

PMT GUIDE #1

TITLE: GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEES

The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA) identifies each individual church congregation as the steward of their buildings and grounds, which is a necessary and vital part of their overall ministry operations. The session is given the responsibility to provide for the management of the property of the church and to determine the appropriate use of its building and facilities. It is also responsible for obtaining adequate property and liability insurance coverage to protect the facilities, programs and officers, including members of the session, staff, board of trustees and deacons.

This guide suggests organizational and operational considerations which might be appropriate for each new or established building and grounds committee to consider. With certain adjustments, the organizational concepts presented here would be applicable to smaller churches, where the committee might be only 1 to 4 persons.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Each member church of the Chicago Presbytery may have a committee already in operation or under consideration. This "Committee" can be identified by many names:

- Building and Grounds Committee
- Property Ministries Committee or Team
- Trustees Property Committee or Team
- Building Ministries Team

The Committee should consist of 3 to 10 male and female persons, depending on the size of the church and its needs. A Committee chair should be selected from those having the most experience in the operation of the church and general familiarity with the building and grounds. In many churches, the Committee chair is also a member of the board of trustees or session, which allows him or her to report to this governing board on the monthly activities of the committee. A secretary may also be selected to take and distribute minutes of each meeting, which can serve as a checklist for actions to be taken by the various members prior to the next meeting. Often times, the Committee chair will take his or her own minutes.

This Committee offers service opportunities for members of the congregation who are or could become familiar with the building facilities and operations, and especially for those with building-related expertise in architecture, engineering, contracting, legal, kitchen and dining room operations, real estate and general maintenance. Many other members who may not be versed in these areas are selected because of their strong interest in the maintenance and improvements of the buildings and grounds.

At the first meeting of the new church year, the Committee chair should present a 12 month calendar of dates of monthly meetings for review and adoption. It is important to establish the monthly meeting on the same date, time and place. This is also an opportunity for each member to identify their own expertise and interest in selected aspects of the overall activities. They could act independently in a particular area, or two or more could serve as a subcommittee. These should be informally operated without the burden of minutes or other unnecessary paper work. It is most important that each member agree to give the necessary time commitment beyond attending the monthly meetings, especially to follow up on their individual or group assignments. The Committee should also select a person to serve as liaison with the Property Ministries Team.

COMMITTEE OPERATION & INTERACTION WITH BUILDING MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL

The Committee normally functions under the umbrella of the session or trustees. This allows the necessary interaction with the governing bodies of the church in all matters involving the expenditure of funds and establishment of schedules for operation and maintenance of the buildings and grounds. The liaison between these parties would be the Committee chair, whether the chair is also a member of the board of trustees or session, or not.

Prior to the time of stewardship drives and establishment of church budgets for the coming new year, the Committee might meet with other church committees and ministry teams to review how their past years use of the buildings and grounds met their needs, and their anticipated use in the coming year. This is a good time to also have a tour of the building and grounds with all interested parties present, to verify areas or items for maintenance and improvements.

The Committee is not expected to actually operate or maintain the church facilities. This is the duty of the maintenance supervisor or building custodian (“supervisor”) who may or may not be hired as a full-time employee. The supervisor would also direct and monitor the maintenance and cleaning staff, whether they are in-house employees or contracted outside vendors and contractors.

It is very important that the supervisor be a part of the Committee, where the supervisor would perform a vital role in reporting monthly on the activities and performance of the maintenance and cleaning staff, outside vendors and contractors. The supervisor would work with the Committee and the church budget committee to prepare the annual budget for the coming year. The supervisor would also be in charge of working with the accounting office to prepare monthly progress reports for review by the Committee in order to monitor expenditures against the approved annual budget.

MAJOR AREAS OF COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION

Once the annual budget and the areas of general involvement of the Committee is established, the individual members may identify their personal interest in selected areas of the buildings and grounds, for their major involvement. These areas may include:

- A. Grounds Maintenance: Exterior landscaping, including trees, plantings and lawn areas; fencing; public and private sidewalks, steps and ramps; parking lots; site watering and drainage control; snow removal and storage; and, exterior lighting and signing.
- B. Exterior Envelope of Building(s): Walls of masonry, stone and other materials; exterior doors and windows; stained glass windows; roofing, flashing and drainage systems; access and stair systems; canopies, awnings and other overhead features; and the need for reconstruction and improvements, including tuck pointing and sealants.
- C. Basic Building Systems: Maintenance, repair and/or replacement of systems for heating, ventilating, and air conditioning; electrical power and lighting; plumbing, fire protection and suppression and water protection (sump/ejection systems); elevators; security and communications (fire alarms, smoke detectors, motion detectors, alarms, etc.); other mechanical equipment such as pumps, motors, compressors, etc.; and, environmental and energy management systems.
- D. Interiors of Buildings: Interior design and remodeling of existing rooms and areas; painting and wall coverings; flooring systems; lighting improvements; and furniture, furnishings and window treatments. Includes special areas for infants, children and young adults.

- E. Communication and Administrative Operational Systems: Computer-based and related communication systems; office furniture and equipment; telecommunications systems; reproduction equipment; and, archival storage systems and equipment.
- F. Sanctuary, Chapel and other Designated Worship Areas: Special systems for lighting; communications; recordings; sound control; music equipment (organ, piano, orchestral); choir; ministerial staff; seasonal and other special occasions; seating areas including storage of bibles, hymnals and special sign-in cards; communion service; and, portable audio and video systems, including uses in lecture and meeting rooms, dining halls, gymnasiums and other areas.
- G. Gymnasium and other Special Recreational Facilities: Special hardwood flooring systems; wall coverings and window protection devices; ceiling and lighting systems; portable or built-in seating systems; basketball, volleyball and other special equipment; storage for tables, chairs and other items; portable sound and video systems, including scoreboards; and, other special equipment.
- H. Kitchen and Dining Facilities: Kitchen equipment, including refrigerators, freezers, ovens and cook tops, food preparation and storage facilities, dishwashing, and equipment storage cabinetry; special fire suppression systems; portable transporting carts; tables and chairs (rigid, stackable and folding), including movable storage carts; dishes, glassware, silverware and tableware; and related items.
- I. Manse (as applicable): Separate or attached living facilities for ministerial or other staff members and families, including parking and garage areas.

SPECIAL AREAS OF COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION

The following items generally apply to the buildings and grounds in their entirety, and are major areas for both group participation and individual participation by members with specialty expertise in these areas:

- A. Outside Consultants and Contractor Participation: The Committee should establish a listing of specialty consultants and contractors to support and augment the property needs as required. This list should be computerized and should include those who have successfully worked for the church in the past, and those who by reference or referral are deemed to be qualified to solicit proposals or bids from. The Committee should seek referrals from other churches and their own members, with references available for checking. The Chicago Presbytery's Property Ministries web pages list the names of experienced consultants and contractors in many specialty areas (architects, engineers, sound and lighting consultants, contractors, specialty subcontractors, etc.), accessed at: www.chicagopresbytery.org, click "Resources", click "Property Ministries".
- B. Americans for Disabilities Act and Illinois Accessibility Code Issues: Churches should use every opportunity to make their facilities "totally accessible to all persons who are environmentally limited", whether or not it is required by the governing codes. There are architectural firms and other specialty consultants available to plan and implement the necessary changes, either as part of a new remodeling project or as a separate undertaking.
- C. Local Fire Department: The local Fire Department is a vital community resource which is established to respond to alerts for fire and other disasters. Equally important is their ability to recognize potential violations and other unsafe conditions during their periodic reviews of the buildings and grounds with the church maintenance supervisor.

- D. Environmental and Zoning and Building Code Compliance Issues: Environmental issues such as standing water, contaminated soils, mold and tree blight should be addressed by retaining consultants knowledgeable in such specialized areas.
- E. Historic Preservation: Many churches and their sites are recognized as have historic significance, and often are designated as historic structures, sites and landmark districts. Local building and zoning codes and regulations are in effect to promote the conservation, protection, restoration, rehabilitation, use, and overall enhancement of these structures, sites and districts. The Committee should become familiar with such governing regulations and the local representatives who are responsible for them.
- F. Overseeing of Contracted Work: Whenever the Committee arranges for remodeling or new construction work by a qualified contracting entity, several activities should precede the award of the contract. The ideal situation is to hire an architect or engineer to provide construction documents for the full scope of the work to be undertaken. His contract for construction phase services should include review of required submittals of contractor-prepared drawings and material samples and monitoring the progress, compliance and cost of the work.

For minor contractual work, the Committee should prepare a brief attachment to the contractor's proposal identifying: the "agent" representing the "owner" (church); the time for start and completion of the work, if specified; appropriate insurance coverage to protect the church (see PTM Guide # 6); the cost of the work; and, the length and extent of warranty of the work. This attachment could be drafted for use in all small contracted work. The "agent" could be a member of the committee, if appropriately qualified, or the supervisor or custodian, who is normally available when the work is in progress.

- G. Financial Management: The Committee should prepare and/or oversee the yearly Facilities Operating Budget (FOB) including all maintenance and repair work; and, long-range planning for major repair and replacement work requiring capital expenditures not included in the FOB. This would include such major work as replacement of roofing; HVAC equipment; tuckpointing and sealing of exterior walls; the replacement of windows and doors; replacement of principal maintenance equipment; replacement of parking lot surfaces, concrete sidewalks and driveways; and other items.
- H. Preventative Maintenance Program: Consideration should be given to implementing a Preventative Maintenance Program. This would identify all areas which either have been recently repaired or are planning to be repaired and funded accordingly. Inspections should be made on an annual basis which would identify minor repairs needed. These repairs should be scheduled, budgeted and implemented in order not to let them become major repairs needing emergency repair at some unknown time in the future. This is especially applicable to building envelopes (roofs, exterior walls, windows and doors).
- I. Building Reserves Program: The Preventative Maintenance Program should be part of a Building Reserves Program, which would identify over a suggested 20-year time frame each and all of the needed replacements of equipment and systems at the expected end of their operating life, with the year to be done and the cost identified in inflated dollars. This would identify what will be required in each of the 20 years ahead, so that the annual amount needed can be covered by the appropriate reserves, assuming they will be available. A properly implemented Preventative Maintenance Program has been proven to extend the life of building systems beyond their expected life span, thus allowing more time to build up the necessary reserves to cover these future

expenditures. Consider the use of a specialty consultant to assist in establishing a Building Reserves Program, who would identify the areas to be included and the present and future cost of improvements.

- J. Insurance Coverage: The Committee should work with the church finance or insurance committee to ensure that proper replacement coverages are provided for the buildings and grounds, as well as to establish the limits of liability for all work and services of the church staff, church officers and clergy, the Committee and other applicable persons.

GUIDE TO FACILITIES MAINTENANCE PRIORITIES

The Committee, and each of its members, have an implied responsibility to manage the process and meet the established budget to the best of their abilities, in order to get the job done in the time frame established.

The general order of importance (from more to less) is:

1. Emergency Maintenance
2. Public Safety and Code Compliance
3. Scheduled Maintenance
4. Accessibility
5. Program Improvements
6. Aesthetic Improvements.

Under each category, examples of items needing attention are listed:

1. Emergency Maintenance (immediate need)
 - a. Smell of gas.
 - b. Visible signs of structural deterioration or stress (new cracks in beams). columns, large cracks in bearing masonry walls, basement walls and foundations
 - c. Roof and exterior wall leaks (from deteriorated plaster and paint).
 - d. Flickering of light and shorts (frequent tripping of circuits or fuses).
 - e. Exhaust or supply fans nonfunctional (kitchen, furnace room, or other).
 - f. Plumbing and heating pipe leaks.
 - g. Security systems not functioning properly (locks, alarms, etc.).
2. Public Safety and Code Compliance
 - a. Doors marked as exits should be clear of obstructions and exit doors easily recognizable and operable at all times from within (unlocked or with panic hardware) during hours of occupancy.
 - b. Stairs and stair railings in sound condition.
 - c. Exit lighting, emergency lighting and equipment (fire extinguishers, etc.) should be fully operational.
 - d. Smoke and CO detectors installed where required (sleeping areas, furnace rooms). Periodic testing to be scheduled.
 - e. Keep mechanical rooms neat, with plenty of open space around boilers, furnaces, hot water heaters, electrical panels, etc. Do not store flammable materials here.
 - f. Proper storage of hazardous materials (oil paints, cleansers, pesticides, etc.)

3. Scheduled Maintenance (seasonal, annual, periodic)
 - a. Seasonal maintenance (at least annually) of all gas and oil fired heating equipment (furnaces, hot water heaters, etc.)
 - b. Monthly maintenance and checking of boilers (blow downs, water levels, etc.)
 - c. Quarterly site inspection tour by the responsible church committee, and preparation of annual maintenance priorities and budget.
4. Accessibility as required by law or program (rest rooms, public building levels).
5. Program Improvements: new or reconfigured space or equipment for program strengthening.
6. Aesthetic improvements in addition to those associated with items 1-5 above.

NOTES ON CHURCH STAFF:

Church property maintenance can involve church staff on payroll in a variety of ways from that of property administrator to custodial and "jack or jane of all trades". In general, what applies to the Owner above applies to all administrative staff; what applies to Volunteers below applies to all hands-on employees except to the extent that the church's insurance policies do cover paid employees and may not cover volunteers. It remains the governing body's responsibilities to provide for insurance coverage, appropriate hiring practices for contractors and professional consultants and for the identification of facility needs for its ministries. Because the governing body is likely to rely heavily on a property administrator, it is important that this person have at the time of hiring or soon be trained to have the experience and qualifications needed for this position. Once assigned these responsibilities, he or she should be given oversight of the projects, skills and procedures to be employed for volunteer property maintenance projects as well as contracted activities.

NOTES ON VOLUNTEERS:

Volunteers (both brain and brawn) can be a valuable resource for the congregation and its property stewardship committees. Their activities provide both a chance for fellowship and property improvement and beautification. Unfortunately, they can also expose the volunteer to injury and disappointment and the building to damage and financial loss in cases where the tasks exceed a prudent appraisal of volunteer skills or inadvertently place the volunteer at risk. Risk can occur for example by falling, by failure of deteriorated or miss-used equipment such as ladders, by exposure to hazardous materials or equipment. For these reasons, many organizations maintain strict definition of the line between tasks for volunteers and tasks only for outside contractors.

SPECIAL REPORT: BUILDING CONDITION SURVEYS

In order to properly identify and document the condition of the buildings and grounds, as part of any initial walkthrough, the Committee may wish to engage a specialty consultant who is a qualified building professional. This consultant may be an architect, and may be further qualified as a preservation professional. This may be particularly important when your church is recognized as a historical building or landmark, and thus is subject to reviews and controls by agents of the city in which you are located.

An example of such a Special Report was prepared by Kim Lovejoy of the New York Landmarks Conservancy on June 1, 1998, and can be accessed at: www.chicagopresbytery.org, click "Resources", click "Property Ministries". These web pages also list the names of experienced architects and preservation specialists in the Chicago Metropolitan Area.

Among work reserved for outside contractors should be listed any work where the state or community requires licensed skills (e.g. electrical, plumbing, HVAC) or ladders or scaffolding is needed. Though a member may possess such a license, the church is nonetheless obligated to comply with all local and state building codes and permitting requirements whether performed by outside contractors or church members.

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