

CASE STUDIES

Sampling of what some other churches have done

Bellevue First Congregational Church (UCC)

Bellevue sold their church outright, but wanted to stay close to downtown, so used the proceeds to purchase and remodel a building further north that would allow them to continue their main homeless ministry as well as their music and worship ministries. They moved to their new building in 2016. Their website states:

In 2014, after much careful consideration, we at First Congregational Church, Bellevue decided to sell the place we called home for more than a century, on the corner of NE 8th and 108th Ave NE. We bought an unassuming office building just a few blocks away and, with the help of architect Susan Jones of atelierjones, converted it into a creative worship place that's an environmentally friendly 'space of awe.'

Urban Grace of Tacoma

Urban Grace became an ecumenical congregation, affiliated with the Presbyterian Church and the Evergreen Region of American Baptists. With the help of historic preservation grants, they retained their 1925 Gothic building that also functions as a community center. Located in an area of subsidized housing, they have two separate budgets — one for the church and one for the community center. Their website states: “In 2005, a group of faith leaders in Tacoma came together to ask what downtown Tacoma needed in a church. They came up with a church committed to the poor, engaged with the arts, ecumenical and interdenominational, and welcoming to all. They called it Urban Grace — The Downtown Church.

Trinity Episcopal Church

Trinity restored their historic building after it was damaged in the Nisqually quake. They plan to develop their property to the north and have engaged Meriwether to put out a new RFI. (An Australian developer they had previously engaged backed out during COVID). They already have designs and a Master Use Permit. (MUP) Their website reports:

Trinity engaged the Seattle-based Bassetti Architects to help plan the restoration and RAFN Company construction contractors to implement the design. Within four years the church was rebuilt, fully restored, and earthquake-retrofitted, at a total cost of \$7 million. The congregation celebrated its first service in the restored church on Christmas Eve, 2005, and the building was rededicated on February 11, 2006.

Plymouth Congregation Church

Plymouth has engaged Meriwether Associates to explore development opportunities for its half block downtown. They have recently put out a Request for Interest (RFI). A recent article in the Daily Journal of Commerce quotes Doug Barrett of Meriwether: Barrett told the DJC, “At this

point, the church is carefully exploring its options, and looks forward to creative and impactful ideas that will surface from the development community. They wish to proceed with a development only if it aligns with their vision, values and intentions, and they are deeply committed to remaining on its site, relevant and rooted in the downtown core of Seattle.”

University Gathering (formerly Univ. Temple UMC)

University Temple is redeveloping their site with two towers of student housing on 15th Ave. NE above a pedestal of three stories for the reimagined church, including a new sanctuary, and all-ages live performance venue, offices, library, chapel, service project area, and parish hall, as well as a cafe on the corner of 15th and 43rd. They demolished their old buildings and look forward to the day when the new building will go up, resurrected as a community hub with a new name. They engaged Meriwether/Weinstein for their RFI and went with ACC as developer. They are still affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

“The upgrade costs for our Sanctuary were very high and there was no realistic way to undertake them by placing a debt load on a dwindling congregation. Our mission and vision were steadfast in our desire to remain a viable, supportive congregation in the University District. The rezone provided a path forward to re-life our Church in the University District through a redevelopment process.

~ Larry Erickson, chair of the Building Committee

7400 Woodlawn (formerly Bethany Lutheran Church)

7400 Woodlawn is a center for community, arts and spirituality — a repurposed church at the corner of Woodlawn Avenue and Latona Avenue near Green Lake. It was founded with help from the ELCA when Bethany Lutheran closed in 2016. Rev. Harriet Platts is on their staff. Partnering with non-profits, community events include concerts, recitals, yoga classes, neighborhood potlucks, meditation groups and the building also houses a new worshipping community, Emmaus Table, which is inclusive, inter-generational, open and affirming while grounded in a Lutheran expression.