

Preamble to DEXCOM

In advance of the DEXCOM education portion of the meeting, I (Mark) asked Andy Lambkin and Ryan Graham to pull together a document that spells out a series of values regarding land stewardship, along with practical concerns that churches and the CPD need to address. The document below is meant to stimulate initial conversation.

Theology of Land - A Working Thesis Statement

All land is God's land. He has given land to the corporate Church as a gift that we now steward in order that we might love and serve Him and our neighbour.

Amplified, this statement has the following concepts in mind:

Land is God's – We do not “own” our land. From a theological perspective, neither the Crown, denomination, or the local church possess or control land. “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.” God is the rightful owner of the lands we occupy.

Land is a gift – Graciously, God has given land, to people, as a gift. God bestows land as a part of His plan to bless us. Theologically speaking, “us” is to be understood as a corporate reality. A local congregation looks not only to its own interests, but also to the interests of the larger Church. In this respect, a local congregation should consider sharing land and building, and in certain circumstances, even gifting its land to another congregation.

Land is to be stewarded – Because we are stewards (caretakers), not owners, how we use land is meant to demonstrate love for God and neighbour. We must regularly ask the question, “How might this land be used to demonstrate love for God, the love of God, and the well-being of people?”

The stewardship of church land and buildings has both a protective and proactive element to it:

- We must **protect** the land from being unwisely dispersed. While this may not make sense from a capitalistic metric, our stewarding responsibility should be to ensure that land gifted to the church, remains for the purposes which it was first given to us – that is, loving God and loving neighbour.
- We must **proactively** plan to ensure the land is actively working toward maximum blessing for God and people.



Practical realities for the Church in Canada that are impacting real estate and our ability to fulfill our stewarding responsibilities:

- Christianity is in decline – this includes evangelicalism. This results in an obvious decline in operational revenue which has an impact on churches.
- Our churches are primarily funded by Boomer Generations – it is likely that a decline in giving will continue in the coming years.
- The cost of maintenance has increased exponentially; this puts churches in precarious places in the event of a major, unbudgeted expense.
- Closely related, many churches do not invest in ongoing building assessments, or invest in a reserve fund that could address major capital expenses.
- Revivalism might be hamstringing our wisdom. We keep praying that people will return to our churches and thereby fund our ministry expenses.
- Congregations remain possessive in their ownership view – “we need our own building, this is our building, etc.” This limits our ability to think about shared space.
- From a density perspective, our urban church lands are often under-utilized.
- Real estate developers are hawkish toward vulnerable church lands.
- Cities are not designating new lands for church space, and they are redesignating church properties for multi-family residential.

