



Policy on Assistance to Churches Considering Closure

Recognizing that the decision to close is always difficult and painful for a local congregation, and desiring to encourage faithful stewardship of congregational assets for the ministry of the wider United Church of Christ, the Association Council adopts the following guidelines for staff working with local churches considering closure.

1. **PASTORAL CARE:** To the extent practicable, Association staff will offer pastoral care to the members of our churches considering closure, including assistance with planning final celebrations and worship services.
2. **ADVICE, COUNSEL AND REFERRALS:** The Association staff or assigned trained consultants will be available to meet with church leadership to discuss the various considerations and steps involved in church closings, including issues of continuing legacy and legal options and requirements.
 - The Association will maintain a pool of lawyers who have the requisite legal knowledge and an understanding of United Church of Christ polity and local church life, and who are willing to engage with local churches in this process.
 - For any church considering closure, the Association will fund an initial consultation with a lawyer selected by the local church from a list provided by the Association.
 - For any church considering closure, Association staff will provide an initial consultation, including a conversation on discernment related to mission and legacy.
3. **ASSISTANCE WITH CLOSING:** If and when a church votes to close, the Association staff or trained consultants will offer assistance. The Association will refer the church to an attorney. Assistance will depend on the current capacity and resources of the church.
 - Due to the specialized nature of the requisite work, the church will be strongly encouraged to select an attorney from the pool recommended by the Association.
 - Church leadership will engage significantly with the attorney to accomplish the dissolution of the church.
 - This process may take from six months to two years.
 - The church will pay directly all attorney fees, costs related to sale of properties, and all other costs related to the dissolution of the church.
4. **LEGACY SERVICES:** Association staff will encourage local churches to continue their legacy by nurturing local church vitality, and the covenant among our churches, through distribution of some or all of their remaining financial assets to the Association for use for church vitality, leadership development, mission and community engagement and all the ministries of the Association.

For legacy gifts of \$500,000 or more, the Association may create a new endowment fund, named in memory of a congregation which is closing. The purpose of the fund must be consistent with the purpose and mission of the Association, and be accepted by the Association's Council. Any document establishing such a permanent legacy must include a provision as to how the fund will be used in the event the named purpose becomes impossible or impractical to fulfill.

For legacy gifts of \$50,000 or more, the Association may create a named expendable fund in memory of a congregation. The purpose of the fund must be consistent with the purpose and mission of the Association, and be accepted by the Association's Council.