

Resolution Related to a Comprehensive Urban Ministry Strategic Plan

Submitted by: Commission on Urban Ministry

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Whereas, the Commission on Urban Ministry is charged by The Book of Discipline to create a Comprehensive Urban Ministry Strategy for the Annual Conference; and

Whereas, the 2008 Book of Discipline, ¶2548.7, provides a funding base for the Annual Conference's Comprehensive Urban Ministry Strategic Plan through the net proceeds of discontinued church property sales in urban centers with more than 50,000 population, and

Whereas, the Annual Conference by Resolution 2012-10 reaffirmed "its commitment to urban ministry and the necessity of a Comprehensive Urban Strategic Plan for all urban areas" and directed "that the Commission on Urban Ministry review historic strategies and present to the November 2012 Adjourned Session an Urban Strategy for Eastern Pennsylvania;" and

Whereas, the Urban Commission represents congregations, clergy and laity in urban ministry settings throughout the Annual Conference; and

Whereas, the report presented by the Urban Commission provides a framework that requires continuing insight and input from the Bishop, Cabinet, Director of Connectional Ministries, Coordinator of Urban Ministry and certain other official entities of the Annual Conference; and

Whereas, in the spirit of Holy Conferencing the proposed Urban Strategy framework will be improved and amended in order to remain faithful to the vision and mission of the Annual Conference and to be in compliance with The Book of Discipline; and

Whereas, the emergent framework will be implemented as resources are identified and allocated appropriately; and

Whereas, the Urban Commission seeks the prayers and support of all persons and seeks to be a ministry of and for all persons of the Annual Conference;

Therefore be it resolved, that the Comprehensive Urban Ministry Strategic Plan be adopted as a framework for urban ministry that is "moving on to perfection" and thus creating a shared vision and strategic plan for urban ministry within the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

Brief Summary of the Comprehensive Urban Ministry Strategic Plan

The Conference Commission on Urban Ministry (Urban Commission) recommends these strategies for urban ministry under the following six categories:

A. Developing an Urban Personnel Policy includes creating an extensive ministry apprentice program, an adequate pastoral salary structure, a clergy recruitment program particularly focusing on young adults, an urban training program and an appropriate urban appointment consultation process.

B. Developing Stronger New and Existing Congregations includes helping churches develop a self-study process and training program to build a more effective ministry and initiate new church development in collaboration with Coordinator for Congregational Development.

C. Developing Stronger Community Outreach includes helping churches working with the Commission, Communities of Shalom, Partners with Sacred Places, Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, the National Latino Plan and other agencies to develop ministries that meet the needs of the community and develop shared use arrangements that bring additional income into the local church.

D. Developing an Urban Ministry Fund includes the Commission working with Partners for Sacred Places and Conference agencies to obtain funds from the annual conference, general conference, private and public grant sources including governmental agencies, foundations and individuals to support this plan and local urban churches.

E. Restoring and Reusing Urban Church Buildings includes the Commission working with Partners for Sacred Places to raise public and/or private grants to develop a holding entity to hold and maintain church properties after closure in order to transition the properties to new uses such as new church starts, community centers, homeless shelters, or other uses.

F. Strategic Partnerships strategy continues to strengthen our partnerships with Partners For Sacred Places, Communities of Shalom, Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries, the National Asian Plan, the Native American Plan and other national church plans.

Comprehensive Urban Ministry Strategic Plan

Report and Recommendations of the Conference Commission on Urban Ministry

The Conference Commission on Urban Ministry (Urban Commission) recommends these strategies for urban ministry under the following six categories:

A. Developing an Urban Personnel Policy

The Urban Commission plans to use specific identification and recruitment strategies and personnel policies to engage and support the next generation of leadership for urban ministry.

- 1.) The Urban Commission in consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM), and the Cabinet shall devise an intentional plan of action that will identify present Conference members who are interested in working in urban ministries, as well as a plan to recruit and train other persons for future EPA urban ministry appointments. Special attention should be given to the preparation and appointment of ethnic minority candidates and women. This would include the strategies developed in the following plans: National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries, Strengthen the Black Church for the 21st Century, the Asian American Plan and the Native American Plan. This strategy includes the identification and development of leadership churches that will receive, nurture, develop and evaluate potential urban pastors.
- 2.) The Commission in consultation with the Cabinet and BOOM, the Connectional Table and Congregational Development Team (CDT) shall study the feasibility of establishing an extensive ministry apprentice program, particularly for young adults. These apprentice positions or fellowships may be volunteer, paid stipend, part time or full time positions and may work with BOOM and the Laity Academy to instruct potential candidates for ministry in preaching, teaching, administration, visitation, and other pastoral duties.
- 3.) In developing a salary schedule that is adequate for appointments in urban centers, the Commission will resource the Cabinet in a consultative role, taking into consideration the higher cost of living in urban centers (vs. the cost in outlying areas of the Conference). Further, the Urban Commission in partnership with other entities will study the feasibility of raising additional dollars for urban pastoral salaries.
- 4.) Patterns of moral support shall be intentionally encouraged and developed among church clusters, such as ethnic and cultural background, gender, clergy status, and other factors that tend to separate people from each other;
- 5.) Regular meetings of all urban pastors and lay leadership shall be held for moral support and resourcing and convened by the Urban Commission.
- 6.) The Urban Commission in collaboration (with the national plans noted above) shall develop a training package to equip clergy for effective ministry, taking into account such factors as on-site

training, utilization of group process, use of interns and work with seminaries.

7.) The Urban Commission in collaboration with the national plans and with all appropriate Conference agencies shall establish an ongoing program of urban training that will equip pastors, the local church and the Conference in theological reflection that is relevant to an ever changing context in our urban centers. Pastors in urban ministry appointments shall participate in orientation and continuing education in urban ministries, either prior to their appointment, or within 3 months following their new appointments. Such training should include specific emphasis on the pastor's prophetic ministry as preacher and community leader and his/her leadership development of a prophetic ministry of and by the laity in the local church.

8.) The Commission will be available as a resource to the Bishop and the Cabinet in a consulting role to help identify and discern potential candidates for urban communities and the need for longer appointments in urban settings. The Commission recognizes that the Bishop and the Cabinet have final authority in all appointments.

9.) As demographic change and community transition becomes evident, particularly in terms of race and ethnicity, the Urban Commission seeks to accompany local congregations as they work to adapt to their changing community. When racial/ethnic transition approaches 50%, the Cabinet, in consultation with the Urban Commission, should give strong consideration to a change in pastoral leadership that reflects that transition.

10.) The Urban Commission will help challenge pastors and congregations to engage in incarnational ministry with the community in social justice issues.

B. Developing Stronger New and Existing Congregations

1.) The Urban Commission will assist local congregations in implementing a church and community self-study, using designs developed by the National Plans, Congregational Development s Team, the Urban Commission, the Annual Conference and/or Partners for Sacred Places. A church's profile should be updated annually, noting shifting needs of the congregation and important changes occurring or anticipated. With regard to size, ¶ 213 of the 2008 Book of Discipline shall be the guiding principle. Churches of 50 members or less in static or declining population areas shall be identified and assisted in studying their potential to revitalize or develop cooperative ministry (UMC or ecumenical) and/or relocate or to discontinue.

2.) In collaboration with the Conference Connectional Table and Congregational Development Team, the Urban Commission may identify and initiate new ministry development using ongoing data gathering and analysis of demographic and sociological statistics that will ascertain new opportunities, using such tools as *MissionInsite* and the *MissionInsite Opportunity Scan*, as well as other demographic, socio-graphic, and GIS tools.

3.) Local churches who are located near new church development may be asked to partner along side the new church start in order to support and offer leadership when appropriate. The District Committee on Church Location will be included in planning and implementing new congregations, pay particular attention to new church development among ethnic minorities, and

recognizing the potential of alternative forms of Christian worship and community.

C. Developing Stronger Community Outreach

- 1.) Local churches will study with the assistance of the Urban Commission and produce a demographic profile of the community in which it is located in terms of age, marital status, economic levels, racial, ethnic and religious composition and social needs. This is a continuing process that must be updated at least annually.
- 2.) A design for the congregation's ministry in the community shall be developed from the findings of the study and evaluated on a regular basis. The local church shall be encouraged to use the resources of the Conference and/or National Plans in designing a ministry that addresses the political and economic issues of its community. The local church shall seek to establish ties with other local churches and secular groups who are serving the needs of the community, lending its resources to existing projects and programs.
- 3.) The local church shall seek to provide a ministry to identified unmet needs in concert with other local congregations (United Methodist and other denominations). The local church pastor must develop a leadership style that projects him/her into the problems, concerns and issues of the community and which educates and encourages the local congregation's involvement in community concerns (e.g., the affairs of institutions and government).
- 4.) The local church shall design Christian Education and worship experiences that incorporate the background and styles of its community-wide participation: outside-the-building experiences (on church grounds where space is available or other venue, e.g., local park), bi-lingual experience, a non-Sabbath day experience, etc.
- 5.) For a church that has no effective net membership increase over a reasonable number of years, a review of its situation will be requested and a plan to counter this deficiency developed, under the supervision of the District Superintendent and in consultation with the Urban Commission.

D. Developing an Urban Ministry Fund

- 1.) Models and guides for the full use and stewardship of local church funds will be provided by the Conference Commission on Finance and Administration (CCFA) and other related agencies. Assistance will be provided to local churches to assist in learning how to maximize income from their own local church resources. Local church investment income should be seen as a resource for the entire ministry of the church and not just to maintain its building and assure its survival.
- 2.) Tools, techniques, and expertise will be provided by the Connectional Table in cooperation with the Urban Commission for requesting funding sources within and beyond the Annual Conference. Help in developing the kind of creative ministries that will attract such support will be provided.

- 3.) Private and public funding sources, including grants, must be identified for those ministries that have been well-designed and are compelling. A legal entity recommended by the Urban Commission may be available to help receive and manage such funds.
- 4.) Partnerships will be encouraged among churches in the city and those in outer urban communities, the suburbs, the exurbs, and beyond for leadership, financial and ministry support.
- 5.) The Urban Commission encourages cooperation among all Conference agencies to work together to strive to use already allocated funds in a concerted effort to support this urban strategy.
- 6.) The net proceeds from the sale of urban churches shall be directed to the Conference Committee on Urban Ministry to be administered to help local churches in “urban transitional communities” as defined by ¶ 212 of the 2008 Discipline and to fund the Annual Conference’s Urban Ministry Strategic Plan as per ¶ 2548.7 of the 2008 Discipline.
- 7.) A staff person or persons will be employed to manage of the Urban Strategic Plan for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. Funding for this position shall come from ¶ 2548.7 net proceeds from discontinued urban church property sales. One of the major duties of this staff person or persons will be raising additional funds for the Urban Ministry Fund.

E. Restoring and Reusing Urban Church Buildings

- 1.) Local church congregations shall design community as well as congregational ministries taking into consideration the possibility of ecumenical approaches. When maintenance and operation of the buildings of the congregation exceed its programmatic ministry expenses, then a feasibility study shall be encouraged in consultation with the Urban Commission and the Cabinet to discern the most effective path forward.
- 2.) Facilities shall be maintained in such a fashion as to be inviting, creative and functional, for the church’s effective ministry in the community. Each local church will be expected to cooperate with Urban Commission efforts to maximize building maintenance and care, (e.g. risk management, bulk buying, and group building maintenance).
- 3.) An annual review of any regular meetings held with city planners shall be shared with the Annual Conference through its Urban Commission for review and action.
- 4.) The Commission will work with churches that a) are identified as “urban” by the Annual Conference; b) are identified as at risk by themselves or by the parameters set by the Conference; c) they are delinquent in their apportionment regarding related building matters such as liability insurance or d) demonstrate a willingness to work with the Conference by cooperating with Commission inquires.
- 5.) With cooperating churches and in collaboration with Partners for Sacred Places and/or the Urban Commission, every effort will be made by the Commission to assess, renovate, upgrade and revitalize existing buildings rather than discontinuance and sale of buildings. A triage

system would be implemented to identify which buildings are in eminent danger of closure, which buildings need extensive continued care, and which buildings could be restored to full function with a minimum of intervention.

F. Strategic Partnerships

1.) The Urban Commission strongly recommends continuing our partnerships with Partners for Sacred Places (including our Broad Street Corridor and Lancaster City initiatives), National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries, Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, the Asian American Plan, and the Native American Plan for the United Methodist Church.

These plans include, but are not limited to:

- Training and congregational profile assessment for the work of revitalization
- Training for congregations working with or in the process of developing ministries with non-English speaking communities or recent immigrants through the Pentecost Journey.
- Training and deployment of Lay Missionaries to serve alongside local congregations to develop new communities of faith among 1st and 2nd generation immigrants.
- Working with Partners in the process of transforming our church buildings into multipurpose community centers for ministry of transformation spiritually, socially, and politically.

2.) The Urban Commission believes that at the core of any congregation showing signs of revitalization in an urban setting is demonstration of how effective it is at engaging in ministry with youth and young adults.

The Urban Commission will encourage and assist congregations in urban settings to receive training in:

- The use of media, music and technology
- Relevant messages/sermons/Bible Study for youth and young adults
- Reaching beyond the church walls/alternative means of engagement
- Dialogue of current/relevant events to young people
- Developing holistic family ministries i.e. single parent families, blended families, etc.
- Leadership Development among young people to serve in leadership in local churches and in the development of new communities of faith, including worship leadership and new relevant styles of worship designed and implemented by youth and young adults.
- Wesleyan social justice engagement and powerful preaching
- Providing opportunities for the development of authentic relationships