

John Knox Presbytery Policy on the Disposition of Property of a Dissolved Congregation.

Background

Since its creation in 1976, the John Knox Presbytery has been blessed with a relatively stable number of congregations. Although the total number of members in the congregations have declined in recent years, as they have throughout the PC(USA) and mainline Protestant churches in general in the United States, the Presbytery has not faced the difficult task of dissolving many congregations. Given current demographic trends, however, it is increasingly likely that the Presbytery will be faced with this task in the future.

The disposition of property held by a congregation must be addressed when a congregation is dissolved. The goal of this Policy is to create a common set of expectations and guidelines, consistent with the Book of Order, so that any congregation making a decision to dissolve will do so with a full awareness of the Presbytery's policy for disposing of property held by the congregation when it dissolves.

Guiding Principles

Scripture teaches that the world and all property in it belongs to God and is to be used for God's purposes. (Leviticus 25:23; Psalms 24:1)

The Book of Order instructs that all property held by the Presbytery and its member congregations is held in trust for the PC(USA). (G-4.0203). It further provides that the property of the PC(USA) and its congregations is a tool for the accomplishment of Jesus Christ in the world. (G-4.0201).

While death is a part of our spiritual journey, and all things living die (including institutions like churches), we are a resurrection people. While churches die, the Church rises again in new forms as the Spirit gives it life. (Luke 24:15: Why do you look for the living among the dead? His body is not here. He has risen.”

Policy

When the members of a congregation within the John Knox Presbytery reach the point on their spiritual journey that they decide to end their ministry and dissolve their congregation, upon Presbytery approval, the disposition of all property held by the congregation shall immediately become the right and responsibility of the Presbytery, as trustee for the PC(USA) in accordance with the Book of Order.

Pursuant to this Policy, the Presbytery delegates to the Presbytery Council, its authority under the Book of Order to determine the disposition of any property held by a congregation upon its dissolution.

The Presbytery, through Council, shall determine how the property shall be disposed of, whether any such property is retained, sold, or otherwise used. If the Council determines that some or all property held by the congregation should be sold any proceeds generated by the sale of such property shall be handled in accordance with the following guidelines:

- 1) All funds from the sale of the property shall be deposited in a separate bank account or allocated as a separate account, and shown as such or a line item that identifies the origin of the funds, on Presbytery financial statements. If the funds are deposited in a separate bank account, at least 2 Council members shall be signatories on the account. The separate account shall be dissolved after all funds have been distributed from the account in accordance with this Policy.
- 2) The use or other distribution of the proceeds from the sale of property in accordance with this Policy, including the timing, amount, and recipient(s) of any such distributions, shall be at the discretion of the Council.
- 3) The Council shall make all decisions regarding the use or distribution of proceeds from the sale of property in accordance with the following:
 - A) The Book of Order describes our work in furtherance of God's mission: In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ (F-1.01). To fulfill God's mission, at least some portion of funds must be used for New Church Development.
 - B) Through the Administrative Commission, the Council shall provide a means for the session/remaining members of the dissolved congregation an opportunity to be heard as to where they would like to see the use or distribution of proceeds to be used.
 - C) In making decisions regarding the disposition of property or proceeds from the sale of property, the Council shall take into consideration any recommendation from the Administrative Commission.