

Congregational Options When Facing an Uncertain Future

Option #1 - Age in Place

Do nothing significantly different. Cut expenses as needed through significantly reduced pastoral services (move to weekly pulpit supply and/or chaplain model) to extend life of congregation until it cannot be extended any further due to lack of funds.

- Energy required: low
- Financial resources required: low
- Spiritual challenge: low

Option #2 – Reinvention of Ministry

Make a change. Changes may be minor or dramatic, and may include targeting a new audience. A revised ministry plan must be developed to include strategic and tactical considerations.

- Energy required: high
- Financial resources required: high
- Spiritual challenge: high

Option #3 – Congregational Death & Re-Start

Death and resurrection: the church “goes dark” for a period of time and then “re-opens” as something new and different. Popular among non-denominational churches, this model involves new leadership, a new format, a new name ... a new approach to ministry. Few current members would return.

- Energy required: very high
- Financial resources required: high
- Spiritual challenge: very, very high

Option #4 – Share Campus

Models vary, from allowing another congregation to “nest” in your space while the host congregation’s ministry continues largely unchanged ... to offering the bulk of the campus to other charitable organizations and hosting another congregation which becomes the dominant worshipping community on the site. Income derived helps to fund the host congregation’s ministry.

- Energy required: medium
- Financial resources required: medium/high

- Spiritual challenge: low

Option #5 – Sell Campus

Models vary, and include the congregation becoming a tenant in its former location or relocating and renting space elsewhere. Property sale proceeds fund ongoing operations, mission, and ministry locally and beyond.

- Energy required: low to medium
- Financial resources required: very low
- Spiritual challenge: varies depending on model

Option #6 – Merger

Two or more congregations of the PC(USA) join together to become one, new congregation. Ministry model must be developed and venue must be selected. New leadership of the new congregation will be representative of the predecessor congregations.

- Energy required: high to very high
- Financial resources required: low
- Spiritual challenge: high to very high

Option #7 – Dissolution

The congregation dies a well-planned and well-organized death. Members transfer their membership to other congregations. Property sale proceeds fund a legacy endowment in the church's name to fund designated ministry in perpetuity.

- Energy required: low
- Financial resources required: low
- Spiritual challenge: varies