

Rules of Thumb: Worship Centers

1. Overview

The following "rules of thumb" are given as general estimates and guidelines when considering land and building needs for a Baptist church. Some are absolute, such as the number of square feet required to park a car and some are meant only to be guidelines, such as the number of square feet required in classrooms.

These "rules of thumb" should be used for general planning. Their use will allow the church to avoid many unnecessary problems. Deviations from these guidelines should come only after careful analysis in consultation with qualified professionals who know and understand applicable codes and ordinances.

2. Worship Center Ground Coverage

Seating Capacity	Sq.Ft./Person
Up to 300	15-17
300-500	17-20
500-up	20+

Figures are for rectangular buildings. Other shapes may require more square feet per person. Area includes main worship area, baptistry and dressing areas, foyers and restrooms.

3. Platform

Depth (Front to back)	
Minimum	7'-0"
Recommended	8'-0"-15'-0"
Height (Capacity 200 or more)	
Minimum	3'-0"

The maximum height relates to the distance from the platform to the most distant seats in the room. Professional assistance is needed in establishing platform height and sightlines.

4. Foyer

Minimum Size
2 square feet of space per seat in the worship center.

Recommended
A space connecting the education and worship buildings with approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ the square footage of the worship center.

5. Choir / Praise Team

Capacity

10% -15% of worship center capacity

Riser Width

Minimum	3'-0"
Recommended	3'-4"
Front & Back Row	3'-4" (Minimum)

Riser Height

Minimum	6"
Seating width	24" (Per person)

Allow same amount of space for Praise Team or Choir.

6. Baptistry

Dimensions (Basic)

Inside tank	4'-2" X 8'-2"
Overall	4'-10" X 15'-1"

Water Depth

Without glass	3'-0"
With glass	3'-6"

Floor Height of baptistry above top choir riser

Minimum	6"
Recommended	2'-6"
Maximum	5'-0"

7. Congregation Seating

Dimension to first row of seats from platform

Minimum	7'-6"
Recommended	8'-6" -10'-0"
With Communion table	10'-0"-12'-0"

Spacing for pews or chairs (measured front to front)

Minimum	3'-0"
Recommended	3'-2"

Seating width per person (Pews)

Minimum (Code)	18"
Recommended	24"

Pew Length

Minimum	6'-0"
Maximum	22'-6"

Aisle Width (Codes may require wider aisles)

Main Aisle	5'-0" (Minimum)
Side Aisle	3'-2" (Minimum)
Last pew to rear wall	4'-0" (Minimum)

8. Balcony

Capacity

No more than 50% of main floor capacity.

Row Spacing (Minimum)

Typical	3'-4"
Front	3'-6"

Railing Height (Minimum)

Aisle	3'-6"
In front of fixed seats	2'-6"

Dimension from balcony to pulpit platform

Minimum	45'-0"
---------	--------

Dimension from side balconies to pulpit platform

Minimum	35'-0"
---------	--------

9. Steeple

Typically the height of the steeple should be equal to the dimension from the ridge of the roof to the ground. Professional assistance is recommended in establishing height.

10. Parking

A minimum of one parking space for every 3 seats in the worship center at a "typical" Baptist church. Additional parking is needed if there are a large number of senior adults and/or singles in the church. Multiple worship and Bible study schedules require more parking to accommodate overlap.

Approximately 100 cars can be parked on one usable acre (1 Acre = 43,560 sq.ft.)

Parking space dimension

Minimum	9' X 18'
Recommended	9' X 19'

Driveway dimension

Minimum	24'
Recommended	25'
Fire Lane	30'

11. Conclusion

Additional codes and ordinances will apply in many areas.

Because of the many technical considerations in worship center design, the assistance of a design professional is highly recommended.