

Should we sell our church building?

By [L. Gail Irwin](#)

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I know some of you have a love/hate relationship with your church buildings. Your church's floors may have asbestos in them and the roof may leak and the sanctuary is not wheelchair accessible. Maybe you are secretly hoping for a strategically placed tornado.

Or maybe you should *sell* your building? Wouldn't that make life easier?

Well, yes and no. Selling your building might provide you with a big wad of cash to move to a better building or start a creative house church ministry. Some of the churches I've studied did things like that successfully. But there are other factors to consider:

- Do you have a better idea about where you should meet? If you're thinking "coffee house", consider whether your congregation will ever be able to sing together again. If you're thinking "rented store front", remember that the landlord might kick you out (this once happened to Solomon's Porch).
- Could your building be put to better use while you are still using it? For instance, are there non-profit groups or another congregation who could share it with you for a reasonable rate?
- Remember that you have more than a building. You also have a *location*. Why did God put you in your neighborhood in the first place? What was/is your mission on that particular piece of holy ground?
- Instead of selling it, could you *give* your building to another church who really needs it?
- If you sell it to the first buyer who comes along, such as a CVS franchise, [as in this story](#), will the community be losing a beloved landmark?

I'm generally pretty hard-nosed about not letting buildings get in the way of ministry. But I also believe buildings have a function, and I am still on the fence about the Church cashing out its physical presence in our communities. (Have you ever tried to find a House Church to attend? I have. Never found it.) There is

something about church buildings that civilizes our world. They remind us that humanity is about pursuing more than self-protection, money, sports and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

And the fact is that, except in some juicy locations, many church buildings are not worth nearly as much in dollars as you may think.

It *might* be time to sell your building and move to a location that better suits your church's mission. But first, you may want to read [this article](#) about an Episcopal church in Connecticut, where the Diocese is viewing a former church building as an asset, and has invited interested parties into conversation about how it might be used for the benefit of its community.

And in [this story from Seattle](#), another Diocese transferred responsibility for the maintenance of a church building to a sister church, which oversees use of the space for a variety of community non-profit groups.

Church buildings are like congregations: loaded with the power to save your soul or drive you crazy- maybe both on the same day. Proceed with caution.

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