

Approval Process for Local Church Building Projects (¶2544) – Toolkit

1) When This Applies (Triggers)

- New construction, purchase of real property, or major remodel beyond ordinary repairs.
- Projects that require borrowing, a mortgage, or a capital campaign.
- Work that materially affects safety, access, use, or the value of >25% of the structure.

2) 10-Step Approval Path (start-to-finish)

1. Form a Study Committee and obtain pastor & DS written consent to study the project.
2. Complete the Study Report (mission need, options, size/scope, accessibility, cost range, funding approaches).
3. Seek DBCLB site/location review (for new construction or purchase) and obtain early site approval before any acquisition commitments.
4. Church/Charge Conference authorization to proceed to preliminary plans and financing exploration.
5. Create a Building Committee and coordinate with Trustees (title/insurance/risk) and Finance (affordability/controls).
6. Prepare the Preliminary Package: concept drawings, cost estimate, financing plan (loans/campaign/grants), and debt-service analysis.
7. DBCLB Preliminary Approval on plans, costs, and financing assumptions.
8. Church/Charge Conference Preliminary Approval of the same package.
9. Assemble the Detailed/Final Package: permitted drawings/specs, reliable bids, and written financing commitments (no contracts signed yet).
10. Secure Dual Final Approvals — DBCLB and Church/Charge Conference — then execute contracts and begin work.

3) Guardrails & “Do-Not-Proceed” Flags

- Do not sign construction/architect/loan/ground-lease contracts before dual final approvals and documented financing sufficiency.
- Include accessibility (ADA), life-safety and code compliance in all designs; maintain adequate insurance.
- Sale/mortgage proceeds are not for ordinary operating expenses.
- Instruments are executed by the proper corporate officers/trustees; keep originals of deeds, notes, and approvals in a central archive.
- Some approvals may expire after one year; renew if delayed.
- A DBCLB disapproval may be appealed per the Discipline/conference rules.
- Follow the principle of legality: processes in the Discipline govern everyone consistently.

4) Who Does What (at a glance)

- Pastor & DS – Initiate process; ensure Discipline compliance; call Church/Charge Conference.
- Trustees – Property stewardship, title/insurance, contracts/permits, risk management.
- Finance – Affordability, cash-flow, debt service, internal controls, fundraising oversight.

- Building Committee – Program requirements, interfacing with architect/GC, schedule/budget tracking.
- DBCLB – Location/building reviews; preliminary & final approvals.
- Church/Charge Conference – Congregational authorization at preliminary and final stages.
- Chancellor/Treasurer – Legal review of instruments; financial covenants and compliance.

5) Documents to Bring to Each Gate

Preliminary: Study Report; conceptual plans; cost estimate; financing plan & debt analysis; minutes showing authorization.

Final: Stamped plans/specs; competitive bids; financing commitments; risk/insurance review; final resolutions for DBCLB and Church/Charge Conference.

6) Ready-to-Use Motion Starters

- Preliminary Authorization: *“That the Church/Charge Conference authorizes the Building Committee to advance the [project/purchase] with conceptual plans and an estimated cost of \$___, and to seek DBCLB preliminary approval and develop a financing plan for later final action.”*
- Final Authorization: *“That the Church/Charge Conference approves the final plans and reliable cost of \$___, acknowledges sufficient financing, and authorizes the proper officers to execute all necessary contracts and instruments upon DBCLB final approval.”*

7) Quick Timeline (typical)

Study & concept 4–8 weeks → Preliminary approvals 4–6 weeks → Detailed design/bids/financing 8–12+ weeks → Final approvals 2–4 weeks → Construction

Tip: Keep a single digital folder for all approvals, minutes, drawings, bids, insurance certificates, and executed contracts.

Need help? Call your DS first; loop in the Chancellor for contracts/real estate instruments.