

The District Board of
Church Location and Building
of The United Methodist Church

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THE DISTRICT BOARD OF CHURCH LOCATION AND BUILDING

FUNCTIONS

- The Board is the primary group responsible for the prevention of serious errors in church locations, facilities, financing and construction. The Board's approval is necessary for purchase of a church site for every major building decision made by local churches and for the purchase of a district parsonage.
- The Board's approval is the denomination's way of ensuring that sound planning has taken place in advance of a major project, all relevant factors have been carefully considered, and the experience beyond the local church has been brought to bear on the decision.
- Decisions concerning individual churches cannot be made in isolation from other churches.
- The Board is responsible for the development of a district strategy for church location and new church development.

RESOURCES

- The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016 (§ 2518-2524; 2536-2544)
- District Board Manual: A Planning Guide for the District Board of Church Location and Building, published by Evangelization and Church Growth Mission Program Area, General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115. (800) 862-4246 or info@gbgm-umc.org.
- When Not to Build: An Architect's Unconventional Wisdom for the Growing Church, by Ray Bowman and Eddy Hall

MEMBERSHIP

- The Board consists of the District Superintendent and a minimum of six and a maximum of nine additional persons nominated by the District Superintendent in consultation with the District Committee on Nominations elected annually by the annual conference.
- It is recommended that the membership include one-third clergy, one-third laity, one-third women and, where possible, be inclusive of both sexes, varied races and ages, and people with disabilities.
- Including persons with experience in real estate, finance, construction and other related fields is encouraged to bring expertise to the decisions.
- Members of the Board, excluding the District Superintendent, are divided into three classes. One-third is elected annually for a three-year term. If this is not the present situation, the Board at the next meeting should be divided into classes as required.
- A chairperson and a secretary are elected annually at the first meeting following annual conference.

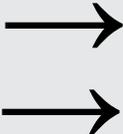
DECISIONS

- The decisions of the Board have legal authority; therefore, accurate minutes of the meetings must be kept and preserved. The decisions of the Board must be made and documented that they are in accordance with Mississippi law and The Book of Discipline.
- The Board investigates and determines that building sites are properly located for the community to be served and adequate in size for future expansion and parking facilities (§ 2520.1).
- The Board is responsible for developing strategies for changing neighborhoods (§ 2520.2).
- The Board files a written report communicating its decision(s) to the appropriate Charge Conference and District Conference or District Superintendent. In addition, it is often helpful for a member of the Board to meet with and interpret the Board's actions to the local church Building Committee (§ 2519).
- The Board's decisions terminate after one year if the local church has taken no action to carry out such decisions (§ 2521.3).
- The local church has a right of appeal to the annual conference to challenge the conclusions of the Board (§ 2522).
- The Board determines if facilities are designed to be energy efficient and accessible (§ 2520.3).
- The Board reviews proposals to ensure they are feasible and financially sound (§ 2544.6; 2544.8).
- All new construction should comply with the International Building Code or local codes whichever is the most stringent code for the area in which the construction occurs.

- Local churches should bring the following information to their meeting with the Board: Study Committee report to their charge conference; proof of proper 10-day notice sent to charge conference; minutes of the charge/church conference showing the vote count, along with written consent from the pastor and District Superintendent.
- In accordance with the "25% rule", the District Board must approve any remodeling of a parsonage or church building only if remodeling exceeds 25% of the insured value of that building. The 25% rule also applies to construction in connection with casualty losses.
- In most cases, a local church will need to meet with the District Board three times during the building or remodeling process.
- When a church remodels or adds a new building, will local building codes require all other buildings (or parts of those buildings) be brought up to current building codes?
- Parsonage considerations.
- Each annual conference may have certain standards which govern such things as parsonages and similar structures.
- Sale of church property to another United Methodist Church or other denomination.
- Suggested space needs for different age levels and rooms.

STARTING A BUILDING PROJECT

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016 outlines the requirements of The United Methodist Church regarding the purchase, construction, and mortgaging of real property (§ 2544). The following is a summary of those requirements. Information in boxes includes additional suggestions from the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Conference of the United Methodist Church (Trustees).

RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TASK
LOCAL CHURCH	Establish a Study Committee.
STUDY COMMITTEE <i>(The study committee is a very important first step.)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze the needs of the church and community. 2. Project potential membership with attendance growth. 3. Document the church's Program of Ministry. 4. The information above will form the basis of the report to be presented to the Charge Conference and to be used by the Building Committee.
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Possible approach to gather information and build consensus at these points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Congregational survey ■ Interview staff and leaders ■ Meet with program groups </div>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The Study Committee's findings become a part of the report to the District Board of Church Location and Building. 6. Analyze census data and projected population growth for the area. MisssionInsite is available at no cost. 7. Analyze trends for growth and economic development within the community for the past 10 years. 8. Analyze financial trends and growth trends within the congregation for the past 10 years. 9. Prepare a projection for finances and congregational growth looking forward for the next 10 years. 	
LOCAL CHURCH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure written consent of the Pastor and District Superintendent. 2. Submit data to the District Board of Church Location and Building.
DISTRICT BOARD OF CHURCH LOCATION AND BUILDING	Review project report and approve.
CHARGE CONFERENCE	Authorize the project and elect a Building Committee of no less than three members.

CONDUCTING A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN – CONTINUED

RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TASK
BUILDING COMMITTEE	After approval of the preliminary data, obtain detailed plans and estimates of cost and submit them to the charge conference and The District Board of Church Location and Building.
CHARGE CONFERENCE	Review and approve final data.
DISTRICT BOARD OF CHURCH LOCATION AND BUILDING	Review and approve final data.
LOCAL CHURCH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obtain a fee simple title to the property. 2. Submit formal loan application, if loan is needed. 3. Shall not enter into a contract or use any volunteer labor that would incur any financial obligation until there is cash on hand, pledges payable during the construction period, or a loan (or written commitment for a loan). 4. Ensure that no trustee or church member be required to personally guarantee any loan made to an agency of The United Methodist Church. 5. Work only with contractors who are properly bonded. 6. Assure compliance with all requirements of the current Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church by all attorney(s) involved in the process of deed, title, or closing preparation; and also any financial institution(s) providing funding for the project.

ESTIMATED TIMELINE FOR ACTIVITIES AND DECISIONS FOR A BUILDING PROJECT

MONTHS PRIOR TO BEGINNING CONSTRUCTION:

36 to 24	ESTABLISH A STUDY COMMITTEE.
18 to 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Submit Study Committee's findings to District Board of Church Location and Building. b. Hold Charge Conference to approve project and elect Building Committee. c. Prioritize and list the needs of the local church. d. Determine the estimated safe debt limit for the church.
15 to 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Interview and hire an AIA architect for preliminary drawings. b. Interview and consult with a contractor.
14 to 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Submit Building Committee's findings to District Board of Church Location and Building for preliminary approval of project. b. Conduct Church Conference to approve project (preliminary data).
13 to 12	INTERVIEW AND SELECT CAPITAL CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS.
12 to 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Begin capital campaign fund drive. b. Reconfirm safe debt limit.
10 to 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Direct architect to work within the guidelines of the local church concerning needs and financial ability. b. Interview contractors prior to soliciting bids.
6 to 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct Charge Conference to approve project. b. Present preliminary architectural plans to District Board of Church Location and Building.
2	SUBMIT FORMAL LOAN APPLICATIONS.
2	Submit final architectural plans to District Board of Church Location and Building and receive final approvals.
2 to 1	OBTAIN FIRM BIDS AND SELECT CONTRACTOR.
	CONSTRUCTION PHASE BEGINS.

Note: This timeline is only an estimate. Time tables will vary with each building project.

QUESTIONS THE BOARD NEEDS TO ASK OF EVERY PROJECT

FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

- What is the estimated cost of the total project, including all soft costs such as architect fees, engineering, furniture, contingency, etc.?
- How are you funding the project?
- Are you financing a portion of the project?
 - a. How much will you finance?
 - b. What will the new monthly debt service be?
 - c. Is this affordable?
 - d. Do you currently have debt service in your budget?
 - e. What are the rate and terms of the proposed financing?
 - f. Mortgage terms should be limited to no more than 15 years.
 - g. Is the lender requiring a capital campaign? If yes, give details.
- What have been the historical financial trends of the church vs. projections for the future?
- If this is a relocation project, is the financial plan for the first phase based on the future sale of the old site?
- Have you completed a cash flow model? (*provided by the Trustees*)
- Consider how a change in membership should affect the financial viability of the project (Membership transfers, death etc.)
- If a change in membership could adversely affect the financial viability of the project, what steps can be taken to mitigate those effects?
- What is the history of the congregation in meeting the district and conference mission shares?
- What is the history of the congregation in meeting obligations for clergy benefits?
- How will this project affect the payment of mission shares and clergy benefits?



SITE QUESTIONS

- Is the site conveniently located to serve both present and future church membership?
- How large is the site?
- Consider the effects on the plans of required setbacks and height ordinances.
- Consult local authorities in regard to ordinances that might affect planned signage.
- Are there adequate utilities at the site? If utilities must be added or rerouted, consult with local authorities and MDOT to determine any access restrictions. (sanitary sewer, water, natural gas, electricity)
- How much on-site parking is provided? Does this meet code requirements?
- What is the auto traffic pattern on the site? Consult with MDOT and/or local authorities regarding ingress and egress requirements from public roads.
- Does the site provide grade level auto access to each level of the building?
- Can the site accommodate future expansion of the building and parking?
- How do future land acquisitions or sales on adjacent properties relate to this specific building program?
- What, if any, environmental issues are involved in the use of this site? Examples of environmental issues are those such as stored chemicals, an old dump site, underground gas tanks or wildlife issues.
- What are the city or county impervious cover requirements?
- Are there any environmental issues including wetland issues that must be mitigated? If so, determine what reclamation or mitigation costs will be needed to meet the requirements of all governmental authorities.

CONSTRUCTION QUESTIONS

- Does the building support the vision and ministry goals of the church?
- What experience does the architect have with churches, in particular United Methodist Churches?
- What services will the architect provide?
- Does the architect have a firm (not to exceed) budget for the building?
- Will the architect provide detailed plans and specifications?
- Will there be a contractor consulting with the architect during the design phase?
- Is the church considering a general contractor or construction manager?
- Will you be provided a maximum price construction contract that includes retainage?
- Will your contractor provide a payment and performance bond (¶ 2544.15)?
- Does your contractor work well with churches?
- Have the contractor's work and references been thoroughly reviewed by the Building Committee?
- Will you hire a "Clerk of the Works" to provide assurances that work is going as planned?

ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

- What is the general layout of the building?
- Is the building easily accessible from the parking area?
- Can people easily orient themselves once inside the front doors?
- Is there a large, centrally located narthex that serves as the circulation hub of the building?
- Are there areas in which people have to pass through one activity to get to another activity?
- Is adequate signage planned for the building and grounds?

EDUCATIONAL AREA QUESTIONS

- Do room sizes meet suggested requirements for the size of the group that will use that room?
- Are there classrooms of less than 300 square feet?
- Do the classrooms allow for future growth in class size?
- Does each classroom provide storage space for teaching materials and equipment?
- Are restroom facilities provided in classrooms used by pre-school children?
- Have all governmental requirements been met as required for specific uses of the improvements or particular areas of the improvement? (Kitchens, Day Care, Schools, children's play grounds, etc.)

QUESTIONS THE BOARD NEEDS TO ASK – CONTINUED

FELLOWSHIP AREA QUESTIONS

- Can the fellowship hall seat the anticipated number of people?
- Does the congregation really need a fellowship hall that can seat as many people as the proposed plans indicate?
- Is the ceiling high enough? (The ceiling in any fellowship hall should not be lower than 10 to 11 feet, with 12 feet recommended.)
- Does the fellowship hall have columns or other visual obstructions?
- Does the fellowship hall have a stage area that could accommodate a worship service, a play or other presentations?
- Is there enough storage space for tables, chairs, portable staging, movable storage units, etc.?
- What kind of kitchen will best serve the fellowship program of this congregation?
- How does the kitchen service the fellowship hall?
- If kitchen will be used for disaster relief services or other special uses, does it meet the requirement of organizations such as the Red Cross that may have specific requirements for these facilities?
- Does the kitchen have a separate service entrance?

SAFETY QUESTIONS

- Are there any dead-end corridors?
- How wide are the corridors?
- Do the doors swing in the direction of egress?
- Are there at least two ways out of the sanctuary and fellowship hall?
- When folding partitions enclose a room, is there another means of egress?
- Where is the mechanical room located?
- Will the mechanical rooms also be used for storage?
- Is there a separate janitor's closet for storing cleaning supplies and equipment?
- A Safe Sanctuary policy covering all areas of the congregation's improvements should be prepared or amended as needed and approved by the appropriate congregational board.

QUESTIONS THE BOARD NEEDS TO ASK – continued

ACCESSIBILITY QUESTIONS

- Have the fire department and city approved the building and site plans?
- Is the design of the building accessible to persons with handicapping conditions?
- Is a ramped entry provided or needed?
- Are the restrooms designed to accommodate a person in a wheelchair?
- How wide are the doors?
- Will the city or county approve curb cuts that maximize auto access to the site?
- Are all requirements of The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church met?

WORSHIP FACILITIES QUESTIONS

- Does the congregation really need a sanctuary that can seat as many people as the proposed plans indicate?
- Are there any design provisions to handle an overflow crowd on special occasions?
- How high is the chancel platform?
- How high is the ceiling in the sanctuary?
- Does the sanctuary have a balcony?
- What is the position of the choir and organ?
- Is the sanctuary designed so that it can be used for other activities?
- Is there sufficient storage space for tables, chairs, chancel furnishings, altar hangings, etc.?
- Are restroom and nursery facilities easily available?