

Rules of Thumb: Fellowship Buildings

1. Overview

The following guidelines are given as general estimates and may need to be adjusted according to your church's needs and existing facility or property conditions. Square footage recommendations are based on actual space use and should not be adjusted significantly. These guidelines can assist, but should never replace the specific help a design professional, such as an architect, can provide to your project. Specific issues such as local building codes, special ministry functions, and expectations of the congregation will all affect the actual design of the fellowship building. Working with an experienced design professional who knows and understands applicable codes and ordinances will be invaluable to your church.

2. Space requirements

Total dining capacity

- ★ For churches with up to 250 average attendance, the capacity should be same as attendance.
- ★ For churches with over 250 average attendance, the capacity should be at least ½ of attendance.
- ★ Don't plan the dining capacity for single events such as an annual "homecoming" or Thanksgiving meal. Instead plan that extra large events will overflow into nearby classrooms or be moved to an off-site location.

Total building size

- ★ 16-20 square feet per person including dining area, kitchen, storage and restrooms.

Fellowship dining area (per person)

- ★ 12-15 square feet (long tables)
- ★ 15-17 square feet (round tables)
- ★ Actual capacity will be determined by table arrangements. Remember to allow space for serving tables.

Kitchen

- ★ Recommended 20-25% as large as fellowship hall. A larger kitchen may be required for actual meal preparation versus a kitchen just for warming food.
- ★ For kitchens with commercial equipment, the equipment supplier should be consulted on room space requirements and design.

Storage

- ★ A room or closet for tables and chairs.
- ★ Closet for special equipment such as sound systems, podiums.
- ★ A room or closet for food and utensil storage.
- ★ Extensive cabinet space is not necessary in the kitchen.

Ceiling height

- ★ Room less than 600 sq. ft.: 9' high minimum
- ★ Room size 600-2500 sq. ft.: 9'-12' high
- ★ Room size over 2500 sq. ft.: 12'+ high

3. Building Materials

A structure that provides a wide, column-free space is preferred. Options include wood trusses, steel joists or pre-engineered steel buildings.

Floors

Carpet and vinyl tile are recommended. Carpet provides an excellent, low cost, low noise floor finish. The carpet should be a tightly woven commercial grade, stain resistant loop pile that is glued directly to the slab (no pad). Colors and patterns that hide dirt and stains are best. Vinyl tile provides a durable, easy to clean surface. The tile should be solid, commercial grade material.

Walls

Painted drywall with chair rail or wallpaper border trim. Painted concrete block.

Ceiling

A suspended acoustical tile ceiling is recommended. Drywall can be used but is less preferred.

Lighting

Four tube recessed or ceiling mounted fluorescent fixtures are recommended. Dimmable incandescent down lighting that can be dimmed for special presentations can increase the flexibility of the space.

Note

Fellowship buildings that will serve for extensive recreation activities (basketball, volleyball) require special considerations for wall, ceiling, and floor materials as well as lighting and mechanical systems.

4. Multiuse space

Most churches wish to use their fellowship buildings for a variety of activities in addition to meals. Some of these activities are:

Classroom space

Best used as younger adult or youth (age 12-18) classrooms. Classroom space works best when noise can be minimized in the room. Carpet on floors and acoustical tile ceilings help to absorb sound. Good quality folding walls will reduce sound transmission between class areas. Look for folding walls with a minimum STC rating of 40. Rooms which are designed for recreation are normally not well suited for classroom use also.

Recreation space

Recreation, such as basketball and volleyball, requires special design and building material considerations. Durable, low maintenance ceiling, floor and wall materials are essential. Acoustics are also important if the room is to be used for other church programs. Work closely with a design professional to evaluate the options and plan for the needs. The ceiling height for recreation should be a minimum of 21' for basketball and 25' feet for volleyball.

Special presentations

Events such as dramas, seminars or other large group ministry functions may need the fellowship hall occasionally. For these types of uses, plan the room so a stage (preferably a portable one) can be located to provide good sight lines from all points in the room. Stage lighting and a sound system may need to be incorporated in the room. The lighting and the sound system can be portable, but power requirements should be anticipated.

8. Sample Fellowship Building Plan

