

[54] **FOLDING CHURCH PEW**

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[51] **Int. Cl.**..... **A47c 4/00**

[58] **Field of Search**..... 297/14, 16, 17, 37, 42, 297/44, 46, 47, 51, 59, 60, 159, 331, 335; 312/314, 317 R, 317 A

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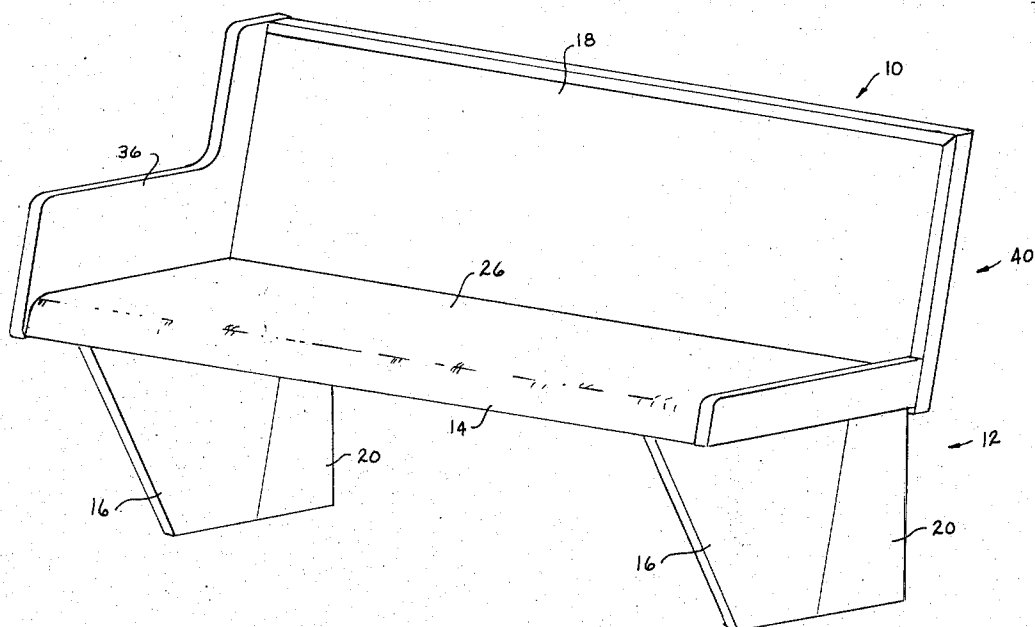
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[57]

ABSTRACT

A folding pew having a rigid frame portion which includes a back support and a fixed leg, a movable pew set portion rotatably connected to the rigid frame and having movable legs rotatably connected to the underside of the bench whereby the pew may be folded into a compact unit for easy storage.

3 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures



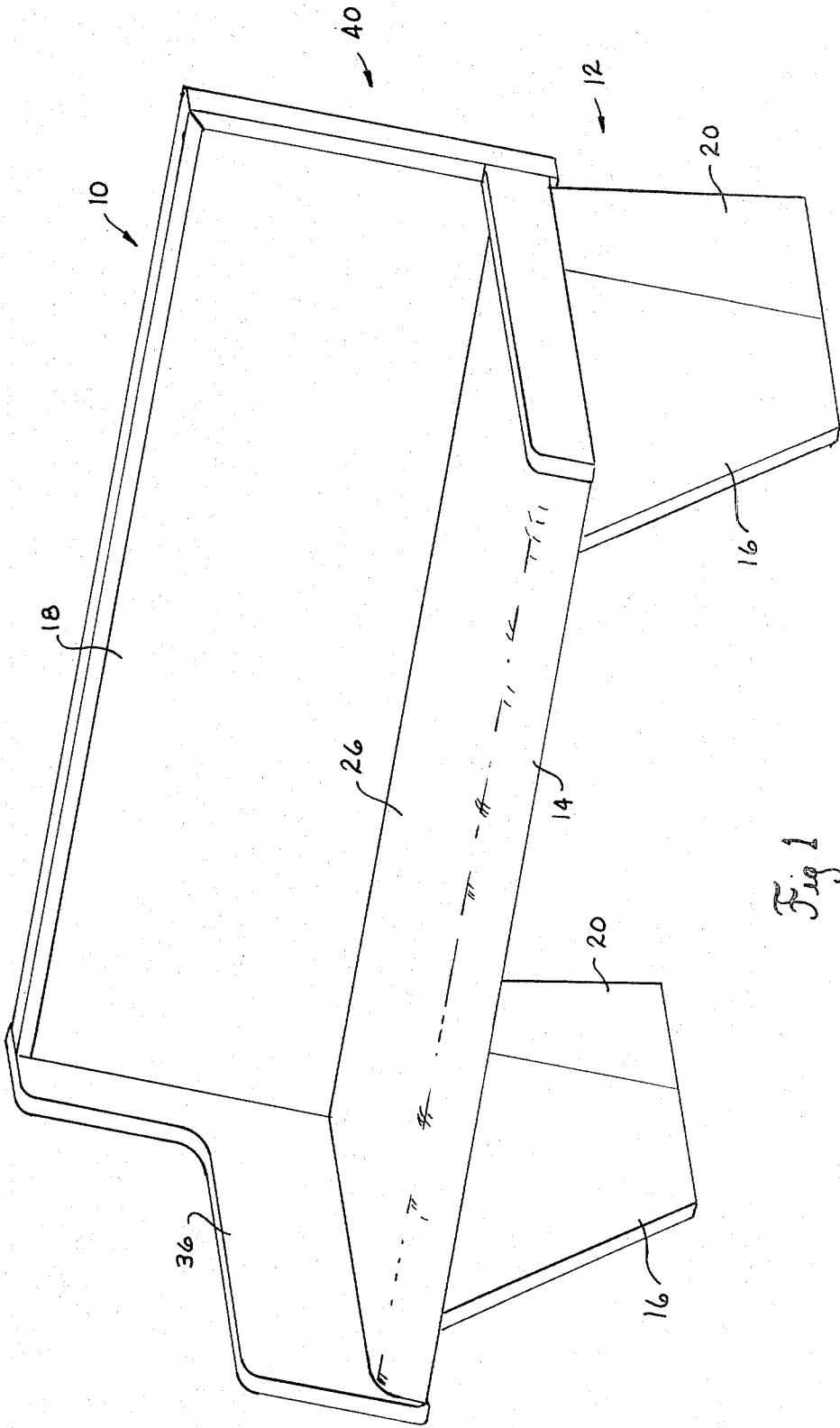


Fig 1

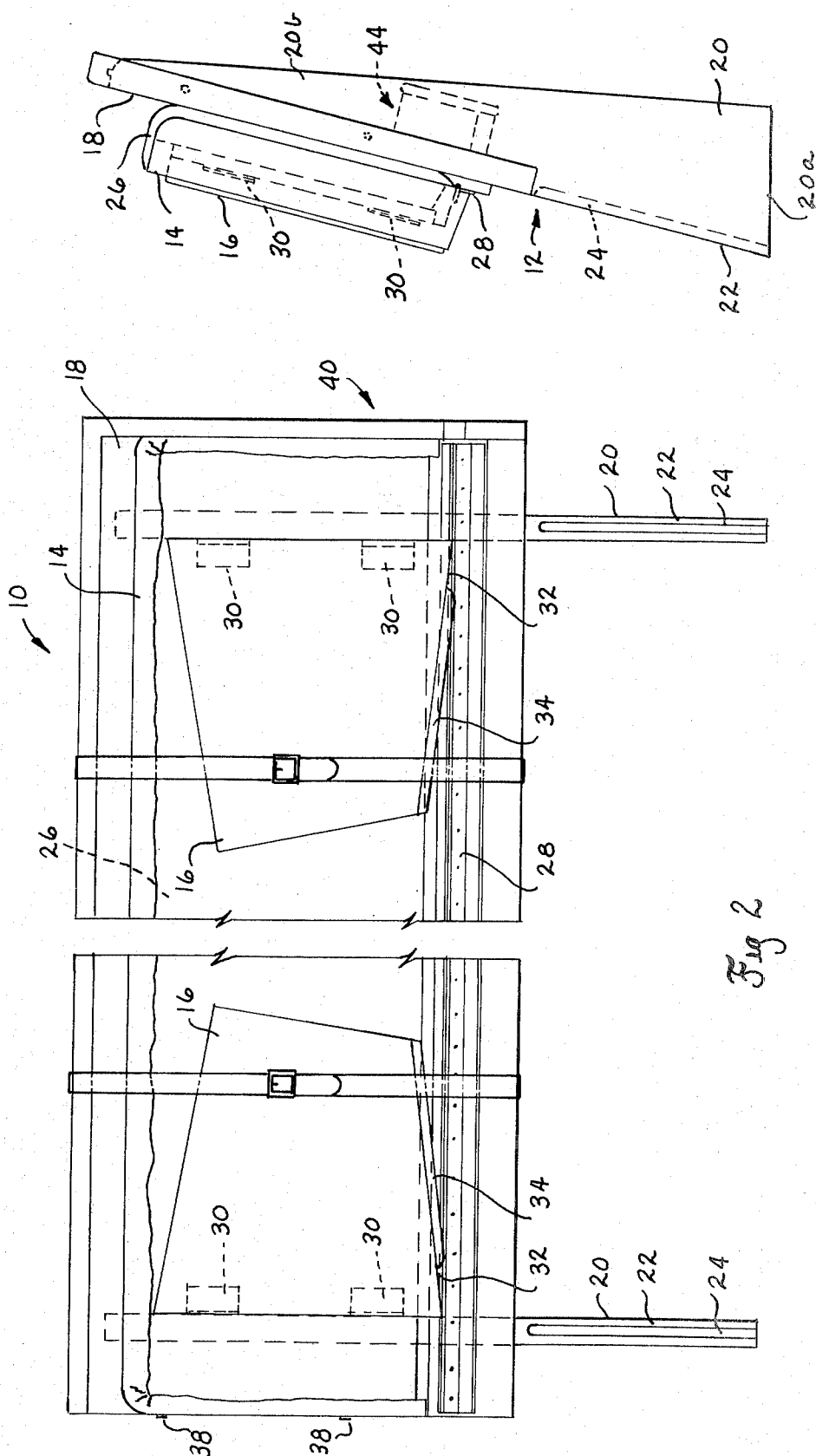
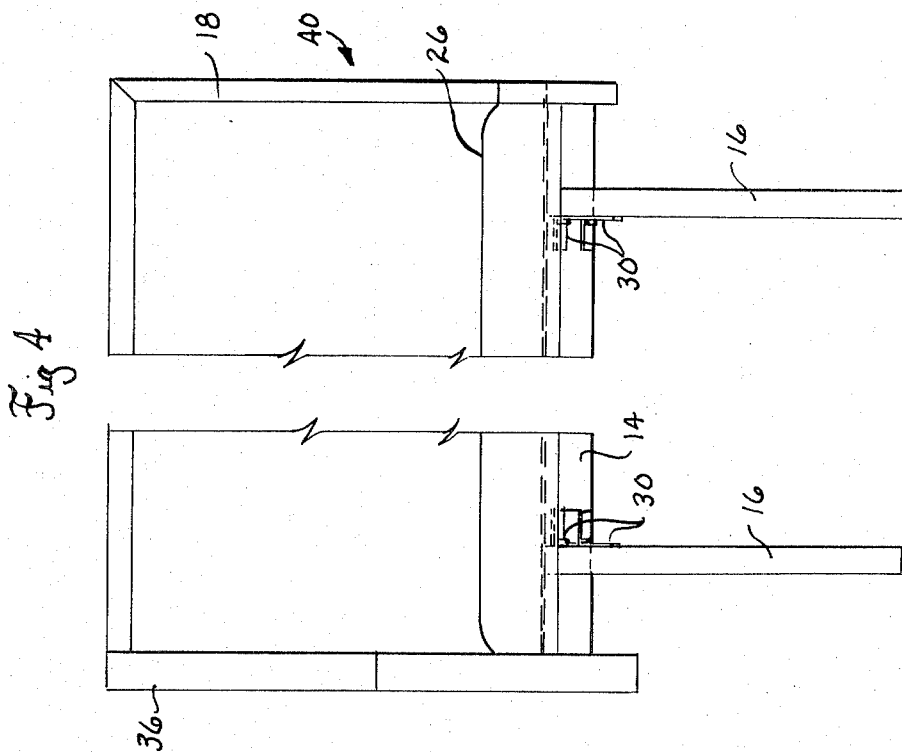
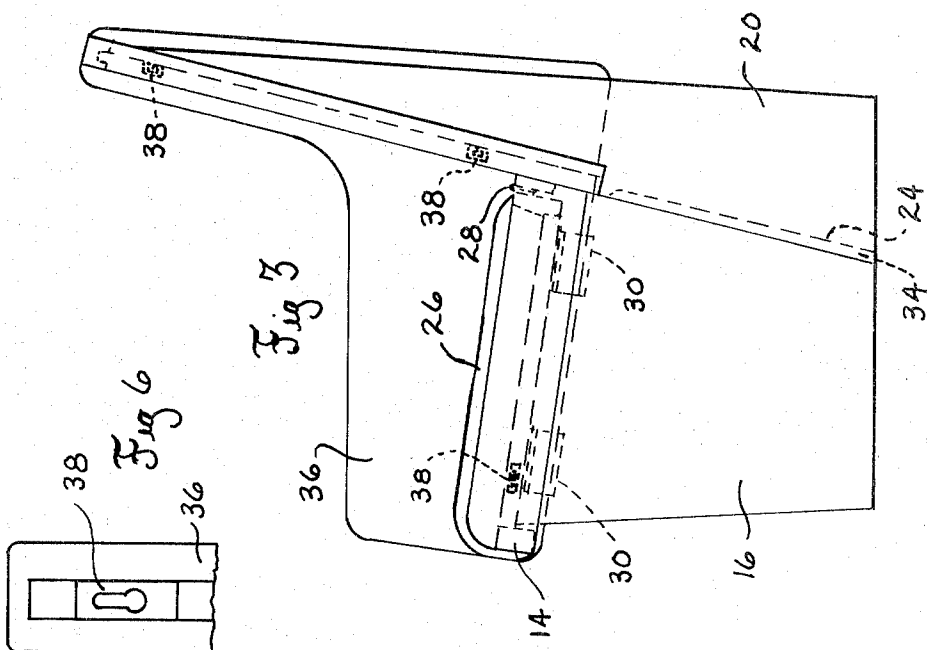


Fig 5

Fig 2



FOLDING CHURCH PEW

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In this day and age of increased costs, especially in building costs, the need for additional space at the lowest cost possible is a prime objective of most planners, architects and others interested in building utilization. One of the most efficient ways to gain additional space at minimal cost is to encourage and specify multiple use of buildings.

Nowhere has this need for adequately designed, multiple use building facilities been more encouraged or needed than in church, synagogue or auditorium construction.

It should also be noted that many churchmen are striving for ways to generate renewed interest in church activities, not the least of which is increased attendance. One way which has proven effective is the ability to be flexible in the interior arrangement of the church to get away from the rigid and formal church interior to something more informal for the younger people while still permitting rearrangement in the more traditional way for the older church members.

Until the advent of the present invention, there have been only a few means available to design and construct a church or synagogue in which customary pews were available during the services, but which could also be conveniently moved to create a more flexible interior or stored away completely in an out of the way location so that the interior space of the building could be used for other purposes. Until now, the best available seating means to achieve multiple use of available space was the use of folding chairs or movable benches. None of these available devices add to the interior design or give the effect that is achieved in a church building by the addition of traditional pews. The present day devices all have the disadvantage of requiring large numbers of people to assist in setting up and breaking down the seats.

According to the present invention, it is now possible to offer a better alternative to achieve a traditional interior design of a house of worship when the building is to be so used, yet, at the same time, provide the flexibility to be easily moved and stored away to permit the same interior space to be used for other functions.

It is, therefore, the primary object of this invention to provide a flexible alternative to interior church design which will permit maximum utilization of available space and thereby save building costs.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a folding pew which provides traditional pew construction and appearance, while at the same time providing an easily storeable compact unit.

A still further object is to provide a simple construction for the folding pew which can easily be folded up and moved and then replaced again.

These and other objects of the invention will become more apparent from the detailed description of the pew to follow.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a prospective view of the pew described by the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a partial front view of the pew in the folded position;

FIG. 3 is an end view of a pew in the normal use position;

FIG. 4 is a partial front view of the pew in the normal use position;

FIG. 5 is an end view of the pew in the folded position; and

FIG. 6 is a detail drawing of the fastening means used to hold the pew end plate in position.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Turning now to the drawings, with specific reference to the numerals, the folding church pew is generally designated by the numeral 10, as shown in FIG. 1. The pew 10 is comprised of a rigid frame portion 12, a bench portion 14 and a folding leg 16.

The rigid frame 12 includes a back portion 18 of variable lengths and a fixed leg portion 20. The fixed leg portion 20 is adapted to engage the floor of the building in which it is located, or it might sit on any relatively level surface. The leg portion 20 is suitably fixed to the back portion 18 by screws and/or dowels and/or gluing. The forwardly facing, lower surface 22 of leg 20, as shown in FIG. 5, is inclined, sloping from a wider base portion 20a toward a narrower upper portion 20b. A grooved portion 24 is provided in the inclined surface 22 over a substantial portion of its length between base 20a and the point where leg 20 meets back portion 18, as shown in FIGS. 3 and 5. The leg 20 provides partial support for the pew 10 when the pew is in the normal use position shown in FIGS. 1 and 3 and total support for the pew when it is in the folded position, as shown in FIGS. 2 and 5.

The number of fixed legs 20 needed for adequate support for the pew 10 will, as will be readily understood, be determined by the length of the span of the pew. Accepted construction techniques require that the fixed legs be equally spaced apart over the length of the pew, usually in the range of five feet on centers. For short pews, two legs may be enough while for longer pews three, four or more legs may be required.

The bench or seat portion 14 may be a standard bench seat having a suitable seat contour or it might be provided with a cushion 26 as shown. The bench 14 is connected to the rigid frame structure 12 and specifically to back portion 18 by means of a piano type hinge 28 which extends over a substantial length of the bench 14, as shown in FIG. 2. In this manner, bench 14 is rotatable with respect to the rigid frame 12 and back 18 and is movable between an outwardly extending, generally horizontal normal use position and a generally vertical upward extending folded position.

For each fixed leg 20 there is provided a movable or folding leg 16. In this case, for the purposes of illustration, there are a pair of fixed legs 20 and movable legs 16. Each leg 16 is rotatably or pivotally connected to the underside of bench portion 14 by means of hinge means 30. The hinge means 30 may be a standard hinge or it may comprise a drop leaf support type hinge which provides a positive lock by means of an overcenter type device. By this arrangement, the legs 16 may be rotated between a generally vertical use position, shown in FIGS. 1, 3 and 4, and a folded position generally parallel with bench 14 and in engagement therewith, as shown in FIGS. 2 and 5.

The rear surface 32 of leg 16 is provided with a complimentary inclined surface with respect to surface 22 on leg 20. A tongue member 3 extends outwardly from

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surface 32 and is adapted to be received in groove 24 in leg 20. When the pew 10 is in its normal use position, inclined surfaces 22 and 32 on legs 20 and 16, respectively, interlock by means of the cooperation of the tongue 34 being received in groove 24. The inclined surfaces and the tongue and groove further cooperate to provide a bearing surface along the incline and a positive locking means when the pew is folded down, since the tongue and groove lock the two legs together in the lateral direction and facilitate the alignment of the two legs when the pew is folded down.

To further provide stability to the pew structure as well as providing a decorative effect, an end plate 36, as shown in FIGS. 3, 4 and 6, may be fixed to the back portion 18 by appropriate fastening means 38 such as bayonet type clips or the like. If it is desired, however, it is also possible to provide a plane end 40 without any end plate at all. The invention described herein is by no means to be limited by a type of end plate or lack of end plate.

Further devices such as book racks or the like 44 may be provided on the pew 10, as shown in FIG. 5.

When the pew 10 is in the normal use position as shown in FIGS. 1, 3 and 4, it looks and functions as a standard pew structure. The pew is not, however, fixed or fastened to the floor of the building as would normally be the case. The device is stable by its own weight and becomes more so when it is being used. When desired, however, the pew and others like it may be quickly and easily folded and moved to an out of the way or storage position. To fold the pew, a single person may stand behind it and simply lift on the bench 14, pivoting or rotating it to the generally vertical position. Next, legs 16 are folded inwardly toward the bottom of bench 14 and a suitable fastening device, such as a strap 42, is placed around bench 14, back 18 and leg 16, as shown in FIG. 2, to hold the members in place as a folded unit. The folded pew may then be carried to the storage location or a suitable set of dollies (not shown) may be provided to fit under base portion 20a of legs 20 so that the pew can be wheeled away.

It should also be noted that when the pews are folded and moved to a storage position, they are stacked in a vertical position so that the folded up seat of one unit fits into the recess of the back of the pew in front of it. This reduces the storage space to an absolute minimum and maximizes the available floor space after the pew are stored away.

To use the pews, the movable legs 16 are snapped into position, the straps 42 are removed and the bench 14 is lowered to the horizontal position. This movement permits the legs to align themselves so that they are in position for the tongue 34 to be received in groove 24 to lock the legs together.

If an end plate, such as the one designated 36, is used in combination with the pew, it must first be removed, by lifting up on the end plate 36 to release the fastening means 38, before the pew can be folded. When the pew is folded down the end plate 36 is replaced in a similar manner.

While this invention has been described in connection with a single embodiment thereof, it will be under-

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stood that this embodiment is capable of modification and that this application is intended to cover any variations, uses or adaptations following, in general, the principles of the invention and including such departures from the present disclosure as come within the known or customary practice in the art to which the invention pertains, and as fall within the scope of the invention or the limits of the appended claims.

What I claim is:

1. A folding pew comprising, in combination, a rigid frame means having a back portion and fixed leg means for supporting the pew in the folded position and for partially supporting the pew in the use position, said fixed leg means having an inclined surface, extending upwardly and rearwardly along the forward edge thereof, bench means rotatably connected to said rigid frame means for movement relative to said back portion between an upwardly extending, generally vertical folded position and a generally horizontal outwardly extending use position, movable leg means connected to said bench means for rotation with respect thereto between a downwardly extending generally vertical use position and a horizontal folded position parallel with said bench means, said movable leg means having an inclined surface complementary to the surface on said fixed leg means and cooperable therewith in the use position to form a load bearing area to support the pew and locking means including a groove in the inclined surface of said fixed leg means and a tongue extending outwardly of the complementary inclined surface of said movable leg means, said tongue fitting into said groove and cooperating therewith when said pew is in the use position to lock said legs together.

2. A pew having a use position and a folded position comprising, in combination, a rigid frame means having a back portion and fixed leg means for supporting the pew in the folded position and for partially supporting the pew in the use position, said fixed leg means having an inclined load bearing surface along a forward edge thereof, a bench portion connected to said rigid frame means for rotation with respect thereto between an upwardly extending vertical folded position and a generally horizontal use position, movable leg means connected to said bench portion for rotation with respect thereto between a vertical use position and a horizontal folded position, said movable leg means having an inclined load bearing surface along a rearward edge thereof and complementary to the load bearing surface of said fixed leg means and locking means along said inclined surfaces of each of said leg means cooperating when said pew is in the use position to lock said legs together.

3. A pew, as described in claim 2, wherein said locking means includes a groove extending inwardly over a portion of said inclined surface of one leg means and a tongue extending outwardly over a portion of the complementary inclined surface of the other leg means, said tongue, groove and inclined surfaces cooperating when said pew is in the use position to lock said legs together in the horizontal and vertical directions.

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