



## 2006 Access Study

A Report of the Building Committee  
to the Congregation of Tenth  
Presbyterian Church

**Tenth**  
Presbyterian  
C h u r c h

October 2006

## **Background**

Tenth Church was designed by John McArthur, Jr., and constructed in 1855-56. The two-story Sunday School and Lecture Building (the Middle Building) attached to the south side of the Sanctuary Building was completed first. The congregation met in Reception Hall while the sanctuary was being completed. The church purchased the Delancey property in 1982, which now houses its administrative offices and Bible school classes. Tenth Church purchased 315 S. Seventeenth Street in 2000 for use as classroom space.

All of the buildings in the Tenth Campus date from a time when modern access codes were not considered in the design or operation of buildings. As a result Tenth is not particularly accessible by modern standards. Concurrently, Tenth Church is not presently required by law to take any action to correct the situation.

Tenth began to address access concerns in the 1980's and has thus far completed the following projects.

- Installing its first Handicap restroom in 1987.
- Installing its first Handicap ramp in 1992.
- Cutting back pews in the Amen Sections to make room for wheelchairs in 1996.
- Scheduling one or more Sunday School classes in Reception Hall or accessible rented facilities since 1996.
- Setting up auxiliary tables in Reception Hall for church banquets and conducting business meetings in the Sanctuary since 1998.
- Providing ASL interpretation for our evening worship service since 2000.
- Installing a handicap ramp to the first floor of the 315 Building in 2001.

In 1996 a specially formed committee prepared a Handicap Accessibility Study for the Building Committee, which generated an extensive survey of existing accessibility barriers and a list of alterations that would be required to eliminate them.

In that study "Access" was defined in the following ways:

- Primary Access: providing physical access for the primary function, the worship services.
- Equal Benefit: making at least one of everything available for those with physical impairments.
- Full Integration: making everything available and equally attractive.

Among other things, this report recommended an elevator in the middle building infill area for access to all levels of the Delancey and Middle buildings. The air conditioning project designed ductwork and structure based on this location.

## ***Purpose***

The purpose of this study is to revalidate and prioritize access needs at Tenth Church.

## ***Process***

The building committee conducted a study of access issues at Tenth Church during the months between late June and early August 2006. The needs of the elderly, children, employees, and those with special needs were identified for evaluation in the study. Information gathering in the study consisted of interviews with individuals and/or groups representing these groups. The information was then synthesized into this report.

## ***General Findings***

1. Limited mobility is a significant problem for individuals of all ages in the church, and it is not hard to identify individuals that find the stairs at Tenth Church to be a barrier to participation in the functions of the church. It is also obvious that the magnitude of the difficulty varies based on individual circumstances with the most serious situation facing those in wheel chairs.
2. At this point Tenth Church has wheelchair access to the Sanctuary, Reception Hall, and a portion of the first floor of the 315 Building.
3. While several procedural improvements have been made over the past several years to minimize the problems of those with limited mobility, more can be done to implement them more consistently and effectively. An example is consistently scheduling the new member's class in an accessible room at least once per year.

## ***Special Findings***

4. The most obvious mobility issue for the youngest children is the need to provide first floor nursery space in order to be able to evacuate large numbers in the event of an emergency. If our "baby boom" continues to increase in size (20% over the average of recent years in first six months of 2006) Tenth Church will face the need to acquire or convert more first floor space for nursery space for ages 2 and under. Certainly, any nursery space lost to an elevator will need to be replaced. Similarly, for older children (age 3+) served in basement levels, ramps would provide better emergency egress than stairs.
5. With sensitive and intelligent office procedures, the Delancey office building can and does practically accommodate employees with limited mobility. These accommodations generally do not extend to ministry duties in other buildings in our complex. Also, there is no realistic way that the church could hire a wheelchair bound employee without extensive modification of the facilities.

## ***Additional Findings***

6. Because the outside access ramp area is not user friendly, those who could benefit from it avoid it.
7. Wheelchair access would also provide stroller access.
8. Additional handicap bathrooms would be helpful.

## ***Priorities for Access***

The clear consensus of the individuals and groups interviewed in this analysis was the highest priority location for access is Fellowship Hall and the Catacombs followed by Delancey. The choir loft and the 315 Building were also mentioned as important.

Full access to each area would provide the following benefits based on current use.

### ***Fellowship Hall***

On Sundays, full access to fellowship hall would mean adults with limited mobility would be able to participate in a much larger menu of Bible School classes as well as luncheons after 11 am service, such as the missions lunch. In addition, full access would ease the burden on children with limited mobility in access to a variety of programs including Sinfonia Sacra rehearsals and Maranatha.

During the week, Fellowship Hall is used for choir rehearsals; CCA performing arts classes; Session/Diaconate monthly meetings; wedding receptions and similar ministry-related dinners; one or two seminars, training sessions, workshops, or conferences a month; mereBreath rehearsals and performances; TenthWomen events; weekly piano rehearsals; monthly clergy committee meetings; and various CCA rehearsals, luncheons, and programs.

### ***Catacombs and Basement***

On Sundays, the catacombs are used for children's Bible School, bookstore, library, worship overflow, smaller luncheons, ACTS music rehearsals, Fellowship Bible Study, mereBreath rehearsals, and the children's evening program.

During the week the catacombs are used for CCA classes and events, TenthWomen events, piano rehearsals, weekly conversational English classes, weekly Angel Tree tutoring, and Deaf Ministry meetings/classes.

### ***Delancey***

On Sundays, Delancey is used for Bible School and other classes or training sessions, committee meetings, and prayer meetings.

The key benefit of full access in the Delancey building would be during the week for staff. In addition there are 2 or 3 evening meetings each week.

### **Choir Loft**

Access to the choir loft would primarily be useful in support of the music program. Elderly choir members have difficulty with the climb to the choir loft.

### **315 Building**

Access to the 315 Building would primarily be useful to TIF and CCA. If full access were available to Fellowship Hall and the Catacombs, it is anticipated that some 315 functions such as the new member's class could be relocated periodically to more accessible locations.

### **1716 Building**

Access to the 1716 Building would primarily be useful to the 2yr old nursery that meets there. There was little comment regarding the facility, perhaps because use of the nursery is new and as yet unfamiliar to many in the congregation.

### **Conclusion**

After discussing the matter with many interested groups and individuals in the church the building committee concluded that there was a significant consensus in the congregation regarding the priority for increasing access is as follows:

1. Fellowship Hall
2. Basement/Catacombs
3. Delancey
4. Choir Loft
5. 315 Building
6. 1716 Building