

Process for Conversations on Church Potential

Conversations on Church Potential should be considered when:

- A church is at a crossroads in ministry.
- A church is in financial stress.
- A church is considering closure.
- In the judgment of the District Superintendent the congregation would benefit from this process.
- A congregation requests for these conversations to occur.

What is the process for having Conversations on Church Potential?

The Conversations on Church Potential are initiated when the District Superintendent or church request for these conversations to be held. The District Superintendent contacts the Legacy Team Chair to request one or more of the team to lead these conversations. The District Superintendent will also ask at least one clergy and lay person from the district to participate in these conversations. The pastor of the church and at least three lay persons from the church chosen by the pastor are also part of these conversations. The Conversations on Church Potential Team (CCP Team) is usually expected to include 8-12 people with a balance of laity and clergy.

The Conversations on Church Potential has 5 steps centered around 3 conversations:

1. The first conversation is to determine the current reality of the local church setting. This is primarily a time for the team members from the district to listen to the concerns and possibilities that the church sees as their current reality. Prior to the meeting demographic information from Mission Insite and statistics from the year end reports from the two previous reports are provided by the district office. Since finances are often a needed component a budget and the latest financial report is provided by the church prior to the first conversation. Other data may be requested as needed. If the church has already had meetings to discuss the future of the church it is helpful for the district participants to receive any documents produced in advance of the first conversation. Again, the main purpose of the first conversation is for the church participants to speak to the district participants and for the members of the district participants to ask questions which help to clarify the current reality. The notes taken by the district participants are forwarded to the team leader.
2. The second conversation is to explore the options available. This is a time for the district participants to speak to the church participants and for the church participants to listen to the options presented. Part of this conversation is for the district participants to reflect upon what they heard from the church participants and then to present options for this setting. These options may have been already stated previously or they may be options the district participants are now bringing for consideration.

3. During this process it is appropriate for the district participants to meet in between these conversations to discuss the options and process as needed. And it is appropriate for the church participants to meet in between these conversations to discuss the options and process as needed. This is part of the prayer and discernment process. While these conversations are not necessarily confidential, it is important for the total CCP Team to decide when congregational or church council meetings will occur. And it is very important to wait until all three conversations have occurred before implementing a course of action.
4. The third conversation is to spend time evaluating the options and recommending a course of action for the next faithful steps. Although there is not a set time for these meetings to occur in most settings there will be 3 weeks to 2 months in between each meeting. This means that the process of Conversations on Church Potential will take somewhere between 6 weeks to 4 months to complete.
5. After the third conversation the District Superintendent will work with the church to implement the recommendation. After this third conversation the CCP Team no longer meets unless in the judgment of the district superintendent a further conversation is needed.

The hoped for outcome is that these conversations will help churches to take steps which lead to innovative ways to proceed into the future. It is hoped that the church will be revitalized and disciples of Jesus Christ will be made and their community and the world will be transformed.

If the outcome is to proceed toward closure the hoped for outcome is that the church will have considered the best steps to take that will establish a legacy for the church which supports the work of the United Methodist Church, establishes a witness for Christ in their community and beyond, and contributes to the ongoing work of the Kingdom of God.