



Church Land Theology: Discussion Guide for Congregations

SESSION II for churches that own land

If your church *does not* own a property, see the discussion guide on land in your neighborhood.

MCCN intern Andrew Hudson led a series of group interviews over the past year, asking questions like the ones below. If you get a group together and discuss them with your congregation, you'll uncover a lot about your relationship with land that was hiding in plain sight!

Many churches have simmering conflicts regarding the land management questions. This could be a healthy way to explore them—but be aware that it may take some skill. Consult your pastor on the best approach for your context.

History

1. What is the story of your church land?
 - Pre-settlers, if it was colonized.
 - Up through the church's founding and to today?

As you tell the story, where do you slow down and give detail? Where do you skip over large swaths of time?

2. Can you picture what ecosystem was in place at your church's location before it was "modernized?" Would that original ecosystem re-emerge if it was allowed to, or have there been fundamental changes that would make that unlikely? How does this affect your relationship with the land?

Land Management

1. How do you deal with weeds on the church's land?
 - How do you feel about your approach to weeds? Is everyone in agreement?
 - Jesus used weeds as an image in several of his sayings. You can find examples in Matthew 13 and Mark 4:31. Do any of the teachings of Jesus inform your approach to weeds?
2. How do you feel about your church parking lot? Is it a part of your ministry in any way?
3. On what areas of your church land do you spend energy?
 - Physical energy?
 - Mental energy? Where do you have to figure things out?
 - Where do you find yourself at odds with yourself or with other people?
 - If you could change the ways you apportion this energy, what would you prefer?

Theology

1. In many cultures, from ancient Israel to the present, it is common to see oneself and one's group as having a relationship with the Earth. How would you describe what your congregation's relationship with your place is?
2. How is your residence in this place an expression of the Good News? How does the land offer you Good News?
3. What makes for Shalom in your place?
4. How is God present on your land?