

NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

NCD-1. GUIDELINES FOR DISSOLUTION OF A CHURCH

For use by: The Administrative Commission
Presbytery Committees, Teams, Cabinets and Trustees
Local Church Session and Trustees
The Congregation of a local church

Just as the presbytery has the authority to dissolve churches or to dismiss churches to another denomination. (G-11.0103i). Just as the presbytery consults with members at the time of organizing, merging, and forming a federated or a union church, such a consultation takes place at the time of dissolution or dismissal. (G-15.0203a,b; G-16.0201w; G-16.0401q)

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), property is held in trust by the particular church on behalf of the denomination. When a particular church is dissolved, the real and personal property is held, used, or transferred as directed by the presbytery.(G-8.0401)

Just as the compelling question at the time of organizing a church is, “How can Christ’s mission be carried out most effectively?”, the same question is asked at the time of dissolution. Again, it is appropriate for the presbytery to celebrate the mission carried out by that church and the people whose lives were positively enriched during its years of service.

The Companion to the Constitution, 1999, p.33

There shall be a meeting of the Session and Trustees of the church with the Presbytery Church Strategy Committee and Trustees prior to any action for dissolution of the church, in order to go over this policy. (Significant parts of this policy are taken from the section on Dissolution of a Particular Church from the old publication “Presbyterian Law for Presbytery and Synod”, Chapter V, Paragraph 10, page 73-74.)

1. The power to dissolve a particular church is specified among the powers listed in Form of Government, (G-11.0103i). The two constitutional provisions cited below, provide for such dissolved and extinct churches.
 - a. Grounds for the dissolution. These grounds are intimated in the following clause in the Constitution: the church has become “extinct by reason of the dispersal of its members, the abandonment of its work, or other cause.” G-8.0401
 - b. Such information may be brought to the attention of presbytery in any one of various ways: (1) by report of a member or members of the session (or former session); (2) by petition of some of those whose names are on the roll of the particular church; (3) by report of the committee on session records that (a) no records have been presented by the church, or (b) such records as are presented indicate that the church is not functioning properly; (4) by report of the committee on ministerial relations that the church has abandoned its work as an organized group; (5) by report of the committee on strategy or some other committee that, in the opinion of the committee, a church should be dissolved. In whatever form the information or request may come to presbytery, the general council or special administrative commission should be directed to make inquiry into all the circumstances and recommend reorganization or dissolution. If dissolution is decided, two matters of constitutional duty are prescribed. (See Dig., pp. A380 if.)
 - c. Records and members. When a church is dissolved, the presbytery of jurisdiction shall take possession of its records, have jurisdiction over its members, and grant them

certificates of transfer to other churches. G-10.0302b.(2). Care should be taken concerning members removed from the bounds of the dissolved church and those resident members who may have become inactive. The presbytery shall a/so determine any case of discipline begun by the session and not concluded. (D-10.0105.) Discipline here has the broad meaning of the term, making it the duty of presbytery to attempt to transfer all members of the dissolved church who can be located. Such responsibility should be placed upon the stated clerk in consultation with the general council or upon a special commission or committee appointed for the purpose, and reporting to presbytery upon completion of the task, ordinarily within two years of the dissolution of the church.

- d. Real and personal property. “Whenever a particular church is formally dissolved by the presbytery, or has become extinct by reason of the dispersal of its members, the abandonment of its work, or other cause, such property as it may have shall be held, used, and applied for such uses, purposes, and trusts as the presbytery may direct, limit, and appoint, or such property may be sold or disposed of as the presbytery may direct, in conformity with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” G-8.0401. This provision of the Constitution needs little elaboration. The corporation of presbytery, whatever its form may be, should carry out the instructions of the presbytery. If the property or properties are sold, the proceeds of such sale should be treated as capital assets: held by the presbytery to be used for rotary loans to particular churches for property improvement or church building aid; or reserved as endowment funds, the income from which may be used as grants to struggling churches, mission work, etc., as the presbytery may direct. The assets of church organizations, as well as the corporate holdings of the particular church, are included in the responsibilities of the presbytery. The corporation of the particular church should be terminated to complete the action of dissolution.
- 2) Procedure on dissolution. It is important that presbytery follow a procedure that is deliberate and fair. This involves fulfilling three conditions. These are, investigation of the facts, an opportunity of the church or its representatives to be heard, and a fair and open hearing by the presbytery. In fulfilling these conditions, five steps are suggested:
 - a) Preliminary investigation of the facts by the presbytery or a committee or commission of the presbytery appointed for the purpose.
 - b) Report to the presbytery on the investigation, if done by a committee or commission, with a recommendation as to whether or not the presbytery should consider the possible dissolution of the church.
 - c) If on hearing the report the presbytery decides to consider the possibility of or advisability of dissolution of the church, then notice of the time and place that presbytery will conduct a hearing should be given to all parties in interest to allow them an opportunity to be heard before the presbytery. It would seem that such notice, as to the church, could be given to the clerk of session and the pastor, if any. The time and place of the hearing should be reasonably convenient to the interested church and the presbytery. The notice should contain a statement that the church and interested persons shall appear at the time and place stated and show cause, if any they have, why the presbytery should not dissolve the church.
 - d) Presbytery should hold a hearing at the time and place given in the notice and, with an open mind, consider all the evidence, testimony, and arguments pro and con.
 - e) At the end of the hearing, presbytery should take such action, as it deems proper. If the

presbytery decides to dissolve the church, it should include in its order (a) that all property of the church be turned over, transferred and conveyed to the trustees of the presbytery pursuant to the provisions of “Whenever a particular church is formally dissolved by the presbytery, or has become extinct by reason of the dispersal of its members, the abandonment of its work, or other cause, such property as it may have shall be held, used, and applied for such uses, purposes, and trusts as the presbytery may direct, limit, and appoint, or such property may be sold or disposed of as the presbytery may direct, in conformity with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” G-8.0401 of the Form of Government; (b) authorize and direct the moderator or the stated clerk of the presbytery or both, to take any civil action necessary to effectuate the order of the presbytery; (c) declare that the church has become extinct; (d) provide for the preservation of the records of the church, and the care of and dismissal of the church members to some other church; and (e) provide for such other matters that may be involved in the dissolution of the church.

It should be remembered that the order or judgment of the presbytery does not *ipso facto* transfer legal title in property to the trustees of the presbytery. It may be necessary to have the legal title to property transferred by one of two methods: First, by proper officials of the church corporation voluntarily conveying the legal title in property to the trustees of the presbytery; or, second, by legal procedure in which (a) the church corporation is dissolved according to state law and, in the process, the property is ordered to be transferred to the trustees of the presbytery, or (b) the church corporation is ordered in a civil action to transfer the property as directed by the presbytery. In any case, where the legal title is not voluntarily transferred to the presbytery, the laws of the state must be consulted on procedure.

- f) After the congregation votes to dissolve, another meeting shall be held with the Session, Trustees and the Administrative Commission appointed by the Presbytery over the church, to go over these guidelines carefully so that all know and understand the process and the options and limitations open to the church. At this meeting the following shall be clarified:
 - i) There shall be a clear understanding of what “title to Presbytery means”, (Session and Trustees are stewards and Presbytery holds residual title.)
 - ii) An account of investments, property and any limitations on use shall be given to the Administrative Commission.
 - iii) A current list of church members, their addresses and phone numbers shall be given to the Administrative Commission; any changes made in the list shall be conveyed to the Administrative Commission.
 - iv) A copy of the budget, which was approved by the session for church’s current year and covering the period to the final dissolution, shall be placed in the hands of the Administrative Commission. An understanding shall be reached that no funds beyond the line items in the budget can be expended without permission of the Administrative Commission.
- g) Pastors whose churches are within the parish area of particular members of the church being dissolved, shall be asked to call on these members prior to the date of dissolution to invite them to their churches so the members can have a ministry and an opportunity to continue their ministry within the Presbytery. Special concern shall be given to persons in nursing facilities and shut-ins, and any member of the dissolved church shall be invited

- to join at least one Presbyterian Church regardless of residence address. This shall be coordinated by the Moderator of the dissolving church.
- h) A copy of any history of the church shall be obtained (or duplicated) to place in the archives of the Presbytery.
 - i) Wherever possible, the will of the members of the church shall be considered in the disposal of any memorials, remembering paragraph #1, page #1. All items to be removed from the church shall be removed before listing for sale with a real estate broker.
 - j) At least one active elder from the church shall be a member of the Administrative Commission to dissolve the church.
 - k) During a meeting of the Presbytery, there shall be a celebration of witness of the church, coordinated and scheduled by the New Church Development/Redevelopment Team, the Administrative Commission and the Planning and Visioning Team through Coordinating Cabinet. If the church so desires, the last worship service in the church shall be a celebration of its witness, with the Presbytery assisting in any way it can as invited by the Session.
 - l) Any action relative to funds or property on the part of the church shall be properly moved, seconded and approved by the majority of the Session or Trustees (as the situation would require), and supported by the Administrative Commission. The Administrative Commission shall be most considerate in conveying to the Presbytery any desires by the Session and/or Trustees (Congregation or Corporation) pertaining to the use or disposal of any of the funds or property of the church.
 - m) The Administrative Commission of the Presbytery shall empower to intervene, and if necessary replace the Session when properties and /or funds are being disposed of without the approval of the Presbytery or its duly authorized Commission - the Administrative commission appointed for that church. The Administrative commission shall have authority to seek restitution for any property improperly disposed of, if necessary.
 - n) The Presbytery shall receive all books of the trustee and all Session Records (Minutes and Registers), all cancelled checks and paid bills, with a list of any outstanding obligations, and all bankbooks, checkbooks or other financial records after all bills of the church have been paid and all pledges are fulfilled. In addition, the Presbytery shall receive the following:
 - Insurance Policies;
 - Titles, deeds, abstracts of all property;
 - Government reports if any;
 - Employee records;
 - Statements of position regarding outstanding obligations, with full disclosure;
 - Notice of any suits pending, or claims likely to result from suit;
 - Authority to list property for sale and show property before final dissolution;
 - Authority of the Administrative Commission to countermand budget if not proper (viz. self-serving, such as a bonus to the minister);
 - Adequate notice of intention to dissolve.
 - o) Listing of property for sale shall be by the Trustees, subject to approval by the New Church Development/Redevelopment Team and Presbytery. Sale of property by the Trustees shall be subject to approval by Presbytery.
 - p) Net proceeds of sale of building and land shall be added to the New Church

Development/Redevelopment Fund of Presbytery after payment of all expenses and carrying charges, as well as commissions incurred from time of dissolution to sale. The Trustees shall oversee the investments of these funds. The New Church Development/Redevelopment Team shall designate dispersal of the funds, with approval of Presbytery.

- q) Any other assets, of a local church, at the time of dissolution, shall become the property of the Presbytery of Detroit and, except as otherwise designated, shall be added to the Unrestricted Endowment Fund of Presbytery.
- r) Every effort shall be exercised to complete disposal of property at the time of the final service of local congregation.

NCD-2. POLICY FOR NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS

New Church Development Vision and Strategic Plan

Presbytery of Detroit

December 2007

Prepared by

Philip J. Reed, Brenda Jarvis, Mickey Blair

Our Call

We believe God is calling the Presbytery of Detroit to grow in faith, membership, and impact.

- We believe God is calling our Presbytery to grow in faith by presenting us with a significant challenge – to reverse the current downward trends of membership loss and re-establish the PCUSA as a vibrant missionary body sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed.
- We believe God is calling our Presbytery to grow in membership by reaching more and more people currently not connected to a Presbyterian church and inviting them to faith in Jesus Christ and service in his name.
- We believe God is calling our Presbytery to grow in impact as we re-position ourselves as a moral and visionary leader in shaping our community and culture as “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.” These are tough economic times within our Presbytery. Unemployment, declining real estate values, corporate downsizing, increasing foreclosure all add up to poor economy. With it comes despair and hopelessness. Because of our faith in God, however, we believe in the people of Detroit and Southeast Michigan. We believe God is calling us to encourage the spiritual revitalization in this area.

In order to fulfill God's call, we envision launching 4 new Presbyterian congregations within the bounds of the Presbytery of Detroit in the next 36 months.

1. **Detroit Downtown (Woodward Corridor)**
2. **Dexter/Chelsea**
3. **Hartland**
4. **Oxford**

This plan is unique

This plan is unique is that we are proposing a unified effort of the entire to launch these congregations. Most Presbyterian New Church Developments are isolated efforts that do not take full advantage of all Presbytery resources and they suffer because of it. We propose are intentional and

consorted effort of the Presbytery, giving all Pastors and congregations opportunity to invest in and rally behind this major project. In addition, there are major economies as we pull resources together.

- We envision one general fund to launch all 4 new church developments.
- We envision sharing of support staff and other administrative functions for a time.
- We envision a common fund-raising effort from a variety of sources.
- And we envision a coming together within our Presbytery that will generate excitement, enthusiasm and commitment.

Typical Reactions to the Proposal of New Church Development

(Please see Tim Keller's article in Appendix A.)

1. *We already have plenty of Presbyterian congregations and other mainline churches that have lots and lots of room for all the new people who have come to the area. Let's get them filled before we go off starting new ones.*

Response: This concern assumes that existing congregations reach new people as well as new congregations. This is not typically the case.¹ But to reach new generations and people groups will require *both* renewed older churches and lots of new churches.

2. *Every church in this community used to be more full than it is now. A new church here will just take people from churches already hurting and weaken everyone.*

Response: This concern assumes that new church developments will only reach current active churchgoers or will only tap into the market of existing congregations. But new churches do far better at reaching those who are not currently connected to any church, especially younger adults.²

¹ Tim Keller, Why Plant Churches; “Dozens of denominational studies have confirmed that the average new church gains most of its new members (60-80%) from the ranks of people who are not attending any worshipping body, while churches over 10- 15 years of age gain 80-90% of new members by transfer from other congregations. This means that the average new congregation will bring 6-8 times more new people into the life of the Body of Christ than an older congregation of the same size.

So though established congregations provide many things that newer churches often cannot, older churches in general will never be able to match the effectiveness of new bodies in new reaching people. Why would this be? As a congregation ages, powerful internal institutional pressures lead it to allocate most of its resources and energy toward the concerns of its members and constituents, rather than toward those outside its walls. This is natural and to a great degree desirable. Older congregations therefore have a stability and steadiness that many people thrive on and need.

However, new congregations, in general, are forced to focus on the needs of its non-members, simply in order to get off the ground. So many of its leaders have come very recently from the ranks of the un-churched, that the congregation is far more sensitive to the concerns of the non-believer. Thus a congregation filled with people fresh from the ranks of the un-churched will have the power to invite and attract many more non-believers into the events and life of the church than will the members of the typical established body.”

² Ibid. *Younger adults have always been disproportionately found in newer congregations. Long-established congregations develop traditions (such as time of worship, length of service, emotional responsiveness, sermon topics, leadership-style, emotional atmosphere, and thousands of other tiny customs and mores), which reflect the sensibilities of long-time leaders from the older generations who have the influence and money to control the church life*

3. *Let's help churches that are struggling first. A new church doesn't help the ones we have that are just keeping their nose above water. We need better churches, not more churches.*

Response: This concern assumes that new church development will discourage existing congregations. There may be some prospect that this might happen, but it is not necessarily so. It is very difficult to turnaround a congregation that is in decline. It is not correct to assume that a declining congregation will be able to reach new people as and new people groups as they move into the area. New church development may revitalize existing congregations by becoming the Research and Development for the Presbytery, testing new ideas for communication, new models for discipleship, new way to reach out and make them available to the entire Presbytery.

4. *Been there, done that in this Presbytery. We tried new church development four times in the past ten years in this Presbytery and it has not worked well, plus we had some spectacular failures. All that money and time wasted.*

Response: No, not wasted because we learned extremely valuable lessons. We learned what does not work. We learned that what does not work is an isolated, unsupported effort of the Presbytery. We learned that what does not work in pastoral leadership that has not been assessed specifically for New Church Development. We learned that what does not work is poor communication and a general lack of awareness in Presbytery of what is happening in New Church Developments. We failed because we had the wrong leadership in place and we did not support the effort of the people gathered. But just because we failed, it does not mean we should give up on New Church Development within the Presbytery of Detroit! Let's not waste what we've learned the hard way.

Time to Act!

Let us redefine the Presbytery of Detroit's understanding of successful New Church Development success. We define failure as doing nothing and success as trying new models with renewed energy for New Church Development. We realize that all our New Church Developments may not develop into large thriving congregations. But we know we won't have any new congregations unless we try

The Plan

3 primary target areas within 24 months, an additional 1 within 36 months, and 3 more for the next 72 months.

Within 24 months:

Downtown Detroit – Woodward Corridor

Far West Suburbs – Dexter/Chelsea with a satellite in Hartland

Within 36 months

Far Northern Developing Suburbs – Oxford

Downriver

Within 72 months

Canton
Milford
Detroit

Launch Models: How it might work

1. Presbytery initiated Parachute Drop – One Pastor, one area, and go to it! Highest risk, longest start up.
2. Jet Landing – One Pastor, plus leadership team.
3. Cruise Ship Launch – One Pastor, Leadership Team, plus missionaries from other congregations. Lowest risk, fastest start up.

We believe each of these models will work in the Presbytery of Detroit.

Tentative Timeframes

1. Downtown Detroit
 - Plan Landing in the First Quarter 2008
 - Pastor begins several bible studies in the area with an “emerging target.” 25 to 40 year old – working professionals
 - Continue to develop core team
 - Define vision and mission
 - Public launch Advent 2008 to January 2009
 -
2. Dexter/Chelsea
 - Cruise ship in the fall 2008
 - Saline, Westminster in Ann Arbor, and others contribute missionaries
 - Pastor begin bible studies in the spring 2008
 - Define vision and mission
 - Public launch Christmas 2008
3. Hartland Satellite
 - Parachute drop in the spring of 2008
 - Pastor begins several bible studies in the area focused on suburban, family target.
 - Develop a core team
 - Define vision and mission
 - Public launch spring 2009
4. Oxford
 - Parachute drop in the spring 2008
 - Pastor begin several bible studies
 - Develop core team
 - Define vision and mission
 - Public launch spring 2009

Cost

(Detailed spreadsheets in Appendix B)

7 Sources of Income/3-Year Timeframe

- 10 Partner Churches
5,000 each year
- Member Support
50,000
- POD Budget Support
380,000
- Feasibility Grant
10,000 POD
10,000 Synod
- Special Gifts
150,000 Congregations
150,000 Individuals
- POD Capital Support
100,000
- NCD Grants
450,000

Total = \$1,450,000 over 3 years

Presbytery Support and Leadership is Key!

- A unified effort of POD
- Properly assessed pastoral leadership who recognize the value of PCUSA New Church Development coaching and recognize the fund-raising will be a major part of their responsibilities as Organizing Pastor!
- There are 3 Pastors within POD who believed they are called to New Church Development. 2 have already been assessed by PCUSA and are ready to begin.
 1. Brenda Jarvis (already assessed by PCUSA) – Downtown Detroit
 2. Philip Reed (already assessed by PCUSA) – Dexter/ Chelsea and Hartland satellite
 3. Mickey Blair (pending assessment) - Oxford

Action Step 1

(See Chuck Dennison, *Connectional Church Development: A Presbytery Handbook for Creating New Churches* available at <https://www.pcusa.org/newchurch/pdf/ncdhandbook.pdf>.)

Establish POD Church Development Team

Action Step 2

(See PCUSA Guidelines for Starting a New Church Development in Appendix C)

Encourage Brenda, Phil and Mickey to refine their specific vision for new church development within target areas. Have them to “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets so that a runner may read it.” (Habakkuk 2:2) These vision statements must include the following:

- Statement of Vision
- Statement of Mission
- Description of Target Community

Demographic Information
Religious Picture of Target Community
Statement of Your Call to These People
Launch Plan
Networking Plan
Ministry Plan
Timetable that will include key tasks each
month
Tentative Budget
Funding Plan
Presbytery Oversight Plan

Additional Steps

- Seek advice and support of other pastors in the target area and similar church types
- Authorize NCD Pastor to create a steering committee
- Authorize NCD Pastor to begin work

Jesus Calls Us to New Church Development

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:28)

Baptism means incorporation into a worshipping community of faith. Teaching means an on-going relationship to a community of faith. Jesus calls us not to just make disciples but to also ground them in communities of his followers, the church.

Jesus Calls Us to New Church Development

- The best way to reach new people!
- The best way to reach people we are least effective in reaching now – 20s and 30s
- The best way to strengthen and encourage existing congregations
- The best way to bring new ideas to Presbytery.
- The best way to surface new and creative leaders in Presbytery.
- The best way for us to do what Jesus asks us to do, “Go, therefore . . .”

2/3rds of God is “Go!”

Let’s Act Now!

(Note: Appendices are found in the minutes of Presbytery for February 26, 2008.)

Amended by replacement 2/26/08

[End]