

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Do You Have Enough Fellowship Space?

Fellowship has been an important part of Christian gatherings since the first century. Scripture tells us that the early believers “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42 NIV).

Today’s effective churches continue to encourage and prioritize fellowship as an important part of the gathering of the saints.

“Effective churches encourage and prioritize fellowship as an important part of the gathering of the saints.”

Much of the fellowship in churches occurs after the Sunday worship service. The space available near your worship facility, for people to gather following the service, is key to whether this vital function actually happens in the life of the church.

Why worry about the fellowship space that is easily accessible from your sanctuary? Here are a few reasons:

1. The #1 factor influencing a guest’s decision to return is “the friendliness of the people.” When asked *when* they determined whether the church was friendly or not, most guests say it was immediately after the worship service. When does most of the fellowship occur in a church? Immediately following the conclusion of the service. If you have a place where such fellowship can occur, it is much more likely that it will occur. If you have no facility for such fellowship, it is likely that most people (including visitors) will head for the exit.

2. Fellowship is the *grease* that keeps relationships in the church growing. One study found that the average new member who joined a church and remained active had made 7 new friends in the church during that first year. The average dropout had made an average of just 2 friends.

3. The farther away fellowship space is from your worship center ingress/egress, the less likely newcomers will seek it out. Be assured that visitors will not go out of their way to seek out the fellowship space on their own. However, if someone in the church approaches and invites the visitor/guest to join them in the fellowship area, chances are good that they will go...even if they wouldn't have on their own.

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How People Are Actually Coming
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e-book versions.

Fellowship is the grease that keeps relationships growing.

Churches need 6-8 square feet per person for fellowship.

Consider the following ideas.

First, determine whether you have any fellowship space available. This does not mean any space anywhere in the church. The fellowship space must be very close, and easily accessible, to the worship center. The space for the post-service fellowship must be in the natural path people take on their way to and from the worship service.

Second, calculate your functional room size by figuring 6-8 square feet per person. So, if you have 200 people in worship, and you want fellowship space for 60% of that (120), you would want a room that is between 720 - 960 square feet.

Third, if you do not have enough fellowship space, think of ways to remodel or enlarge the current space to accommodate more guests, it may be worth the investment. Some churches in warmer climates may use space outside of the worship center.

If you do have adequate fellowship space, use the following suggestions to invite people

1. Supply the room with a nice variety of food and drink. Include a coffee bar with various quality coffee options. Include hot chocolate, lemonade, hot water and tea bags, ice water, and whatever other creative things you want to include.
2. Give people a good reason to drop in. Cookies, donuts, and pastries are nice, but for healthier options add an assortment of fresh fruit, veggie sticks, health bars, popcorn, or cheese sticks. It's

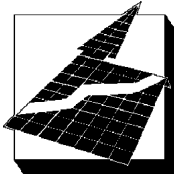
OK to charge a nominal fee for the goodies, but better if they're free. If you do charge, be sure visitors and guests know the goodies are on the house.

3. Be sure to announce the refreshment room at the conclusion of the worship service, and invite members and guests to attend. Portable freestanding signs should point the way to the fellowship room.
4. Encourage your members and regular attendees to introduce themselves to anyone near them whom they do not know. If they turn out to be visitors, members should invite the guest to the fellowship hall and introduce them to friends and church staff.
5. Appoint fellowship room hosts to be on the lookout for people standing alone, particularly newcomers. A good host is skilled in social exchange and will engage the person(s) in casual conversation. Introducing the guests to the pastor and other members is also good hospitality.



Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn. For more ideas see *What Every Pastor Should Know* (Baker Books, 2013).

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Guesterizing Your Church DVD

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Guesterizing Your Church

Being nice to people is just the beginning of connecting newcomers to your church. Smiling and being nice accounts for only about twenty percent of connecting guests to a church.

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