

Urban Property Policy Working Group

Motions: The Urban Property Policy (UPP) Working Group recommends that the Presbytery of New Brunswick adopt a new Urban Property Policy related to the sale of church buildings and properties designated as “urban.” The policy follows in its entirety.

Further, the UPP Working Group recommends the Presbytery of New Brunswick through the Central Leadership Team establish a process for developing a policy for the sale of church buildings and properties with the Presbytery of New Brunswick not identified as “urban.”

Presbytery of New Brunswick Urban Property Policy

Upon the dissolution of a church within the boundaries of the presbytery that has been designated as urban by the Urban Mission Network Committee, The Presbytery of New Brunswick will ordinarily designate the net proceeds (after all loans, mortgages, and other obligations have been paid) from the disposition of all properties, real or otherwise, owned by that congregation, as follows:

- 80% to be used for the purpose of engaging in vital urban ministry as defined in Section 9.07 of the Plan of Presbytery. Such funds shall be called The Presbytery of New Brunswick Urban Fund and shall be placed in a restricted account. Decisions about their dispersal will be made by the Presbytery’s Grants Committee after receiving advice and recommendation of the Urban Mission Network Committee. The Grants Committee shall carefully review repeat grant requests, consulting with the Committee on Ministry when appropriate. In the event the Grants Committee is not functioning, the Trustees shall make dispersal decisions. Funds available for grants in a given calendar year are limited to 20% of the fund balance at the conclusion of the preceding calendar year. The Grants Committee, or the Trustees when appropriate, shall make a report to the Presbytery on fund dispersal of the previous year at the stated January meeting.

These funds may be utilized for urban ministry as follows:

- Revitalization/redevelopment of ministries or leadership
 - Sustainability – (pastoral salary support; long term funding)
 - Urban partnerships, available to urban, non-urban churches and specialized ministries seeking partnership
 - Capital improvements
- 20% to be used for any ministry within the Presbytery. Such funds will be designated as the Presbytery Wide Concerns fund. Decisions about their dispersal will be made by the Presbytery’s Grants Committee. Funds available for grants in a given calendar year are limited to 20% of the fund balance at the conclusion of the preceding calendar year. In the event the Grants Committee

is not functioning, the Trustees shall make dispersal decisions. The Grants Committee, or the Trustees when appropriate, shall make a report to the Presbytery on fund dispersal of the previous year at the stated January meeting.

This fund may be utilized for ministry as follows:

- Revitalization/redevelopment of ministries or leadership
- Sustainability – (pastoral salary support; long term funding)
- Partnerships, available to urban and non-urban churches and specialized ministries seeking partnership
- Capital improvements

Rationale: The UPP Working Group met on multiple occasions over several months to develop the policy as requested by the Presbytery of New Brunswick at the special meeting of June 14, 2016. Prior to the first gathering, past policies, the newly adopted Plan of Presbytery, and various financial reports were shared with the UPP Working Group for their review. The group then met to discuss and develop a full understanding of the important history of the Urban Property Policy in the presbytery and the current financial status of the various funds identified by the existing suspended policy. After establishing a recommendation on the current funds (See Motion #1), the committee moved to the development of a new policy. With discussions, deliberations, and prayer, a strong consensus built among the members of the UPP Working Group.

The UPP Working Group named several guiding principles for policy development: honoring the distinctive commitment to Urban Ministry reflected by the presbytery's current policy and past practice, improved transparency and financial accountability grounded in our new Financial Policy approved by the presbytery in November of 2016, consistency with the Plan of Presbytery and the newly defined Urban Mission Network Committee, greater simplicity, an affirmation of trust and collegiality among members of the presbytery, and of course, faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The recommended policy affirms the respective roles of the Urban Mission Network Committee, the Grants Committee, the Trustees, the Committee on Ministry, and the Presbytery itself. More specifically, the policy assumes the Committee on Ministry, the Trustees, and the Session will engage in a robust process prior to a church's dissolution that addresses a congregation's concern for legacy, preservation of important historical documents and meaningful distribution and/or sale of liturgical pieces. Legacy here has been defined as economic resources of a congregation in the process of dissolution which it may choose to allocate in a manner reflective of its past through the blessing of future ministry and mission elsewhere. Mandated monthly reporting through the Presbytery Treasurer and yearly reporting through the Grants Committee ensures openness and understanding. The established yearly limit on fund disbursements extends the life of the fund and supports faithful fiduciary practice. The fund is not intended to be a permanent endowment fund. It is also reasonable to expect more capital to come to the fund in the future through the sale of presbytery property. Nonetheless, reasonable guidelines for practice and spending are appropriate.

With various designations, allocations, and multiple fund names, the existing policy called for a

split of Urban Policy Funds of 85% urban/15% presbytery wide concerns. Mindful of the current realities for congregations in the presbytery and with a desire to simplify, the members of the UPP Working Group believe an overall split of 80% urban and 20% presbytery wide is fitting.

Lastly, the four areas for grant requests are broad enough to empower the discernment of the Urban Mission Network Committee, the Grants Committee, and applying congregations. Any further definition within the four areas would be the responsibility of the Grants Committee. A clear effort has been made to support innovative congregational partnerships as well.

The Urban Property Policy Working Group gives glory to God for breadth of ministry reflected throughout the Presbytery of New Brunswick and prayerfully offers this policy with the intent of honoring all that God has done and all that God can surely will do in and through the congregations of the presbytery and those saints who will come after us in the years to come.

Urban Property Policy Working Group

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