



***“Don’t you know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”***  
— 11 Cor. 3:16

The costs of maintaining and operating a church building have risen dramatically, and many congregations are struggling to find the finances and leadership to deal with these higher expenses.

These challenges are leading to some very creative solutions — from energy savings to totally rethinking how to use a church building, and even to some congregations selling their buildings entirely!

The great hymn, “We Are the Church,” proclaims what we all know to be true but can easily forget when we’re caught up in heating bills and repair budgets:

*The church is not a building,  
The church is not a steeple,  
The church is not a resting place,  
The church is a people!*

Today, churches are moving to reclaim time and treasure: from maintaining historic or antique facilities, to reinvesting themselves in the treasure that is the mission and ministry of their people. After all, *that’s what church is really about!*

## Next Steps

- Pray, Pray, Pray for God’s vision and guidance on how to use your facility assets for the work of the Kingdom. Remember, ultimately this is God’s work, not ours!
- Gather your Church Council for an in-depth discussion about your facility’s costs and effectiveness. Begin to think and pray together about a different future
- Speak with your District Superintendent about your challenges and finances

*Watch [neumc.org](http://neumc.org) this Fall for more information and resources on “Dealing with Rising Church Facility Expenses”*

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## Resources

- U.S. Green Building Council — [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)
- National Council of Churches USA Eco-Justice — [www.nccecojustice.org](http://www.nccecojustice.org)
- Space-Sharing Checklist for UMC — [www.gcfa/PDFs/SpaceShare.pdf](http://www.gcfa/PDFs/SpaceShare.pdf)
- *The Nomadic Church: Growing Your Church Without Owning The Building* by Bill Easum & Pete Theodore
- *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples* by Thom Rainer & Eric Geiger
- Your District Superintendent and District Church Location and Building Committee
- NEUMC Office of Congregational Development, email: [curtis@neumc.org](mailto:curtis@neumc.org)

# Help!

## Our building costs too much!



## ***Dealing with Rising Church Facility Expenses***

A resource to help churches explore options for more efficient or ministry-appropriate facility use...  
***for the sake of the ministry of Christ in your community.***

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NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE OF  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
[www.neumc.org](http://www.neumc.org)

## The Challenge

Many of our churches are struggling with the rising costs of energy and building maintenance:

- Fuel costs are rising and will likely continue to do so
- Major costs for boilers, roofs, structural repairs, painting, steeples or other deferred long-term maintenance maybe just around the corner — or may be here now

Building expenses are eating up more of our church budgets, leadership time and congregational attention, leaving less and less for essential and primary ministries and missions:

- Some buildings may be larger than needed for current ministries
- Many buildings were designed for a style and form of ministry from another age, and are not as effective for ministry today

## The Hope

The “church” is not the building, it’s the people. Faithful people have never been bound by buildings:

- Many congregations are discovering new ways to “be church” and different ways to use buildings or even thrive without owning a building
- New technologies for efficient building design are now more affordable, effective and available

Building maintenance is not our purpose. Rather, facilities are a resource to support our mission: *making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*



## Ideas for the Short-Term

- Have an energy efficiency audit of your building done by your fuel or electric company
- Create “zone” heating in your building just by closing vents or bringing in highly efficient portable heaters
- Invest in upgrading your HVAC systems, insulation, controls, thermostats and training for users
- Team with other churches (Methodist or ecumenical) to buy oil at fixed rates
- Use eco-friendly lighting
- Worship in a smaller, more efficient space in your building - it can draw people closer and be creative and inspiring
- Challenge your church to tithe
- Make filling your facility with people and ministries a higher priority — even higher than keeping to traditions of worship styles, programs or church customs

***Seek God's guidance for your church's ministry, especially how your facility fits into God's plans for your church***

*Think outside the box (or building!)*

- Return to primarily meeting in homes — home worship, study groups, or committee meetings are attractive new “old” ways of doing church
- Partner with other community organizations to multi-use spaces at schools, libraries, fire-halls, senior centers, clubs or restaurants
- Consider changing your style, time or pattern

of worship, events or ministries to better fit a more available or efficient space.

## Longer-Term Ideas

- Form a team to evaluate long term viability of your building (efficiency, costs, 21st Century ministry usefulness)
- Install solar panels
- Develop planned and estate giving to support building costs
- Consider that 21st Century growing churches often use community buildings or have flexible space, high efficiency buildings or share church buildings with other congregations, or meet in homes or schools
- Ask your church and neighbors: *“What kind of facilities would help us to reach new people for Christ in our community?”*
- Talk to other congregations that have had facility changes in last 5 years, such as a new building, a re-use of their existing building, or that now have no building
- Discover how in some places, congregations have joined together to sell one or more buildings to use (or build) one efficient building or “Regional Church” —and have started to grow!

*Challenge your church to envision what your ministries would look like if you were not constrained by your buildings and property.*