



Trustees Committee

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1. THE BIG PICTURE

PURPOSE

As a trustee, you will supervise and maintain all property belonging to your congregation so that the ministries of the congregation can be effective. You will work closely with the church council to respond to God's call.

You were elected by the charge conference to act as its agent in caring for the physical resources of the church and for all legal matters. In all matters, you will receive guidance from the church council (§2529, the Discipline) before acting for the church. The council may give you broad limits within which to act, or it may recommend specific tasks in your stewardship of church facilities.

For Instance:

- incorporate the local church;
- develop a policy (to be approved by the charge conference) to be used by the church in purchasing, leasing, selling, mortgaging, constructing, remodeling, repairing, and maintaining any and all church properties;
- develop policies for the use of your church building, facilities, grounds, vehicles, equipment, and furnishings;
- develop a covenant or other agreement with short- and long-range “tenants” (groups or individuals that use the church and its facilities on a regular basis);
- develop a policy for the acceptance or rejection of bequests, gifts, or trusts.
- Work with local law enforcement to conduct a security evaluation of the church grounds and create policies for the implementation of security protocols.

CONNECTING RESOURCES WITH VISION

Talk with the pastor and other congregational leaders to learn how church property, equipment, and investments can be involved in achieving the goals that have been set. Identify current issues. Talk with people in your congregation and community about issues and concerns related to the use of church property. Keep in mind, a focus on Christian hospitality is an appropriate framework for these discussions.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

MEMBERSHIP

The board of trustees comprises not more than nine or fewer than three members. The chairperson must be a professing member of the local United Methodist church. At the first meeting of the trustees, the chairperson is elected for one year (§2530.2, the Discipline). The chairperson will represent the trustees as a member of the charge conference and the church council.

You were nominated by the committee on nominations and elected by the charge conference to serve a term of up to three years (§2526, the Discipline). In order to maintain continuity and experience, you and other trustees are divided into three classes with an equal number of trustees in each class. One class of trustees is elected each year. The charge conference can also fill vacancies that occur in any class. In a perfect world, the composition of your Board will include a good balance between consistency and diversity. Keeping in mind the importance of the different functions within the body of Christ, it will take a variety of gifts to work faithfully together. It is also helpful to mix new members with those who have a history in the congregation.

ORGANIZATION

By Discipline, the Trustees are to meet and organize within the first thirty days of the calendar or conference year (§2530.1, the Discipline). The previous chairperson or the pastor calls the meeting for this purpose. Your first item of business is the election of officers (§2530.2, the Discipline). Officers shall include a chairperson and may include a vice-chairperson, secretary, and other officers as needed. (Note: The chairperson and vice-chairperson shall not be members of the same yearly class so as to avoid these two offices becoming vacant at the same time. Election of a treasurer will depend on your church's practice and procedure.)

Secondly, schedule a time to orient the new trustees with a tour of the church grounds, should it be necessary. Walk through the building(s) to acquaint all trustees with safety features; water, gas, electric cutoffs; potential trouble spots; and so on. New trustees may have a fresh perspective that enables all the trustees to see things as they really are, rather than the way to which you have become accustomed. Next, organize your work into manageable portions and set your calendar for the year.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees together have several legal and administrative functions. They are to:

- oversee, maintain, and supervise all local church property.
- report annually to the charge conference on the state of the church's property, equipment, investments, and resources.
- receive and administer all gifts made to the congregation; make certain that all trust funds of the congregation are invested properly.
- ensure that the articles of incorporation of the congregation are kept up-to-date, if applicable.
- be responsible, in conjunction with the pastor, for all use of the church buildings and grounds.
- maintain adequate insurance coverage on all church property and develop appropriate risk management policies.
- submit to the committee on finance the annual budget requests for insurance, property maintenance and improvement, and new property purchases.
- be accountable to the charge conference and to the church council.

Much of the work of the trustees is governed by specific requirements of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church. You should obtain a current copy from your pastor or from Cokesbury (phone 1-800-672-1789) and create policies for the implementation of security protocols.

WHAT DOES THE CHAIRPERSON DO?

- Guide the work of the board of trustees throughout the year, planning the agendas and presiding at meetings. The chairperson also creates an environment in which the team members nurture and care for each other.
 - Provide advice and direction to the board and others based on detailed knowledge of the disciplinary and legal requirements related to church property.
 - Keep close communications with the pastor in the church council (or main administrative groups).
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4. POINTS OF EMPHASIS

#1 UNDERSTAND THE TRUST CLAUSE.

Ours is a connectional church. Each local congregation is connected to every other local congregation through the district and the annual, jurisdictional, and General conferences and has certain disciplinary responsibilities to The United Methodist Church as a whole. For this reason, titles to all properties are held in trust for the benefit of the entire United Methodist connection. The Book of Discipline ¶2501 states that The United Methodist Church is organized as a connectional structure, and titles to all properties held at “General, jurisdictional, annual, or district conference levels, or by a local church or charge, or by an agency or institution of the Church, shall be held in trust for The United Methodist Church and subject to the provisions of its Discipline.” The specific wording of the trust clause is stated in the Discipline in ¶2503.

The absence of such a clause in any deeds or conveyances does not relieve the local church of its connectional responsibilities (¶2501.6, the Discipline). Every congregation that has accepted pastors appointed by a bishop of The United Methodist Church or any local congregation that has used the name, customs, or policy of The United Methodist Church is deemed by The Book of Discipline to have accepted the terms of the trust clause with respect to its property. Decisions in both state and federal courts have upheld The United Methodist Church and its predecessors in their rights under the trust clauses. The written consent of the district superintendent for the sale of the property constitutes a release of the trust clause (¶2542, the Discipline).

#2 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS!

In order for this calling of a trustee to be lived out as an act of ministry, it will be important to continually refine the role of the trustees in relation to other committees of the church, to the church staff, and to the rest of the community. As those called to represent Christ and be agents of hospitality, work collaboratively. Avoid silos or other power plays. Remember that you are there to serve the mission of the church and to help facilitate the other program ministries to flourish.

#3 PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO INSURANCE COVERAGES AND OTHER LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

Always know that it is far better to consult a lawyer BEFORE you take legal action (contracts, etc) then it is have to call one afterwards. The denominational guidelines are an excellent resource on this particular theme.

#4 ALIGN EACH BUILDING POLICY TO VISION AND MISSION.

If you define it now, there is less chance you will need to defend it later. Policies for vehicles or buildings use are a necessary tool in exercising safety and good stewardship. But again, the mission of the church must always be in mind. Do not allow the policies to become an obstacle to ministry, but rather a means of grace and transformation.

Are there rooms in your church where the children are discouraged or not permitted? Why is that? Is there any place where Jesus is not permitted? Does Jesus say, let the children come to me, that is, unless I'm in the parlor sitting on this sacred couch that was donated in 1976? Are there rooms that are designated for purposes that are no longer relevant? Again, are we serving a mission or a museum? These are important theological questions to be discussed openly with your pastor and staff.

5 IDENTIFY THE BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR PRESCHOOLS, AFTERSCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS, SCOUT TROOPS, WEDDINGS, AND OTHER EXTENSION MINISTRIES.

Are their special licenses that are required? Who supervises these employees? Is this intended to create revenue for the church? Who will provide the custodial services? Who manages the finances for this program? How does this fit into the over mission and vision of the church?

6# COMMUNICATION.

You cannot over-communicate when it comes to facility needs, renovations, or new building development. A regular update in the church newsletter or other correspondence can do wonders for congregational investment and support. When the pastor does it occasionally sounds like a complaint or a lack of appreciation for the existing church. When the trustees communicate these needs, however, it conveys congregational ownership and thus sounds more like an authentic movement of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray that it is!

5. RESOURCES

Trustees: Managing the Resources of the Congregation

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/82d14aqhvv1r0ph/Guidelines%20-%20Trustees.pdf?dl=0>

AWF Website (Conference Resources)

<https://www.awfumc.org/resources>

United Methodist Church Website (General Church Resources)

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/book-of-discipline-2525-ff-board-of-trustees>