

# Why We Need This Building

The year First Baptist voted to relocate our Sunday School average was 239. The Sunday School average for the year should come to 335. Each year has seen steady growth, averaging a 9% increase per year since 2000. More and more people have come to First Baptist and have chosen to join us in serving Christ together.

**In a relocation**, the rule of thumb is that a church will be unable to replace all the space that they had in their previous location. Generally, the relocating church is trading a reduction in space for a future. However, by God's blessing, we saw our space increase! 20 out of 22 teaching units moved into larger classrooms. The worship center is 68% larger in the congregation and the choir loft is more than twice as large. Parking was vastly expanded.

Average Sunday School Attendance										
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 EST
154	155	168	178	190	213	239	261	282	306	335
	+0.1%	+8.4%	+5.9%	+6.7%	+12.1%	+10.9%	+10%	+8%	+8.5%	+9.5%

**We need to build for where we are going, not where we are.** At the current growth rate, in five years, our church average will be approximately 500 and, in ten years, will exceed 700, perhaps nearing 800. Sadly, many churches hesitate, doubt themselves, and delay construction. Then, when they finally build, they confess, "We should have built this building five years ago."

**We have been building to meet the needs of a constantly growing and changing congregation.** While adult attendance increased this year at the rate of 6%, the preschool grew at the rate of 10%, the children grew by 27%, and the youth increased by 29%.

**We are full again...** Though we moved to a building with more space, we are full again. The children's division is already over capacity. Some preschool rooms are at capacity. Of eleven adult classes, four classes are over 80% full now and three classes are "on alert" at 65% full or more. One class is meeting in an office. To continue to reach more people, we need to create new classes. Yet there is nowhere to put a new class.

We are so full that the Teaching Ministry Leadership Team is looking at moving to dual Sunday Schools. However, going to two Sunday Schools cannot meet all of our needs. First of all, it doesn't double Sunday School space, since preschool space must be used twice (Sunday School and worship). It would provide just enough space for the children's (grades 1-6) division, yet it would provide them an adequate amount of growth space. It will not change the fact that the youth do not have space specifically designed for that purpose. The fellowship hall has to be shared with the youth for Wednesday night Bible study and limits our options for Wednesday night activities in many ways. We still will not have a good room for adult training events—and we need one.

**Providing space is not merely something a church does *after* it grows. Providing space is part of what a church must do *in order* to grow.**

Five principles, first articulated by Arthur Flake in the early 1900's, spell out how a Sunday School ministers and grows. The five principles are:

- ◆ Know the possibilities (develop a prospect list)
- ◆ Enlarge the organization (start new classes to reach new people)
- ◆ Provide the space
- ◆ Enlist and train the workers
- ◆ Go after the people (make personal contacts)

These five items are part of our Baptist heritage, having stood the test of time. This is not the latest fad. These principles are Biblical, simple, practical—they work! And in the very middle of the list is, "Provide the space." Providing space is just as essential to a growing Sunday School as making contacts! In his book, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, Dr. Thom S. Rainer reported the results of his extensive surveys, showing that nice facilities, adequate space, safe, easily accessible children's and preschool space, and clean space were all issues of importance to unchurched people.

These are reasons why it is a common saying among Sunday School consultants, "No church will ever grow to need the space it does not provide."

**Quality space is essential, not only to a growing Sunday School, but to a good learning environment.** It's hard to learn when you are one of 30 people cramped into a room designed to hold 20; it's too uncomfortable. People learn in different ways at different stages of their development. Preschoolers and children learn by doing and by playing; if there is only enough room to sit at a table, the teacher's options for learning activities are limited. Youth leaders use games and music as teaching tools; so they also need more space than adults for learning activities.

A good learning environment means more than having *enough* space; a church also needs to have the right *kinds* of space. Churches that develop disciples need space specifically designed for youth, children, and preschoolers. Our students go to schools equipped with computers and video equipment; they are accustomed to learning through visual media as well as by sitting still and listening. The right kind of space, properly equipped, helps a teacher teach the Bible more effectively.

In the process of training disciples, the learning environment matters.

**Why we need the fireside room.** The fireside room isn't just an expensive luxury. First of all, this will be an adult Sunday School classroom. So the extra cost will come into play only to the extent that the room has a slightly larger capacity and costs more to equip and furnish than the other classrooms. We need a good room for meetings and training events with a capacity up to 50 people. With this room we will not have to move walls or heat or cool the entire fellowship hall for such events. This room creates a better learning environment. As this room can be used for Sunday School, Discipleship Training, Deacons meetings, training events of all kinds, showers, teas, and as a bride's room, it offers enormous value per square foot.

**This is a grand opportunity!** How many churches would love to trade places with us and be able to be part of something like this! Many never know what is like to be part of a growing congregation or to be part of something as big as our building program. We are a privileged people. As the Jesus told us, "To whom much is given is much required."