



A Church Extension Planning Guide

The Gathering Area: Key to Building Function and Circulation

A frequent problem in church buildings is an inadequate gathering area or narthex. Some churches were designed with little more than a hallway leading into the main entrance or worship area. Others have added parking lots or new buildings that changed the original circulation pattern so that there is no central organizing entrance area. The entrance nearest the parking lot, regardless of its adequacy, will become the main entrance. A properly planned gathering area is centrally located with ample space.

The narthex is one key to a good church building. From this central place, all other parts of the building should be easily and directly reached. The narthex should serve as a center



The gathering space is like a “village well” for the congregation.

of informal fellowship for the congregation before, between, and after the services and congregational func-

tions. It can become the meeting place for members who have little opportunity to see each other during the week. For the congregation, it's like a “village well” or “meeting and greeting room.”

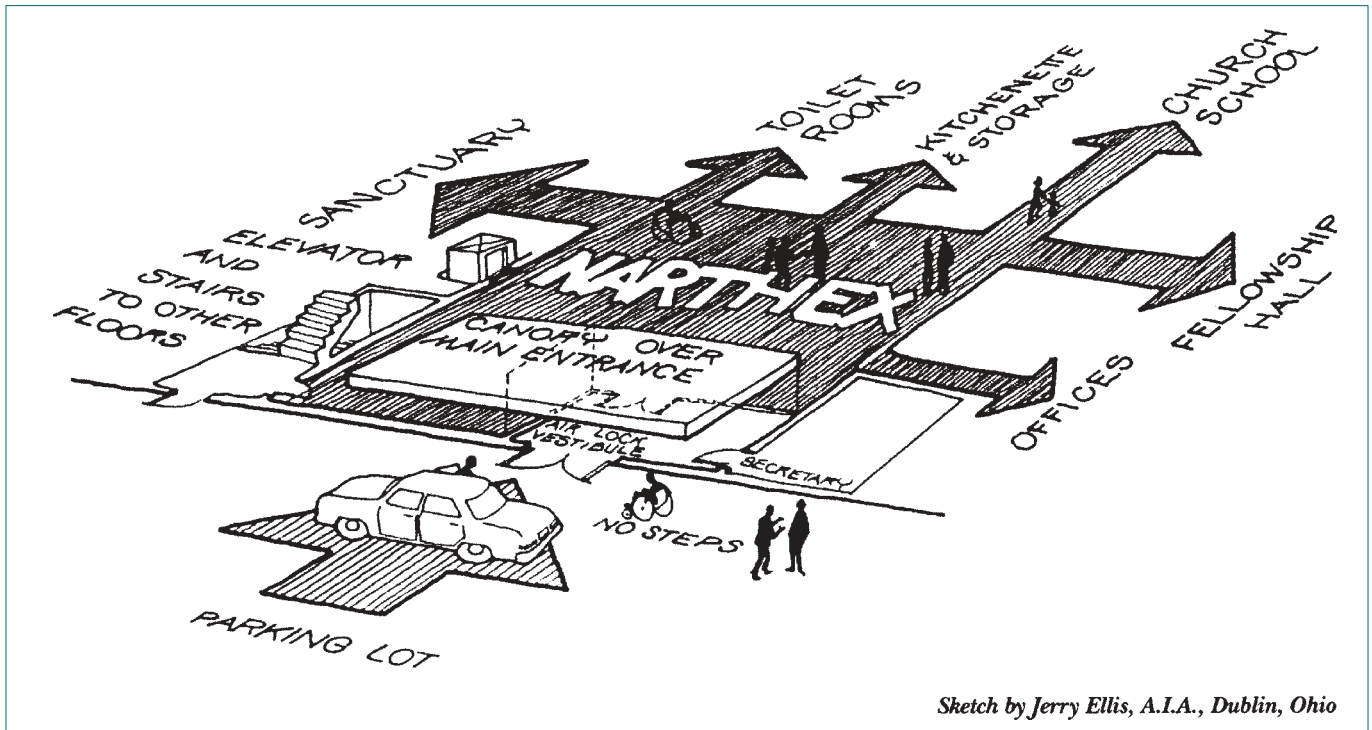
Inadequate space for the narthex tends to cause people to move on rather than stop and converse. In planning the gathering area, four square feet per person (worship seating capacity or attendance average) ought to be allowed. If possible, some seating should be included in this space. A spacious, comfortable circulation area will encourage conversation and fellowship. It can be a lounge as well as a traffic area.

The narthex is the hub of circulation where one enters and finds easy access to all parts of the building.



Following worship, the gathering space can serve as an area for fellowship.

The Gathering Area/Narthex



Sketch by Jerry Ellis, A.I.A., Dublin, Ohio

Functions As:

- ◆ The Central Gathering Place
- ◆ The Meeting and Greeting Room
- ◆ The Informal Fellowship Hall
- ◆ The Hub of Circulation
- ◆ The Stand-Around-and-Talk Space
- ◆ The Lounge

Planning Guide

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Additional Planning Guides
addressing a variety of facility
planning issues are available
from:

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