

Congregation Mission and Property Ownership Conversation Guide v.5

This document is a tool for church leaders to help facilitate congregational discernment about their stewardship of property ownership. These conversations are best understood as ones all Christian denominations – not just Community of Christ - need to explore to assure we are using our resources wisely to further mission. Before reflecting with members on these important questions, congregational leadership should consider these issues:

- How will a meaningful process of discernment and exploration around these questions best be done. How long is needed? Which critical stakeholders need to be included? How can the invaluable legacy of this congregation be upheld, validated, and honored in these conversations? How can a safe space be created for open and honest sharing?
- What support from mission center and/or field officers would be helpful? How might a seasoned evangelist, moments of blessing, and spiritual practices assist in the congregation's discernment?
- What does the decision-making process look like? What is the level of consent needed to move forward with an action?

The following suggested questions are provided to help facilitate the discernment process. Many questions might not be useful for a specific congregation. The facilitator will need to select the most helpful questions for the unique characteristics and needs of the congregation.

Questions on Congregational Mission

1. What has it meant for the congregation to be the body of Christ? How do present congregants understand being the body of Christ in the future?
2. How do congregants understand their collective mission, including invitation and witness?
3. What do congregants understand to be the most essential elements of worship and disciple formation?
4. How is the congregation living Community of Christ's Mission Initiatives?
5. What are key relationships the congregation desires to develop and foster in responding to its call to mission?
6. How is the congregation encouraging the development of disciples and the spiritual journey of discernment?
7. How does the congregation express warm welcome and radical hospitality?

Questions on Property Ownership Benefits and Challenges

1. How is ownership of property providing a visible presence in the community?

2. How is the property helping to establish a Community of Christ identity in the area?
3. In addition to active congregants, who experiences the property as sacred space and authentic sanctuary?
4. What statement does the condition of the property make to the public? How up-to-date is the property with accessibility, building-code safety, maintenance, child-friendliness, signage, accessible location, and architecture?
5. How is the property being used as a community gathering center or a place of celebration?
6. How many people and groups, in addition to the active congregants, use the property?
7. How does the congregation maintain a balanced focus on making new connections (others) beyond activities focused inside the property (us)?
8. How does the congregation understand the difference between “church” and “building”? What other sacred rituals are possible in addition to “going to church”?
9. What activities at the congregational property could be held effectively elsewhere?
10. How does the property enhance or launch congregational mission programming?

Evaluation of Property Ownership to Engage in Mission

1. What are the present opportunities of this congregation for using buildings and properties for mission? How does the property location align with the congregation’s mission and ministry?
2. How often does the congregation use the property for events that specifically promote Community of Christ identity, message, mission, and beliefs? (note: in contrast to community activities that could be held at any location and led by other leaders)
3. How many congregants drive 30 minutes or more to activities at the property? What might this suggest about how the congregation engages in mission around the building versus the members’ local neighborhoods? If gathering for support and renewal is the primary purpose of gathering for a “drive in” congregation, would a more central place be better?
4. How often does the congregation critically and objectively assess maintenance needs and review annual building use?
5. What is the annual maintenance budget needed to sustain the facility? How is this budget amount supported? Are all expenses being met?
6. What planned capital and allowance for reserves are necessary for preventive maintenance? (for example: parking lot and roof replacement, boiler repair, flooring, painting, siding, gutter cleaning, weatherizing, and other facility updates)
7. How many physically-able people are available to support the facility? (for example: opening and closing the building, cleaning, lawn care, snow removal, trash removal, and other routine upkeep)

8. What percentage of the congregation's resources of time, talent, and treasure is devoted to maintaining the property? What is an appropriate percentage?
9. What percentage of the congregation's resources is devoted to mission? What is an appropriate percentage?
10. What is the financial value of the property if sold? What are potential alternate uses for those financial resources?
11. What possibilities exist in merging with another Community of Christ congregation and using proceeds from a sale of facilities to help fund mission?
12. What will be the key points of a mission plan if the congregation decides to sell its property and respond to the requirements of the Use of Net Proceeds policy?