

**A PROPOSAL:
FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES ABOUT
PROPERTY (LAND, BUILDINGS)
FOR THE PRESBYTERIES OF:
DES MOINES
NORTH CENTRAL IOWA
PROSPECT HILL**

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT AND HISTORY

In September of 2025, several members from the three presbyteries along with the 3 executive presbyters attended a workshop in Minneapolis, MN sponsored by the PCUSA to discuss how presbyteries can be more effective stewards of their properties. Presbyteries across the nation, along with other denominations, are wrestling with unprecedented church closures, the repurposing of facilities, aging buildings and discerning how to be relevant in a post-Christian age. How can we continue to be faithful stewards of these gifts?

One of the outgrowths of this workshop was the formation of a small working group made up of ruling and teaching elders from our three presbyteries. It is hoped that this working group will:

1. Develop some common guidelines for our presbyteries and congregations. This will include:
 - a. A value statement that identifies foundational principles about what we believe to be important. (This document)
 - b. Proposed guidelines and policies for presbyteries and congregations for dissolution. Each presbytery currently has a dissolution policy.
2. Serve as a resource to both the presbyteries and to congregations who would like members of this working group to assist them as they seek to discern God's will as it pertains to property issues.

VALUES:

"The property of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), of its councils and entities, and of its congregations, is a tool for the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world."

Book of Order G-4.0201

- **Discernment**
 - Time in prayer and spiritual discernment should take place before any decision.
 - Discernment about the most faithful use of the property that has been entrusted to a congregation for the mission of Jesus Christ in the world should consider a range of possibilities. These can include: sharing space with other congregations or non-profits; converting a portion of the property for alternative uses such as offices, daycare, or community gathering space; renting some or all of the space; or selling the property for uses consistent with the mission of the church.

- **Incarnational**
 - Just as the “Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” so the healthy stewardship of the physical realities of buildings and land can be reflections of God’s presence in our world
 - *“The Incarnation is the ultimate reason why the service of God cannot be divorced from the service of humanity.”ⁱ*

- **Transformational**
 - The temporal nature of buildings and land can be, by the grace of God, used for eternal purposes.
 - *“The same Jesus Who turned water into wine can transform your home, your life, your family, and your future.(and we might add our properties and land) He is still in the miracle-working business, and His business is the business of transformation.”* Adrian Rogers

- **Mutuality**
 - Mutuality in matters regarding property are about:
 - relationship over isolation and shared care over self-interest.
 - It highlights that faith is lived with others—and often with God—in a dynamic of giving, receiving, and responsibility.
 - The wishes of the historical congregation should be considered
 - The local community should be afforded the opportunity for input

- **Stewardship**
 - Ownership is not the priority. Positive community impact should take precedence over financial return.

OUTCOMES

- Funds from the sale of the property should support the continuing mission of Jesus Christ to the world
- Foster community well being
- People are the ministry; programs support the ministry
- Foster relationships not arm length funding
- Value community over “return of investment”

¹ *Dietrich Bonhoeffer (2015). “The Cost of Discipleship”, p.81*

Working Group:

TE David Endriss	Presbytery of Des Moines
TE Megan Davis-Brass	Presbytery of Des Moines
RE Wendy Pittman	Presbytery of North Central Iowa
TE Kenneth (Kip) Murphy	Presbytery of North Central Iowa
RE Suzan Stewart	Presbytery of Prospect Hill
RE Bill Bruce	Presbytery of Prospect Hill
TE Jennifer Olson	Presbytery of Prospect Hill
