

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA \* SOUTH WEST PRESBYTERY**

**PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION  
Minutes 15 November 2011**

**Present:** Michael Fraser (chair), Michael Kooiman, James Lepard, Ron Ross, Stephen Fetter  
(secretary)

**Guest:** Ken MacDonald

**Regrets:** Steve Lee

**CONSTITUTION OF THE MEETING**

Michael Fraser constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ at 7:03 p.m.

**OPENING PRAYER**

James Lepard opened the meeting with prayer.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**MOTION** by Ron Ross / James Lepard  
**that the Property and Environment Commission of South West Presbytery adopt  
the minutes of the June 29, 2011 as circulated.**

**CARRIED**

**SETTING A REGULAR MEETING TIME**

**Decision:**

**The Property & Environment Commission AGREED to meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of  
every month, September – June.**

**PROPERTY GUIDELINES**

**MOTION** by James Lepard / Michael Kooiman  
**that the Property & Environment Commission of South West Presbytery adopt in  
principle the theological rationale for the Property Guidelines circulated prior to this  
meeting attached to these minutes at Appendix A, and that the Secretary be directed  
to insert an additional paragraph about the role of Presbytery and congregational  
representatives in discernment when Decisions are contemplated that have a wide-  
ranging impact.**

**CARRIED**

The Commission members together drafted the following motion which will be put to the meeting of the whole Presbytery on Saturday 19 Nov 2011.

That the document entitled "Property Guidelines and Procedures" (dated 18 May 2011) be adopted as the guideline for dealing with property within the bounds of South West Presbytery.

**DISPERSAL OF FUNDS CONCERNING CENTENNIAL JAPANESE UNITED CHURCH AND TORONTO JAPANESE UNITED CHURCH**

**MOTION** by Stephen Fetter / Michael Kooiman

**that the Property & Environment Commission of South West Presbytery approve the request of the Trustees of Toronto Japanese United Church to invest \$342,000 of their assets after amalgamation into the Minister's Housing Fund of Centennial Japanese United Church, under the condition that the principle may not be spent without further approve of South West Presbytery, and that the interest may be used by the congregation to fund a housing for Ministry Personnel and,**

**that the Property and Environment Commission of South West Presbytery further approve the following disbursement of the balance of the assets after amalgamation as follows: that the congregation may use these funds to enhance the ministry of Centennial Japanese United Church and,**

**that the Property and Environment Commission of South West Presbytery urges the congregation to consider when it is spending monies from the fund to enhance the ministry of Centennial Japanese United Church, that these monies were originally given for the support of the ministry of the United Church of Canada, and that this intention ought to be honoured.**

**CARRIED**

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Michael Kooiman led the meeting in a closing prayer at 8:42 p.m.

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Michael Fraser – Chair

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Stephen Fetter - Secretary

## APPENDIX A

### South West Presbytery Property Guidelines and Procedures: Theological Rationale

*We sing of a church  
seeking to continue the story of Jesus  
by embodying Christ's presence in the world.  
(All italicized quotes are from A Song of Faith, 2006)*

The church we sing is a collection of both believers and buildings. The word has several meanings, and only context determines whether we speak of a building, a congregation, a denomination or the catholic (universal) church. This is no accident, and the confluence of meaning demands that we speak of each with respect. The physical structures that we own and inhabit demonstrate our presence in the world and our commitment to a particular setting.

The state of a church building communicates to the surrounding neighbourhood. Following the "Broken Windows Theory" popularized by Malcolm Gladwell, a building in disrepair suggests neglect, misuse, and lack of respect for our neighbours. If the physical structure we inhabit is an embodiment of Christ's continuing presence, then we must honour and proclaim his presence through proper care of buildings.

When significant decisions are contemplated which may have far-reaching impact, faithful Christians follow a process of discernment to both listen for and test the will of the Spirit. This is true for decisions about the mission and vocation of both individuals and of buildings. The courts of our denomination provide for ways in which Christians can assist each other in this process of discernment, and guidelines and procedures to help make this process faithful to the mission of the whole church and the call of God. Representatives of both Congregations and Presbyteries have significant roles to play in this discernment process.

*Our ancestors in faith  
bequeath to us experiences of faithful living;  
upon their lives our lives are built.*

Standing on the shoulders of saints is both metaphor and tangible reality. The vast majority of our churches and mission sites are inherited: we had no direct hand in their construction. Even the faithful people who created the post-war expansion of churches, taking on and eventually burning mortgages, have largely passed on. Our spiritual and missional homes were passed down from parents and grandparents.

There is a tension between honouring the past in the buildings we received and modifying existing buildings for new mission or new expressions of worship. Changes must be made with great care and with an eye to stewardship, future use, municipal regulations, and the overall mission of the United Church of Canada. We recognize that we are always the 'middle generation' between the past and the future. We want to leave churches and missions that will stand for generations.

*Helping [the church] to live an emerging faith while honouring tradition,  
challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement,  
for we are called to be a blessing to the earth.*

*A Song of Faith* perfectly captures the aforementioned tension between past and present, as well as the tension that occurs when we decide to sell a building. Emerging faith, the faith that will be funded through the sale of property, must be honoured in equal measure to the legacy that a congregation seeks to leave. To live by grace means to encourage new life, to seek an unconditional future and the blessings that God will yet provide. Property proceeds belong to our children's children more than they belong to us.

And what of a church that seeks to be a blessing to the earth? Our First Nations brothers and sisters, along with a generation of scientists, have reminded us that the earth is our mother. Our faith demands that church buildings tread more lightly on the earth, use less of the earth's resources, and do no further damage to the environment. Any judicatory action that creates or modifies a physical structure must examine the environmental impact of the decision.

The policy that follows seeks to proclaim Christ's presence through our stewardship of property, through our commitment to past and future saints, and through our care for the earth.

DRAFT