L.T. (Singles)	9:30	Fellowship House, 1 st Floor
Young Adults	9:30	Fellowship House, Lvg. Rm.
Homebuilders	11:00	Fellowship House, Garage
Reapers	11:00	Fellowship House, Lvg. Rm.
Ambassadors	9:30	Fellowship House, Garage

One church adopted a double session schedule mainly because of space needs during worship. Notice that the elementary classes are scheduled at 11:00 a.m., necessitating the first session worship for the children and their parents. The arrangement was intentional by the leadership to regulate sanctuary attendance. Since most visitors, and adults who did not participate in Sunday School, primarily worshipped at 11:00 a.m., the flexibility of double sessions allowed a balancing of sanctuary worship.

PROMOTION OF DOUBLE SESSIONS

The information which follows was used by one church to promote a change in their Sunday morning programming. The questions and answers appeared in their newsletter (three questions in June and three in July). The church moved into the new schedule after Labor Day, and has maintained the double session format, even after three building campaigns.

Starting on September 3rd Trinity Church will offer two worship gatherings and two Sunday School sessions each Sunday. The 2+2 (as it is often called) has scheduled worship at 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., with Sunday School classes also at 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Much time, study, consideration and planning was spent by the Christian Education Committee and the Board of Deacons regarding our church's needs and possible arrangements to meet those needs. In light of this study, the 2+2 has been adopted.

2+2 QUESTIONS ANSWERED

WHAT IS THE 2+2?

The 2+2 is a total Sunday morning program which offers two worship services and two Sunday Schools running concurrently. People will either go to Sunday School and then church (as they presently do), or they will go to church, then Sunday School.

The order in which you attend Sunday School and church will depend on the Sunday School class to which you belong or the elective classes which you choose.

WHY DO WE NEED THE 2+2?

We need the double session arrangement for two main reasons: (1) the additional space it will give us for Sunday School classes, and (2) the improvement in quality it will offer to our worship gatherings and Bible classes.

As good stewards of the property that God has entrusted to us, the 2+2 will use most of our classrooms twice on Sunday mornings instead of only once. For example, the Myra Chapel will be used at 9:30 a.m. by the Junior High Dept. (while Senior Highs in church), and then at 11:00 a.m. by Senior Highs (while the Junior Highs are in church).

The quality of our worship services will also increase with the beginning of the 2+2. The Morning Worship (9:30 and 11:00) will be identical—both will have the same worship and preaching. This will be a real improvement over last year's early worship gathering. Teachers and other educational workers will also enjoy serving under the 2+2, since they will no longer always have to miss either their Sunday School class or the worship service.

ARE THERE ANY ALTERNATIVES TO THE 2+2?

When a church is as fortunate as ours to see a God-blessed increase of over 20% per year, who can help but rejoice? On the other hand, as you well know, rapid growth also produces problems, especially in the areas of staffing and facility. In planning for 3-5

year church growth, three alternatives were considered for Trinity. The *first* was to build enough buildings to adequately seat all the people at one time. This alternative has already been rejected regarding our sanctuary and classrooms. We will use them multiple times instead of building larger ones. We cannot afford to build three to four more educational buildings when we are not adequately using our present facilities.

The *second* alternative for increasing Sunday School space was to put classes in homes. We would need three to four homes now, and in a projected 3-5 year growth more than half of our classes would need to meet off campus. For common sense reasons this alternative was rejected. It would be impossible for either parents, or the church to run such a large scale shuttle service—the central location of the local body is essential.

The *third* alternative is the 2+2, and as you can see, a feasible solution to our growth pains. As you know, our growth plans include starting as many as three mission churches, but this will not stop Trinity's growth. We need to be prepared to meet the needs of our immediate neighborhood.

WILL THE NEW PLAN SPLIT FAMILIES?

No. Since third grade children and under are in a unified program (Sunday School and children's church), they are not in worship service anyway. The parents of Older Elementary kids and Junior Highs will, for the most part, be in the same worship service, so they could sit together if they choose. Senior Highs and Collegians rarely sit with their parents.

Another advantage of the 2+2 is that Adults will have two elective classes to choose from for each age division. Since one class will be offered each hour, there is no reason why families should be separated.

WILL CHOIR MEMBERS HAVE TO MISS SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES?

Since the adult choir will be singing in both worship services in the 2+2 arrangement, some are afraid they will have to miss their S.S. class. However, this is *not* the case. Beginning this fall, the choir will no longer remain in the choir loft during the entire morning service. Rather, they will be dismissed after the anthem (which will be in the first fifteen minutes of the service). Choir members whose S.S. Class meets during that hour will leave for their class, while the other members remain in the sanctuary for worship. The second service will be the same, with choir members again being dismissed to either class or worship.

DOES THE 2+2 CREATE TWO CHURCHES WITHIN ONE BUILDING?

No! Actually, in the 2+2, nothing much changes except the double use of our facilities. Age-graded Sunday School classes will still be meeting together, and thus retain the fellowship experience with one another. The 9:30 and 11:00 times will be the same as they have been in the past, and will continue to allow time for talking with friends before, between and after the worship service/Sunday School hours.