

Property Enabling Mission

Sometimes a congregation might discover that it has beneficial use of property that is under-utilised or maybe even surplus to requirements. What can a Church Council do with such property?

One option might be to consider whether or not the property can be reconfigured to sponsor or support mission commitments indirectly. Some congregations have practiced this approach to enabling mission commitments and mission initiatives over several decades.

There are issues to consider when Church property is no longer used for direct mission purposes.

The core issue when considering surplus or under-utilised property is remaining faithful to the Church's reasons for having property.

"Property is not the Church's 'possession' or 'gift from God to be used wisely. Instead, it (property) provides an opportunity to witness to the new cosmic order constituted in the reconciling work of Christ... all our dealings with property should point to the kingdom of God. The criterion of the faithful use of property is therefore the efficacy in its proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Property is both a place and a form of proclamation."

Theology of Property, Section 4
UCA Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, 2010.

The Synod has recently adopted the *Property Mission Enabling Policy (PMEP)* as a clarification of *Mission Motivated Development policy*. The goal of the Mission Enabling Policy is to embrace opportunities presented by surplus or under-utilised property to sponsor and support mission purposes.

The *Property Mission Enabling Policy* is about enhancing property as a faithful means to sponsor and support the Church's mission purposes, directly and indirectly. Any enhancement of property must also consider ways in which the changed property remains a place and form of proclamation of the gospel. (See the *Basis of Union*, para 3 for an understanding of the gospel.)

Identifying options

The local congregation's Church Council, together with the presbytery take primary responsibility for ensuring the role any property contributes to mission is congruent with the Church's understanding of God's mission. Working together in a dynamic fashion the principles of *Mission Motivated Development* can inform and guide contribution to mission initiatives by property.

Perhaps words such as 'sponsor and support' rather than 'use' are more fitting to the role property plays in the Church's mission. Remember, property can be both "*a place and a form of proclamation of the gospel*".

There are several options for enhancing a Church property in order to sponsor and support mission initiatives and commitments agreed by the various Councils of the Church. Not all enhancement options will be acceptable to the Church. Bear in mind the role property plays as "*a place and form of proclamation*" of the gospel.

Each property evaluated for enhancement will require a specific enhancement project to be proposed, closely associated with the mission commitments or initiatives the project will support or sponsor. The Synod's Property Application Process set out in the *Property Services Information Guide* provides the framework for considering such proposals in a step-by-step manner.

Synod can assist

Property Services is the operational unit of the Synod's Property Board. Property Services can provide comprehensive consultation to Church Councils and Presbytery Property and Resource Committees when a potential property enhancement project is suggested for consideration. The Synod's *Property Enabling Mission Policy* provides guidance to the various councils of the church when consultation is introduced.

In the course of consultation, some enhancement options suited to a particular property will be clarified. The Property Board's "*Project Management, Risk and Governance Framework*" guides the design of any proposal. Proposed projects will progress through the Church Council, Presbytery, and various Synod committees. Finally, the Property Board will consider the proposal, taking into account the views of the various Councils and Synod committees. The Property Board will resolve to act one way or another in respect to the proposal submitted.

The 'what, who and how' of property enabling mission

What happens, who is responsible for each step, and how do the Church's property application processes flow when a Church Council works with the Presbytery and Synod's Property Board to enhance a property's value to enable mission?

What:

A particular property under the beneficial use of a Church Council, Presbytery or the Synod may be evaluated for the contribution it makes to the Church's worship, witness and service. The property might be considered to be underutilized or surplus. When the presbytery and a church council assess a particular property as surplus to requirements, they are saying that the property no longer has a practical contribution to make to local or regional mission purposes. At this point, the Church Council might suggest to the Presbytery that the Church dispose of the property.

[NOTE: *Regulation 4.11.10* – Alternative Mission Use – can be used to determine the surplus nature and future use of a property.]

The Church Council and Presbytery will be aware of local and regional mission commitments. Discerning together, both Councils might see an opportunity to enable mission and provide for financial sustainability by enhancing the property. Once the property has been enhanced it might be retained or divested according to the financial requirements of the mission commitments undertaken.

Sometimes, there might be ways to retain the property and derive income from it. For example: reconfiguring the property or redeveloping it in a fresh way might result in income to sponsor or support mission purposes. The Church can retain its capital value and generate income to further sponsor or support mission commitments.

Some people will become excited about developing property in this way. The importance of keeping before the various councils of the church who discern the mission commitments and initiatives the role property plays as a *place and form of proclamation* of God's mission amongst us cannot be dismissed.

Who:

1. Various Councils of the Church

The UCA is a Church composed of interconnected Councils. The Church's *Constitution* (Division 5) and Regulations (4. Property) provide for various councils of the Church to each be included in consideration of property matters. The Synod's Property Board can delegate its powers to other Councils and bodies in the Church. (See *Regulation 4.2.1 -4.2.2*)

Enhancing a property for enabling mission purposes requires three Councils of the Church to work collaboratively in the best of interconcial practice.

- **A congregation's Church Council** will work in close cooperation with its Presbytery to assess the property, and to consider both local and regional mission purposes according to the role and function of the Presbytery.
- **A presbytery** will also work collaboratively with the Synod's Property Board and its management unit, Property Services, to establish a persuasive case on both mission and commercial grounds for enhancing a particular property's value.
- **The Synod**, through its Property Board, to work collaboratively with the Church Council and Presbytery.

The Synod's Property Application Processes provide ways for each of the Church Councils to be included in an interconcial practice when engaging in property dealings.

[NOTE: see *Regulation 4.6* and *4.7* – Property Dealings and Application Processes.]

2. Property Services

Property Services is the management unit of the Synod's Property Board. Property Services will establish a Project Control Group (PCG) at an appropriate point in the application process if an application is assessed as a Property Mission Enabling project. The appointment of a PCG is usually associated with "Form 2B – Business Case". (See the *Property Services – Information Guide*.) The PCG will undertake the detailed work of assembling a business case in support of the options recommended. Each option will be focused on enabling the mission case through one or other levels of property enhancement. This might take some time. There will be a lot of commercial, regulatory and property matters to work through. Attention to the detail is essential if a positive

outcome is to be secured.

3. The Property Board

The Property Board is the Synod's Board for managing property as required by the *Regulations*. Once a specific mission case to be sponsored or supported by the funds raised from a property enhancement project is agreed by the Church Council and the Presbytery, Property Services will work with the Presbytery and Church Council to prepare a recommendation for consideration by the Property Board. Also, any project proposal likely to cost more than \$2,000,000 requires Property Board approval. Once the Property Board has adopted a property enhancement recommendation, Property Services will work with all parties to establish the project and put in place the Property Board's project governance provisions.

How:

The Synod's Property Board and its management unit, Property Services, provides several publications to explain mission motivated development in addition to this document. For example, see, '*Understanding the Practice of Mission Motivated Development*' Second Edition (2013).

A clear project management process is set out in a booklet titled, '*Property Services – Information Guide*' (2014).

These resources are available in hard copy and as pdf files on the Synod's Property Services website.

1. Work with your presbytery to get started.

Begin with **Form 1 – Getting Started**. This form will be ready for completion following a workshop facilitated by the Presbytery's Property Committee members or Presbytery Ministers Mission and Education or Administration. **Forms 1 – Getting Started** and **2A Discerning and Deciding** – are each designed to generate informed discussions, involving as many church members as possible. Each form assumes communal discernment prior to their completion. You can find out more about **Form 1 – Getting Started** in the book, *Understanding the Practice of Mission Motivated Development*. An example of the generative discussions and discernment journey involved in completing **Form 1** are included in this booklet.

2. Develop a clear and agreed mission purpose.

Your presbytery can assist the Church Council in gaining the necessary clarity required, and in gathering some preliminary detail. **Form 2A – Discerning and Deciding** will follow further practical workshops that provide opportunity to discuss ideas before discerning a clear mission purpose. **Form 2A** also includes gathering some preliminary understanding of the likely costs and benefits associated with the ideas put forward. You can find out more **Form 2A – Discerning and Deciding** by asking your Presbytery Ministers for Mission & Education and Administration to explain the form and processes used to complete it. See also the *Property Services Information Guide*.

3. Submit the applications to Property Services

Property Services Property Officer will pass the application to PART for consideration. PART is the Synod's Property Board and Board of Mission and Resourcing 'Property Applications Review Team'.

Form 1 is usually received and noted, beginning the application process. PART then requests **Form 2A**. When this is approved by PART, a further request may be made for a **Form 2B**. This in turn will lead to further discussions and one of the several **Form 3's** will then apply. See the *Property Services Information Guide* for further information.

PART will communicate to the Church Council and presbytery concerned with a particular application indicating the next steps recommended as each Form is considered. These might include accessing the Property Board's Development Management Services, especially in the case of a Property Mission Enabling application.

If a property is to be considered for enhancement for mission enabling purposes, the Project Control Group appointed by Property Services will continue to work with the Church Council, presbytery and Property Services. Project governance procedures will be put into place, and the project will proceed accordingly.

Frequently asked questions

1. In what ways is the PMEP congruent with the synod's commitments to mission motivated development?

Mission Motivated Development (MMD) provides a framework of 10 principles to assist in establishing ways that any mission purpose will be enabled, enhanced, or engaged through or with the practical assistance of property. Applying the MMD principles will help a congregation's Church Council and the Presbytery to determine what role and functions any property might be able to play in fulfilling the mission purposes and commitments that have been discerned. Any PMEP application – using the Form 2A – Discerning and Deciding - will be required to demonstrate ways in which the property enhancement will contribute to mission purposes and commitments.

2. Is the PMEP consistent with Mission Motivated Development?

The PMEP builds on the principles of mission motivated development, requiring any applicant to have established the mission purposes for any funds raised by a PMEP project. In addition, the PMEP policy document provides further theological commentary about ways in which mission purposes might be served by property. In doing so, the PMEP also builds on the Synod's theology of property.

One significant point for clarification is to understand that the Church's property is not gift or a resource to be used wisely. Rather property is to be considered in terms of functions property can play in the context of mission. Property does therefore have a role as a place in the Church's proclamation of the faith of Christ, and consequently in the practice of Christian faith as a witness to the Christ. This means that while many proposals about 'property use' might be considered, only some will be acceptable according to the criteria of the church's theologies of mission and church.

3. Which council or body of the Church initiates an application for a PMEP project?

We begin with the *Regulations* Section 4, *Property*. These set out the requirements and guidelines for conducting property matters.

- a. Reg 4.4.1 identifies the responsibilities of congregation's Church Council.
- b. Reg 4.3 identifies the responsibilities of a Presbytery's Property Committee.
- c. Reg 4.6.1 outlines the broad procedures for any property proposal.
- d. Reg 4.7.1 addresses the certification of documents and agreements.

Property applications are subject to *Regulation* 4.6.3 – *Property Dealings* – and 4.6.4 – *Applications for Approval*. The Synod's Property Services Unit does have a series of Forms that are used in making an application. Reg 4.2 identifies the functions of the Synod's Property Board.

The congregation's Church Council or Institution's Board begins the application process. Church Councils are assisted and supported in their application by the Presbytery, specifically the Presbytery Property Committee. Institutions are assisted and supported in their applications by their relevant Synod body, such as UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania or Uniting AgeWell.

Property Services application Forms include **Form 1 – Getting Started** and **Form 2A Discerning and Deciding**. You can see these set out in the *Property Services Information Guide*, Section 3.1 'Project Approval Process', page 10 – 14.

The *Property Services Information Guide* sets out the application and implementation process in a flow chart on Page 9 under Section 3.0 'Project Governance Structure'.

4. Which Synod body approves PMEP applications?

The Property Services Property Applications Review Team (PART) will receive any PMEP applications. If the expected works is less than \$1 million, PART can approve the application. If the expected value of the total works is more than \$1 million PART will refer the application to the Property Board with a recommendation about the application. In this case, the Property

Board will decide whether or not to approve the application, and on what terms. Approvals are communicated to both the applicant and the Presbytery or Synod body supporting the application and giving conciliar oversight to the Church Council or institution.

5. When are the mission purposes that might make use of any funds generated by a PMEP project to be communicated to other councils or bodies of the Church?

Property Services and / or the Property Board may engage the Synod's Communication Unit to provide guidance or services in communicating PMEP projects to the whole of the Church. The Property Board may consider various communication strategies and means by which to engage these.

6. Who will manage a PMEP project? And what form will this management take?

Once an application has proceeded to **Form 2B – Business Case** - Property Services will appoint a Project Control Group (PCG). The *Property Services Information Guide* sets out the usual governance procedures for a building project is section 3.2 – page 10-12.

7. What activity is required to establish that PMEP will in fact provide funds for enabling mission activities?

The presbytery as the discernment partner to a Church Council, UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania (UCVT) as the discernment partner to UnitingCare and the Uniting AgeWell Board are the Church bodies with the core responsibility for establishing a bona-fide mission purpose exists in any PMEP proposal. Once the initial **Forms 1 and 2** have been completed and have the support of the Presbytery or UCVT or the Uniting AgeWell Board, the mission purposes to be enabled by the PMEP project are ready for consideration in respect to the property works proposed to PART (Property Applications Review Team – the assessment team of the Property Board). If PART is satisfied that a genuine PMEP project is being proposed, PART will recommend that Property Services require **Form 2B - Project Business Case** to be completed.

There are several resources to assist Church Councils and Presbyteries and UCVT establish a genuine mission purpose, including:

- *A Theology of Property for a pilgrim people*
- *Understanding the Practice of Mission Motivated Development* (2nd edition)
- *An introduction to the Property Mission Enabling Policy, added to Understanding the Practice of Mission Motivated Development* (2nd edition)

8. Will there be any requirement to share a portion of the funds raised by a PMEP project with the wider church?

BOMAR (the Synod's Board of Mission and Resourcing) will from time to time consider the commonwealth of the Church with respect to sharing property sale proceeds or other funds (property – Reg 4.1 Definitions) generated by property as a means to enable the mission of the Church. BOMAR policies are available through the BOMAR Executive operating from the Synod Office. Call 9251 5420 for further information and policy booklets.

9. What is the Presbytery's role in assisting a congregation with beneficial use of the property to prepare an application and advocate for a PMEP project?

Presbytery is the Council of the Church that is the discernment partner to a congregation's Church Council or a cluster or network's Joint Church Council. (See *Regulations* 3.4.5(c) and 3.4.2). Note: Presbytery as a Council is the discernment partner – see Regulation 3.1.3(d).

At a practical level, a presbytery may appoint a 'discernment guide' to work with a particular church council as that council begins to consider its mission purposes as part of its responsibilities for the local worship, witness and service of the Church in the neighbourhood. Discernment guides often work together with Presbytery Ministers for Mission and Education or Administration in the discernment phase of mission purposes and property applications. Discernment is a spiritual practice, and constitutes a journey in faith by faith, through faith, to understand to whom God calls and sends this particular congregation or institution of the Church. Discernment guides report to the Presbytery on the matters discerned by the Church Council. Presbytery then

considers is support for the mission purposes discerned. In doing so the presbytery may consider the broader strategies it is pursuing for the worship, witness and service of the Church in the region. (See Para 26 of the Constitution of the UCA)

10. Which parties fund the Business Case work, required by the Property Board's PMEP prior to finalising acceptance of a PMEP project application?

Funding of a business case is the responsibility of the Church Council or institution making the PMEP application. Property Services will advise of the specific scope of work to be carried out and the costs involved in developing a business case to support each PMEP proposal.

11. What project governance and risk management provisions will the Synod's Property Board put in place to reassure the Church that any PMEP project is as safe as it can reasonably be?

The Synod's Property Board has been entrusted with the responsibility of developing project governance policies that identify and manage risks – financial and material – to any PMEP project. The Property Board's policies and practices are reviewed regularly by the Synod Standing Committee. In addition other Synod committees working together with the Property Board to ensure good governance of any PMEP project. These committees include:

- The Synod Finance Committee
- The Synod Risk Committee
- BOMAR
- The Synod Audit Committee.

The *Property Services Information Guide* sets out in summary form the project governance for any PMEP project.

12. If any property that is considered by a congregation, presbytery, or other beneficial user to be surplus or under-utilised is *not adopted* for redevelopment under PMEP, what options do these Church bodies have in respect to that property?

Regulation 4.11.10 – Classifying Property for Alternative Missional Use – provides guidance that will assist a Church Council and the Presbytery to work through issues associated with property that might be considered under-utilised or surplus to requirements. This is a long Regulation, but the provisions of the Regulation do allow for a range of possibilities as when a consideration of a particular property's status might be initiated. The Regulation also works hand in hand with Reg 4.11.9 with respect to setting out the consultation process required when two different councils negotiate the use of property. The presbytery does have the right to determine the final 'say' if the two councils of the Church cannot come to an agreement under Reg 4.11.9(c) i Note that in Reg 4.11.9(e) the Synod may determine policies and processes to assist the Presbytery and Church Councils in the implementation of this Regulation. In the Synod of VicTas, BOMAR (the Board of Mission and Resourcing) has provided a policy (B12.35.5) to assist with the implementation of *Regulation 4.11.9* and *4.11.10*.