

Toolkit: Closing a Local Church under ¶2549 (*Book of Discipline 2020/2024*)

I. Theological & Legal Foundations

- Trust Clause (¶2501): All property is held *in trust for the mission of the whole Church*—a covenantal, not proprietary, relationship.
- Connectionalism (¶132): Closure occurs *within* the connection, never apart from it.
- Theological Aim: Closure redeems endings into new beginnings; it is *grace disciplined by law*.

II. Grounds for Closure (¶2549.1)

1. Missional Cessation: Church no longer serves its founding purpose (¶¶201–204).
2. Property Disuse: Property no longer used or maintained for United Methodist worship.
3. Balance: Closure unites *mission* (purpose) and *stewardship* (property).
4. Required Discernment: Conduct ¶213 congregational assessment before closure.

III. Required Preliminary Steps (¶2549.2(a))

1. ¶213 Assessment: Evaluate viability and potential for renewal.
 2. Legal Review: Examine deeds for reversionary clauses or restrictions.
 3. Consultation: Work with District Board of Church Location & Building (DBCLB).
 4. Membership Plan (¶229): Ensure pastoral transfer and care for all members.
- ➡ Compile all into a Closure Dossier for annual conference action.

IV. Two Authorized Pathways

Pathway	Initiator	Required Consents	Final Authority
DS Recommendation (¶2549.2b)	District Superintendent	Bishop + Majority of DSs + DBCLB	Annual Conference
Local Petition (¶2549.3)	Pastor, Council, Lay Member	Verified Documentation	Annual Conference

V. Ad-Interim & Exigent Actions (¶2549.4)

- Voluntary Transfer: Congregation may deed property to conference trustees between sessions.
- Exigent Circumstances: Bishop + Majority DSs + DBCLB may vest title temporarily for protection.
 - Must be reported and ratified by next Annual Conference (JCD 1490, 2023).
 - Purpose: *Preservation, not pre-emption*.

VI. Compliance & Best Practices

- ✓ Conduct ¶213 assessment.
- ✓ Keep closure distinct from disaffiliation.
- ✓ Follow proceeds rules (¶2549.8).
- ✓ Transfer all members under ¶229.
- ✓ Document everything; report exigent actions to next conference.

VII. The Heart of It

Closure is not failure—it is *faithfulness fulfilled*.

Through trust, stewardship, and grace, what ends in one place begins anew elsewhere.