

Minimizing Risk For Your Church In The Preliminary Design Stage



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The Planning stage is the first step in a church building program. The second step is that of developing the size, scope, and budget for your church building project. This is called the Design Development stage and entails the development of floor plans and visual graphics of the exterior of the new facility to show what the facility will look like and how it will function, as well as other information about materials and systems that is helpful in setting a building budget. As expressed in an earlier newsletter, it is important to (1) identify the risks, (2) analyze the likelihood and consequences of each risk, and (3) determine a plan of action to minimize or alleviate the risks.

There are four major risks associated with the Preliminary Design stage of your building program. We will cover the first major risk in this article and the rest in future articles.

The first major risk is that of "growing" the project. During this stage it is not uncommon for church committee members to ask the architect to draw more space than originally planned. It is easy to get caught up in the excitement of the moment and request what you "want" in relationship to what you "need." "It would be good if we could have more space here" is what you usually hear during design meetings.

What are the design risks and results? First thing you know, your project has outgrown what your congregation can comfortably afford. And if you continue on through the following stages of your building program, hoping for a miracle, your building program will probably fail because of the inability to fund and finance the project that you have "grown" in the early stages of your building program.

And then, in the spirit of trying to get what you want, there is a tendency to try to negotiate a lower cost estimate with your designer. The only problem with this is that it just postpones the inevitable when the project is bid out, and you fall in the same group wherein 80% of church projects bid out exceed the earlier design estimates by 30% to 50% or more.

How can you avoid the risk of "growing" your project? The only way that you can successfully do this is to discipline yourself to do so. Once you have established a realistic building budget that your congregation can comfortably afford based upon the intended size and scope of your project, at every design meeting, paste the building

budget up on the wall, and point to it every time someone suggests "growing" the project. This will keep everyone focused. *"Print it on tablets of stone, so everyone can see it, and run with it."* Habakkuk 2:2.

