



# EQUIPPING FOR ELDERSHIP

## S E L L I N G C H U R C H P R O P E R T Y

Each elder studied the report that had been submitted by the session's Future of the Manse committee. Some nodded slowly in agreement as they read. Others jerked back in surprise – eyes blinking wide open.

When it was clear everyone had finished reading, I.M. Sharpe, clerk of session, broke the heavy silence saying, "Pastor Shepherd, I will move, or caused to be moved, at a future meeting of the session, that the manse be sold."

"Thank you, for that notice of motion," said Pastor Shepherd. "Obviously this is a major decision. We all need time to digest this possibility and pray about it. The manse has been part of this congregation for a long time."

"Hang on a second," blurted Phil A. Buster. "This motion is out of order. We can't sell the manse. It belongs to the PCC."

"The PC who?" asked Carrie Oakey, the newest elder.

"The PCC. You know. All the churches and manses belong to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We'd have to get permission from someone in Toronto to sell the manse."

### **So whose property is it, anyway?**

It is a widely held misconception that the denomination owns all Presbyterian property across Canada. This is not the case.

The church, manse and any other properties in the hands of the congregation belong to the congregation as long as the congregation continues to exist. If the congregation ceases to exist, in other words, if it is dissolved by the presbytery, the congregation's assets vest, by law, with the Trustee Board of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The current policy states that Presbyteries may apply for up to 70% of the assets to be returned by submitting a mission plan to the Trustee Board explaining how the presbytery would use the funds to further the mission of the church. The remaining 30% is held for new church development. This means the dissolution of one congregation may help another to be planted.

### **Who is the Trustee Board?**

The Trustee Board is composed of 12 trustees. Ten are members and ministers of The Presbyterian Church in Canada at large. Stephen Kendall (Principal Clerk) and Stephen Roche (Chief Financial Officer) are the national office staff on this board. The Trustee Board has established responsibilities to fulfill and acts at the direction of the General Assembly and the Assembly Council.

**The Rev. Don Muir**

**Deputy Clerk**

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## SELLING CHURCH PROPERTY

### **What can be done with proceeds if the church or manse is sold?**

If a session of a continuing congregation decides, in principle, to sell its church or manse, it would prepare a plan for how the proceeds would be used. The session would present its plan to the congregation for approval. If the congregation approves the plan, it would then be presented to the presbytery for its authorization

There is no national policy regarding how this money can be used. This decision is left to the congregation and presbyter

It may be, however, that the presbytery has a policy with which the congregations of that presbytery must comply. It would be important, early on, for the session to find out what regulations, if any, the presbytery has for the use of funds realized from sale of church property.

Some congregations, with the blessing of their presbytery, use the proceeds from the sale of the church building to purchase another property, to construct a new facility, to rent a space for worship and the like.

Some congregations, with the blessing of their presbytery, invest the proceeds from the sale of the manse and use the interest earned to help cover the cost of the housing allowance provided to the minister.

When a congregation does not provide a manse, the minister is to be given a housing allowance instead. A housing allowance is defined as “the fair rental value of appropriate accommodation.” (See The Acts and Proceedings of the 2013 General Assembly, “Appropriate Accommodation” page 230.) By determining how much it would cost to rent accommodation in the style and location appropriate for the minister and the minister’s family the congregation is guided in establishing its housing allowance.

If the manse sale funds are not required for a housing allowance for any reason, the congregation may plan to use the principal, and the interest earned, to further the congregation’s ministry of Christ in the world. The options are as broad as the congregation’s imagination. Once again, the plan requires the approval of the presbytery before it can be implemented.

### **What happens if a manse is sold as part of an amalgamation?**

Sometimes, two or more congregations amalgamate. That means the congregations are united by the presbytery to form one new congregation. Since both congregations continue to exist within the amalgamated congregation, the proceeds from the sale of superfluous buildings remain with the amalgamated congregation subject to the terms of its amalgamation plan. For example, if each congregation had its own church and manse, a decision might be made to sell one of the churches and one of the manses since these buildings will be no longer needed. An amalgamation plan, that includes an explanation for how funds gained from the excess property will be used for the mission and ministry of the new congregation as well as the ministry of the whole denomination, is submitted to the Assembly Council. (See Book of Forms 200.11)



## SELLING CHURCH PROPERTY

### **What if congregations are united to become a multiple-point charge?**

If two or more separate congregations are joined by the presbytery to become a multiple-point charge, usually the congregations continue to worship in their own church buildings. If, however, they both had a manse prior to the union, it may be that one of the congregations will sell or rent its manse. As in an amalgamation, this action requires the approval of the affected session, congregation, presbytery and Assembly Council.

God has entrusted us with wonderful resources. May we be wise in how we use them for God's mission and glory.

