



# Facility Stewardship Today

“Improving church health through Facility Stewardship”

[www.facilityministry.org](http://www.facilityministry.org)

Jim Rodgers—Architectural Pastor

Spring, 2017

## Facility Stewardship Today

*Have a Seat* is the theme for this installment of Facility Stewardship Today—a newsletter about “Improving church health through Facility Stewardship.”

For His Service & Yours,

## Hey! You're Sittin' in my Pew!

Hymns or Choruses?  
Coffee or no coffee in the sanctuary?  
Contemporary or Traditional worship?

All great subjects to stir the pot for an energetic discussion. But my favorite is:

Pews or Chairs? . . .

First of all, why is this subject so emotional? We can point to finances, practicality, and appearance but there's probably a much simpler root cause for the emotionalism.

It's what we're accustomed to. It's about where we regularly sit at church.

In the cartoon,\* this man knows he should be welcoming to the visitors, but is overcome by concern to protect his family's turf. And while we might smile, thinking that this kind of event would really never happen, I'm aware of numerous true stories of visitors being gently ushered to other locations. One pastor even shared of an embarrassingly emotional exchange he noticed at the beginning of a service. Needless to say, in most of these examples the visitors never return—that is if they can even be identified.

When dealing with church facilities, there is an emotional progression:

1. What we become accustomed to, we become attached to
2. What we become attached to, we resist changing—even if it means running off visitors.

To help diffuse some of the emotion, maybe we should remember that actually, we are all “visitors” to Christ's Church and only welcomed by grace through faith.

*Continue Reading on page 2*



“Welcome to our church—even though you're sitting in our family pew . . .”

## Verse for Today (vft):

“But as for you, keep your head in all situations. Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5—NIV 84).

## Ministry Encouragement:

“I know perfectly well that, wherever I go and preach, there are many better preachers known and heard than I am; all that I can say about it is that the Lord uses me” (Dwight L. Moody, quoted in David L. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers*, p. 510).

## Link Highlight:

Staalsen Construction:

[www.staalsen.com](http://www.staalsen.com)

*Staalsen Construction is a full-service contractor serving churches and Christian ministries. They offer a wide range of construction services that flex with your preferred project delivery method and process. Staalsen can work with any trade contractors in the church or even volunteers to maximize the impact for the whole congregation—service with quality since 1940.*

Facility Stewardship Today is produced semi-annually as a ministry service to pastors and leaders of Christian ministries. You are receiving this newsletter because of your possible interest or attendance at pastoral classes, seminars, conference, or workshops where Church Facility Ministry was serving. If you would like to be added to the newsletter list please contact: [www.facilityministry.org/contact/](http://www.facilityministry.org/contact/) and write “newsletter” in the subject and message. To be taken off this newsletter list please contact: [www.facilityministry.org/contact/](http://www.facilityministry.org/contact/) and write “unsubscribe” in the subject and message.

Web: [www.facilityministry.org](http://www.facilityministry.org)

Contact Jim Rodgers by: [www.facilityministry.org/contact/](http://www.facilityministry.org/contact/)

## [Hey! You're Sittin' in my Pew! \(continued\)](#)

The title, “Hey, You’re Sittin’ in my Pew,” is from a song written by Mark Swisher, the worship leader at a former church—it’s a fun ballad about a Christian learning that the pew doesn’t really belong to him. Mark was motivated to write the song after I encouraged people to start sitting in different seats from their “regular” locations. I’m also using that title for this brief survey of the debate between chairs and pews because it captures our attention.

None of us truly owns the seat at church—even the Martins, who have sat in the same place for 42 years!



The whole church watched with nervous anticipation as the visitors sat where the Martins have sat for 42 years.

Pews began as an economical form of seating as many people can be seated in a row with supporting members at the ends and the middle. Over time, the pew became an identifying element of a church and the ornate decoration often elevated in quality. But that detailing made them less cost effective. Today, pews represent a long-standing tradition of church seating.

However, if a church is seeking to become more engaging with contemporary culture, the move to chairs may send a more effective message. Also, chairs have the benefit of clearly identifying one’s space. In pews, it’s easy for one to set coat on one side and Bible or purse on the other side allowing one person to begin taking up three spaces. But with the seams between chairs, the space is defined more effectively. When choosing chairs, one must decide between fixed seating—like theater seats, or flexible seating—with chairs that can be rearranged (but also interlock).

Formerly pews used to be the most cost effective choice. However, at a former church we reupholstered existing pews even though it was more expensive than buying brand new chairs. We made that choice because the architectural style called for a “Classic” feel. In this case, it was the choice that best fit that church.

In the end, that’s the determining factor in deciding between chairs and pews. Which form best fits the ministry DNA, architectural style, and message intended by the church.

In that song, “Hey! You’re Sittin’ in my Pew! the lyrics describe a man who protected his family pew. He felt justified until he was out of town and visited another church. And you guessed it, someone else challenged him, “Hey, you’re sittin’ in my pew.” By the end of the song our friend greeted visitors and genuinely made them feel welcome—no matter where they sat.

If your church is evaluating your seating, start by identifying the DNA of your church and evaluate the overall architectural style. And try to be one of the calming voices in what can be an emotional discussion.

\* Cartoons from: [www.buildingchurchleaders.com/multimedia/cartoons/15178.html](http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/multimedia/cartoons/15178.html) and [www.buildingchurchleaders.com/multimedia/cartoons/15179.html](http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/multimedia/cartoons/15179.html)