



## Does Your Church Have A Moat?

By Topper Reid

**M**ost churches don't realize they have a moat around their church building. The type of moat I am referring to is invisible. The moat only becomes visible to people who cannot find a place to park on Sunday mornings. Finding a place to park becomes the "challenge of conquering the moat." Does your church have a moat? If so, how can we fill it so everyone can easily cross it and find a place to park?

### How do we know if we have a moat around our church?

Answer these questions: (1) Are all parking spaces taken? (2) If my church has multiple hours of Bible Study and Worship, are all the closest parking spaces taken after the first hour? (3) Has our attendance leveled off or declined? (4) Has the number of guests on Sunday declined? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may have a moat around your church!



### So what is the answer?

One strong suggestion is for your church to provide parking services on Sunday mornings. A well-defined parking ministry can fill the moat by allowing easier access to the church campus. The idea is to make the worship experience begin

upon entering the campus. Conversely, we do not want to anger people when they cannot find a parking place or because their feet hurt or they ruin their shoes walking in the rain from a distant lot.

### What can churches learn about parking strategies from secular events?

When did you last attend a major sporting event? Most require complete management of traffic flow and parking. Otherwise, the event could experience disastrous consequences such as unhappy people and falling attendance.

Event parking managers direct cars to specific parking places. Once a lot is full, it closes and cars get directed to an open lot. Managers understand the strategy of guiding traffic at all times. Police assistance allows cars to leave parking areas safely to re-enter public streets without traffic issues. Often a shuttle service offers frequent, "clock-work" transportation to and from distant





parking areas. Sometimes special parking areas are reserved for certain groups.

Valets operate at some events. As part of the blanket event strategy parking programs do everything possible to make the experience totally enjoyable.

#### How can we get started?

Once a church reaches a certain point in its ministry, a parking strategy may be necessary to encourage continued growth. Many churches already employ parking ministries. Take a video camera and several potential parking ministry people to observe the process at a nearby church. Attend a sporting event to observe the parking program. Get drawings of your church campus to study current parking patterns. Develop a plan to improve traffic flow. Determine how many people it takes to implement the strategy then enlist and train them. Your plan will morph until it reaches the best strategy for your campus. Expect many "tweaks" and adjustments en route.

Churches with parking ministries must re-evaluate their strategy every three to four years. If you add parking lots you may need to look seriously at the effectiveness of the ministry. Evaluation leads us to our greatest potential! Any parking ministry can always be improved!

Points to remember when implementing a parking ministry:

- Direct traffic to specific areas
- Systematically park the entire campus
- Place parking team members at key campus locations to direct traffic

- Use police on city streets as needed
- Provide a first-class shuttle service to remote parking areas
- Use shuttle vehicles that can load and unload quickly
- Avoid church vans for shuttles; they are too hard to get on and off!
- Use valet parking for seniors and single parents with preschoolers
- Reserve parking areas for seniors and first- and second-time guests

- Ask parking team members to wear polo shirts with the ministry logo
- On rainy days place team members with rain gear and big golf umbrellas in parking lots to help people board shuttles
- Use portable sandwich boards on campus to point cars in the right direction
- Provide permanent signage for guest lots, handicapped and reserved parking, shuttle loading areas, etc.

Does your church have a moat? You know what to do! Get busy filling it! ♦

**Bright Future**  
ELECTRIC

Design/Build Electrical Contractors  
Serving the Southeast

Birmingham, Alabama (205) 326-1409  
Orlando, Florida (407) 654-0155