

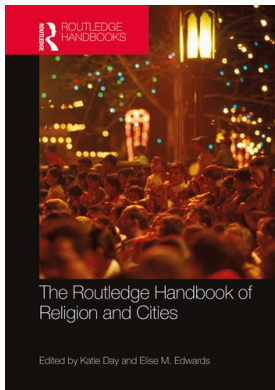
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 26 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Cities

Katie Day, Elise M. Edwards

Urban historic sacred places in transition

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429351181-22>

Rachel Hildebrandt, Chad Martin

Published online on: 31 Dec 2020

How to cite :- Rachel Hildebrandt, Chad Martin. 31 Dec 2020, *Urban historic sacred places in transition from:* The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Cities Routledge

Accessed on: 26 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429351181-22>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

19

URBAN HISTORIC SACRED
PLACES IN TRANSITION

Partners for sacred places

Rachel Hildebrandt and Chad Martin

One of the authors (Rachel Hildebrandt) and her co-researcher sat in folding chairs in a cozy but unkempt first floor meeting room as the long-time pastor of Church of the Crucifixion, a historic African American Episcopal Church, detailed the congregation's history. About an hour into the conversation, loud clanging and the sound of flowing water from an unknown internal source, filled the room—which served as both a worship space for the congregation of eight or so as well as a meeting space for the numerous support groups that met in the building. This church was on the verge of closing, and the building was in active, apparent decline.

Although it was one of the more disheartening interviews Kalen McNabb and Rachel conducted as part of a larger study, Church of the Crucifixion has proven to be emblematic of the challenges and opportunities facing our nation's historic religious properties. Many are in decline as the congregations that occupy them, especially Mainline Protestant congregations, decline in size and strength. However, they can be revived in creative ways that enrich community—if the denominational structures that inherit them are willing to 'remission' the best of them, and if the congregations that oversee their transition are willing to give strategic priority to preservation-sensitive buyers rather than speculative developers.

Church of the Crucifixion closed its doors just weeks after this interview; but, recognizing that the building embodies an important history and is in a strategic location, the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania has retained ownership of the building and is in the process of re-missioning it (or repurposing it with the denomination's core mission in mind). In fact, in 2019 its doors were again open as a group from nearby St. Mark's Episcopal Church inaugurated RISE, a Lilly Endowment-funded ministry that utilizes the craft of bread making to build community among neighbors aged 21 to 35, and to feed those contending with hunger or food insecurity.¹

Philadelphia, the location of Partners for Sacred Places' headquarters, serves as the organization's de facto laboratory for research and programmatic development. Over the past 30 years, Partners has spearheaded research that has helped governmental agencies and non-profit organizations to understand the value that faith communities generate for their communities as well as the challenges they face, including the recent report, *Philadelphia's Historic Sacred Places*.² Philadelphia is one of the only cities in America that maintains a comprehensive inventory of its older and historic religious buildings; and it is the only city in America where researchers have done such a deep dive into the trends facing these important structures.

Previous inquiries: 1998–2016

*Sacred places at risk*³

In 1998 Partners conducted the first scientific study in which the community-serving work of congregations housed in historic and older buildings was quantified. This study found that an average urban congregation creates over \$140,000 per year in value through the contribution of volunteer time; space at below-market rates; and cash and in-kind donations to community-serving programs (including those they operate and/or house). The study also found that four out of five individuals who visit a given sacred place are beneficiaries of this programming rather than members of the congregation. Though groundbreaking, *Sacred Places at Risk* and subsequent works did not attempt to quantify *all* of the ways that congregations impact their communities.⁴

Attrition survey of community-serving sacred places in North Philadelphia

In 2001, Partners hired a team of professionals led by the firm of Martin J. Rosenblum & Associates to assess the condition of ten historic, purpose-built religious properties in one of the most distressed communities in Philadelphia, North Philadelphia. North Philadelphia had seen decades of disinvestment, which left its people underserved and its prewar building stock blighted.⁵

Ultimately, the purpose of this survey was to document, through the collection of conditions data, the properties' repair needs and to project future decline of these buildings in the absence of major investment. Findings of this project include:

- Repair estimates ranged from \$700,000 to just over \$2,000,000, with an average of approximately \$1,500,000 million per building.
- Five properties exhibited structural problems.
- Five properties exhibited exterior and interior deficiencies that posed major life-safety problems.
- All ten properties exhibited code violations (for example, antiquated or substandard electrical wiring).
- All ten properties lacked, or had inadequate, fire detection systems.

Importantly, the majority of these conditions issues were the result of long-term deferred maintenance associated with the congregations' financial limitations, and most of the congregations lacked access to professional support for planning and implementing capital improvements due to the fact that most were independent congregations without a larger denominational organization. Congregations that belong to an organized denomination—Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Methodist, for example—typically pay an annual assessment to their denomination and, in return, receive services related to insurance, pensions, capital project planning, and fundraising assistance. Congregations that do not belong to an organized denomination must navigate these areas on their own, increasing their vulnerability in the face of long-term challenges.

These findings suggested that these congregations, all of which worshipped in their buildings and maintained community-serving programs, were on the brink of crisis and perhaps on a trajectory toward financial failure. In turn, if action was not taken, the community was at risk of losing significant architectural and cultural landmarks as well as the important programs they housed.

Now that nearly 20 years have passed since the conclusion of the *Attrition Survey*, it is possible to revisit the 10 congregations to determine how they fared. Currently two of the congregations

facing the costliest repair needs have closed their doors. The first building, Christ Temple Baptist Church, has since been demolished; and the second, St. Augustine's Church of the Covenant, has since been converted into residences. The eight others continue to house the congregations they did in 2002, and appear to have defied the seemingly inevitable. This is a testament to how resilient faith communities can be.

The demolition of Christ Temple Baptist Church, built as Green Hill Presbyterian Church in 1848, is unfortunate but not surprising. The building was of tremendous architectural significance as an early example of the Gothic Revival style pioneered by architect and builder John Notman (1810–1865). But given the fact that it had deteriorated to the point of requiring over \$2,000,000 in capital investment, its demise is unsurprising.

This building provides an early example of a phenomenon with broad-reaching implications that is better understood now. The building suffered decades of deferred maintenance under the congregation that first owned and occupied it. Upon dissolution of this congregation, it was sold in 1971 to a congregation of color with limited means but abundant faith. Undoubtedly, Christ Temple Baptist Church did the best that it could to sustain the property despite the uphill nature of this task.

In fact, eight of the ten churches that participated in the *Attrition Survey* were built by Mainline Protestant congregations and were transitioned to African American congregations—some growing and already well-established, but most young and fledgling—during the mid-twentieth century. Congregations that have taken on buildings erected by other congregations are called “hermit crabs.”⁶

The economic halo effect of sacred places

The two iterations of this study differed from *Sacred Places at Risk* in that they took into consideration a broader array of congregational activities and assumed the following:

- Spending on operations and building maintenance is funneled into the local economy.
- Providing preschool and K through 12 schooling saves school districts money and enables parents to work.
- Green space and recreation space improve our environment and lower energy costs.
- Hosting events and operating programs catalyzes visitor spending.
- Intervening in individuals' lives enables people to work and reduces government spending.
- Operating and hosting community-oriented programs supplements the activity of the local government and social service agencies, adding value to the community.

Based on an extensive review of available, academically vetted methodologies, researchers, including one of the authors here, identified nearly two-dozen quantifiable measures of economic impact relevant to congregations and assembled a singular methodology to pilot in Philadelphia.⁷

Partners built upon the pilot by undertaking a larger study, beginning in 2010 and concluding in 2016. This study differed from the first in that it included a greater number of congregations (90), and congregations were selected at random⁸ from 3 large cities (Chicago, Philadelphia, and Fort Worth).⁹

Most notably, we found:

- Urban congregations that own purpose-built religious buildings employ, on average, 5 full-time and 6 part-time staff.¹⁰

- Sacred places are magnets for visitors, attracting an average of 780 visits each week with only 11% of visits for worship and 89% of visits for other purposes.
- 87% of the beneficiaries of the community programs and events housed in sacred places are not members of the religious congregation.

Philadelphia's Historic Sacred Places: *Their past, present, and future*

This project produced an updated citywide inventory of older, purpose-built sacred places and an accompanying qualitative analysis that summarized key research findings on the factors that contribute to congregational vulnerability and resilience. The qualitative analysis was based on a series of 22 interviews with congregations representing the diversity that can be found in Philadelphia—in terms of geographic and real estate market context, denomination, predominant ethnicity/culture, congregational size and strength, congregational life cycle, and building condition.

This project afforded the opportunity to develop a comprehensive understanding of the religious landscape overall, as well as an understanding of the ways in which institutional health and dynamics impact our religious building stock.

Thus, the following reflects our most important learnings derived from this study, as well as our vast experience of working with congregations previously and since—from those that are thriving to those that have made the difficult decision to close, merge, or downsize (or those that have been closed or merged by action of their judicatory). Partners has continued to track citywide trends and to explore the range of options facing congregations in transition.

Philadelphia's Historic Sacred Places found that many of the city's congregations and historic houses of worship are characterized by both vulnerability and resilience. In the following section, we will outline in more detail what contributes to these characteristics. At its heart, the study provided comprehensive confirmation of what earlier studies had been indicating for years: Philadelphia's religious building stock is likely to become precariously vulnerable in the next 10–20 years, and buildings that have become neighborhood anchors—perceived by the public as likely to endure as such forever—are likely to face crises challenging even their existence.

Sacred places in transition: Learnings gleaned from *Philadelphia's Historic Sacred Places* and Partners' field experience

Philadelphia's religious building stock is in transition, due in large part to the declining memberships and resources of many congregations. Like many congregations across the country, this trend has left many Philadelphia congregations focused on what *was* rather than what *is*, recalling the days in which the pews were filled from end to end and children infused the church with life. The numbers, gleaned from a number of sources, confirm this. In Philadelphia, the following is true:

- There are 839 historic, purpose-built sacred places (defined as built for the explicit purpose of worship prior to 1965).
- 10% of historic, purpose-built sacred places have been adapted for nonreligious uses—mostly residential use.
- There have been 37 demolitions of historic sacred places since 2009.
- In 2018, there were only 3 examples of the original owner and occupant transitioning its building to a developer to be demolished, while there were 21 examples of “hermit crab”

congregations transitioning their buildings to developers to be demolished (of the 21 congregations, 15 are still in existence and occupy other historic, purpose-built sacred places).

- More than half of historic sacred places are owned by “hermit crab” congregations.
- Most urban congregations are “commuter congregations” with at least two thirds of the congregation traveling from other neighborhoods or even municipalities to worship.
- Few urban congregations utilize the entirety of their buildings.

Many, if not most, of the Mainline Protestant congregations that have not yet left the city’s less affluent neighborhoods and transitioned their buildings to congregations of other denominations, are likely to do so in the next five to ten years. There is great opportunity to initiate new congregations or new community-serving programs at these sites, but most denominational bodies lack the capacity to invest in creative, new alternatives.

Meanwhile, “hermit crab” congregations (typically Mainline Protestant or Roman Catholic, originally), are struggling to sufficiently care for their buildings—many of which suffered from deferred maintenance under their original owners. Instead of attempting to restore their buildings with scarce reserves, these congregations are deaccessioning them.

This trend is especially apparent for Roman Catholic-built complexes that were deaccessioned by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in the early 1990s. These large and prominently located complexes often encompass entire city blocks and include multiple buildings—typically a church, school, rectory, and convent. Patrick Hildebrandt, a local blogger about sacred places, uses tongue-in-cheek phrases such as “North Philadelphia Swath of Destruction” and “The Year of Hell” to describe the period in which Catholic churches in North Philadelphia and West Philadelphia were closed and subsequently sold to independent, mostly African American congregations or aspirational non-profit organizations.¹¹ Nearly three decades later, many of these buildings are coming onto the market for a second time if they are not demolished or abandoned.

Garden of Prayer Church of God in Christ, located at 28th and Diamond Streets in the Strawberry Mansion section of North Philadelphia, is in this very position. Founded by Elizabeth J. Dabney over 80 years ago, the African American Pentecostal congregation flourished under the prominent prophet and healer for decades, drawing visitors from the 4 corners of the United States. However, the church came to a crossroads in the early 1990s when it lost a prominent pastor (a successor of Dabney; Dabney herself died in 1967) and its building was destroyed by fire. This caused the church to splinter with one of the resulting congregations establishing Garden of Prayer World Prayer Center in a former movie theater and the other establishing Garden of Prayer Church of God in Christ in a former Roman Catholic complex, which includes a church and rectory.

Two decades later, the congregation worships in the rectory’s parlor while the sanctuary sits empty all year round. The congregation hopes to relocate in the near future. Partners’ staff interviewed Rev. Gregory Frison in 2017, who has served the church as pastor since 2001. Rev. Frison explained,

If I brought in 10 ministers right now, they would all tell you the same thing. That their vision is that their church will grow and become an organized body of believers that has a large impact on the city. A lot of the time, they’ll buy larger buildings because they’re acting on vision.

In the case of Garden of Prayer, desperation also played a role in motivating the congregation to purchase the former Most Blessed Sacrament, which had been on the market for years.

Your faith can be driven by your desperation. You see a building and you say this could work. I believe God is going to make it work. In hindsight, though, I walk into the building and say, ‘What possessed them to buy this?’ What possessed them to purchase a building that has so many problems? A money pit,” said Frison.¹²

The combination of the building demanding tens of thousands of dollars in maintenance annually and being ill-fitted for the congregation’s needs (the sanctuary is too large for the 60-person congregation and the rectory is far too small) has affected the congregation’s attitude toward it. Frison explained, “There is a percentage of people who were there before I got there who feel that it’s not their church. Their church burned down ... If they tore it down, it wouldn’t hurt.”¹³

Often, “hermit crab” congregations transition their properties to real estate developers who intend to demolish, clearing the path for new construction. We confirmed this in 2016, when we examined the 28 demolitions that took place between 2009 and 2016 for *Hidden City Philadelphia*.¹⁴ We found:

- Of the 28 demolitions, 22 (79%) were associated with development pressure (the pressure to sell to a secular, for-profit real estate developer in an area experiencing rising property values).
- Of the 22 demolitions associated with development pressure, 20 (91%) made way for new housing.
- There were no instances in which the congregation that originally erected the building (the first occupant) sold to a developer who planned to demolish.
- There were 15 instances in which a “hermit crab” congregation sold to a developer who planned to demolish.
- There were three instances in which a congregation resulting from a merger sold to a developer who planned to demolish.
- There were three instances in which the congregation’s denominational office—which acquired property upon the congregation’s disbandment—sold to a developer who planned to demolish.

This data suggests that the strength of a congregation’s attachment to its property matters. Attachment substantially affects the building’s outcome—meaning original owners are much less likely to sell to a developer who plans to demolish; they would rather see the building repurposed.

However, the mix of buildings affected by this demolition trend is diverse. Of the 37 demolitions that have taken place since 2009 (an additional 9 took place between 2016 and 2019), 7 were built by American Baptist congregations; 7 by Presbyterian congregations; 5 by Methodist congregations; 5 by Roman Catholic parishes; 4 by Episcopal parishes; 2 by African American Pentecostal congregations; and 1 each by Franciscan Catholic, Jewish, Mennonite, Reformed Episcopal, Unitarian Universalist, and United Church of Christ congregations.

But let us discuss the reasons *why* congregations—original occupants and “hermit crabs” alike—are transitioning their buildings, the rationale that informs their decision-making processes, and factors that can be monitored by stakeholders wanting to attend to vulnerable facilities.

Vulnerability and resilience

Vulnerability and resilience are at the heart of *Philadelphia’s Historic Sacred Places* as descriptors of the state of many of the city’s sacred places and indicators of their future well-being. Initially, we

had hoped to classify each of the 22 congregations interviewed via the study as either vulnerable or resilient. It was impossible to do this, however, because any given congregation exhibits signs of *both* vulnerability and resilience. Further, any given congregation's building may be separately vulnerable or resilient—depending on the congregational and geographic context.

A *congregation* is vulnerable when one or more circumstances open it up to possible closure or merger. Examples include:

- Poor leadership
- Inability to sustain a paid, full-time clergyperson
- Unstable or changing leadership—including the loss of a beloved, long-time pastor who may have defined the congregation and/or held most of the key relationships
- A constant, steady decline in membership and giving (in contrast, congregations that are small but stable can persist for many years)
- Persistent budgetary deficits driven by decreasing contributions and increasing maintenance costs
- Over-reliance on alternative sources of income, including endowments or rental proceeds
- Lack of vision or sense of purpose
- Resistance to change and/or inability to make decisions at key crossroads
- An antagonistic relationship with denominational leaders (if applicable; not all congregations are associated with a larger governing body)
- An inability to objectively assess congregational vitality (congregations sometimes opt to close because key leadership is overly pessimistic in regards to the possibility of congregational regeneration)
- Lack of control over the congregation's future, which is often the case among hierarchical denominations such as the Roman Catholic church (the Roman Catholic church is one of several denominations that can close or merge a church against the congregation's will)

A different but related set of circumstances, including both internal and external factors, can render the *building* vulnerable. A building becomes vulnerable when:

- The congregation is not the original owner/occupant, and therefore may have taken on a building with deferred maintenance, and/or may not feel attachment to it
- The building is mismatched to the size of the congregation—typically too large
- The congregation cannot afford the annual maintenance costs, often requiring tens of thousands of dollars for purpose-built religious structures
- The congregation is unable to respond to unexpected, non-routine capital expenses such as a leak in the roof or a broken boiler
- The congregation has never retained a qualified professional to assess the condition of the building, increasing the chances that costly, unanticipated repairs will arise
- The congregation has become disconnected from the community in which its building is situated, and/or the majority of congregants are commuters who live in other areas
- Parking has become a challenge for congregants due to the absence of a parking lot or lack of access to reliable street parking in the vicinity
- There is pressure to sell due to real estate conditions/market values in the community having reached new highs—often, in these communities, real estate developers target even congregations that have not expressed an interest in selling
- The congregation's attitude reflects a desire to preserve the institution at any cost to the building

- The property is not locally landmarked

Consequently, struggling congregations explore the following options: downsizing into smaller, more manageable properties; merging into other, typically stronger congregations; and closing their doors altogether. They explore these options in this order—hoping, first, to keep their faith community together in familiar surrounds, and hoping, second, to keep their faith community together elsewhere. This ability to respond to hardship and adapt to survive epitomizes resilience. But congregational resilience, and their determination to persevere as institutions, ironically can render the historic sacred places they own vulnerable. The case of St. Michael's Lutheran Church and Pilgrim United Church of Christ illustrates this.

When Partners first encountered St. Michael's Lutheran Church and Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ, both housed in historic but unprotected buildings in the Fishtown section of Philadelphia, the churches' pastors were married, coincidentally, and each of the congregations had found a defining niche. St. Michael's had evolved to become a *de facto* community center that shared space with numerous non-profit organizations, including a food co-op and a music-based afterschool program, while Pilgrim served as a safe haven for men in recovery. Although they were both thriving in terms of fulfilling their missions, they struggled to sustain themselves financially.

Infusions of cash from the sale of property or bequests—rather than member giving or rental income—has sustained St. Michael's since the early 2000s. In the early 2000s, the church sold its parsonage in order to extend the life of the church for 5 years; in 2005, an unexpected bequest of \$200,000 extended the life of the church for an additional 10 years; and, in 2014, facing closure for the third time in just 20 years, the married pastors merged Pilgrim into St. Michael's and sold the former in order to keep the latter alive. Pilgrim was sold to a developer who subsequently demolished the 163-year-old church to make way for the construction of 5 townhomes.

This clear pattern established by St. Michael's illustrates the tendency of faith-based institutions to prioritize preservation of the institution over preservation of the building—sometimes, even when it is apparent that the institution's days may be numbered—and highlights the fact that congregational resilience can render their buildings vulnerable.

More affluent and stable congregations transition their buildings as well. This is especially true of commuter congregations (congregations composed of congregants that do not live in the vicinity of their house of worship) in communities experiencing development pressure. In this context, congregations can achieve multiple goals by selling their buildings. They extract the value of the real estate to create a pool of reserve funds that can be used to sustain the congregation; and they create an opportunity to move to what is deemed a more desirable location for the future of their ministry (such as more parking for aging members, a more centralized location to accommodate commuters from larger geographic spreads, etc.).

A notable example of this occurred in 2015, when New Hope Temple Baptist Church sold its historic building—which was located in a historically African American neighborhood that was rapidly gentrifying—to a real estate developer who has since replaced it with luxury townhomes. The building, originally home to Union Baptist Church, was where renowned African American vocalist and activist Marian Anderson first performed and where her noted vocal talent was cultivated as a teenager. Even so, there was no formal historic designation protecting it from demolition.

Most of the congregations that do this (extract the value of their real estate) are “hermit crab” congregations that move on to other sites. In the case of New Hope Temple Baptist, the congregation moved on to a historic Episcopal church with parking in the leafy and relatively stable Germantown section of Philadelphia.

The loss of New Hope Temple Baptist was not due to the above-mentioned factors alone. This building was demolished without fanfare, despite its connection to Anderson, due to several additional factors. For one, the building was not on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. If it had been, the buyer would not have been permitted to demolish it or alter the exterior without express permission from the Philadelphia Historical Commission. Secondly, natural stakeholders such as the area civic organization and Marian Anderson Historical Society & Museum did not organize to oppose the demolition. In Philadelphia, only about 2% of the built environment is protected via landmark designation and, relatedly, threats to architecturally significant buildings tend to generate more public opposition than threats to visually modest buildings that may be significant for other reasons.

This trend has greatly affected the modest houses of worship erected by African American congregations during the Great Migration. During the Great Migration, which began in 1916 and ended in 1970, millions of African Americans departed the rural South for cities in the Northeast, Midwest, and West—including Philadelphia. This group established civic infrastructure, including churches, in the cities they adopted. In Philadelphia, these churches were concentrated in historically black neighborhoods adjacent to the urban core—the very areas that are experiencing or have already experienced gentrification. Because they tend to be smaller and feature less architectural ornamentation, the public perceives the loss of one of these buildings as preferable to the loss of an architecturally significant Roman Catholic-built churches or Protestant-built churches. Cumulatively, this has resulted in the demolition of several examples of an important building type and significant cultural moment.

Tindley Temple United Methodist Church offers a contrasting example of a commuter congregation contending with development pressure and demographic change. However, it differs from New Hope Temple Baptist in that it erected its building and owns a small parking lot. Situated in a gentrified neighborhood that saw profound demographic change between 2000 and 2010, the church's signature program (in place since the 1920s) has been its soup kitchen. Although of critical importance to those who utilize it on a daily basis, the soup kitchen is not as relevant to the neighborhood's new, mostly affluent residents. For this reason, Tindley Temple implemented several strategic changes. First, it upgraded its existing kitchen so that it could be rented to food entrepreneurs when the soup kitchen's volunteers weren't using it. Second, it reconfigured some of its administrative space to create office space for non-profit organizations that cannot afford to pay commercial rates. Although there is more work to do, Tindley Temple's approach effectively redefined its role in a changing community and city.

Lancaster, PA: A small city comparison

To deepen understanding of the dynamics at play with historic religious properties in Philadelphia, one can draw comparisons to the nearby and much smaller city of Lancaster, PA. Lancaster County may be familiar to readers for its iconic Amish farms and bucolic countryside, yet the city of Lancaster, with nearly 60,000 residents and as the county seat, sits as a dense urban hub at the center of this rural landscape. The density of Lancaster, combined with its proximity to several of the largest cities on the East Coast, gives it a distinctly urban and cosmopolitan character despite its modest population size.

Like many of America's cities, Lancaster has gone through noteworthy changes to its demographics and built environment in the last half century. Mid-century urban renewal projects leveled one city block of historic storefronts to attempt a modern downtown mall, as well as several blocks of supposedly substandard housing making way for high-rise apartment buildings. The city's population is about 30% Latino and 14% African American, a substantial shift from

its earlier history as a predominantly white city with a small African American community. Like many larger cities, and in striking contrast to neighboring small cities, Lancaster has experienced a lively resurgence of cultural life in recent decades, with rising housing costs, a thriving gallery district, and a critically acclaimed restaurant scene. Highlighting all of this activity, but to the eye-rolling dismay of local residents, one journalist recently dubbed Lancaster “the new Brooklyn.”¹⁵ At the same time, civic leaders struggle to address challenges reflected in a nearly 30% poverty rate—higher than both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and mostly concentrated in several densely packed Latino and African American neighborhoods.

Lancaster thus provides a useful comparison to Philadelphia. These two cities are dramatically different in scale, yet here too the dynamics of vulnerability and resilience are apparent with the many historic sacred places nestled in the city. Within its city limits, Lancaster has 69 purpose-built, historic sacred places. Both authors of this analysis are familiar with this landscape, and one (Martin) has lived in Lancaster for over a decade, regularly observing congregational life and building transitions, as well as interacting with local clergy. In addition, an invaluable resource has aided our research in Lancaster. In 1993 the Lancaster County Historical Society published a volume compiling extensive notes and historical data documenting every known house of worship in the county.¹⁶ This has provided a touchpoint to assess changes in the religious built landscape over an approximately 30-year period. During 2018 and 2019 the authors conducted an informal sidewalk survey, supplemented by anecdotal information, to document changes in congregations owning historic religious buildings, adapted uses, vacancies, and demolitions across this period.

Of the 69 purpose-built houses of worship in Lancaster, only 10 had changed ownership to a second congregation by 1985. Rineer carefully documented changes, including any demolitions or closed congregations up to that date. Since 1985, 24 buildings have changed ownership from one congregation to another. Of these, nearly half are now owned and occupied by Spanish-speaking or predominantly Latino congregations, and the overwhelming majority of these buildings are now owned by congregations of color. This trend parallels the pattern observed in Philadelphia. Yet here, about 35% of the buildings have changed hands at least once, compared to more than half in Philadelphia.

However, these transitions represent a significant change in the religious landscape of Lancaster in recent decades, and of course follow demographic changes in the city’s population. Whereas, prior to 1985, only one or two Spanish-speaking congregations existed, now over one third of congregations owning historic buildings are Spanish-speaking and/or predominantly Latino.

In sharp contrast to Philadelphia, no historic houses of worship have been demolished since 1985. Only one currently sits vacant, and only two have been adapted to other uses—both converted to housing. This translates to about 5% of all purpose-built historic houses of worship in Lancaster being vacated, torn down, or converted to other uses, versus over 15% in Philadelphia.

This could be seen as a strong showing of resilience of Lancaster’s sacred places. Indeed the religious building stock seems to be more stable and perhaps better cared for. Yet the increasing pace of changes in ownership suggests there is increasing vulnerability too. While the rate of building decay may be lagging behind that of Lancaster’s much larger neighbor, we know many of the factors outlined above contributing to congregational and building vulnerability are at play in Lancaster as well. Tracking congregations like Ebenezer Baptist Church will help show how congregational resilience withstands challenging factors. Ebenezer is one of the oldest African American congregations in Lancaster, having occupied a couple of modest buildings in its history prior to purchasing the much larger previous home of St. Andrew’s United Church of Christ in 2013.

While the former congregation had left the building in mostly good condition, Ebenezer has navigated a steep learning curve in managing the aging facility. So far the congregation has been able to balance each new expense and challenge—everything from larger snow- and trash-removal contracts to installing air conditioning in a sanctuary that had been underutilized for years—with energy and revenue from partners sharing the building. Reflecting on lessons learned, Ebenezer's senior pastor Roland Forbes says, "I wish they would have given us a better feel for the challenges ... Had they been able to do so, it would have been really helpful."¹⁷

Judging by the state of affairs in Philadelphia, the fate of Lancaster's religious architecture depends in large measure on how congregations like Ebenezer fare in the years to come. Many more transitions, and possibly vacancies and demolitions, could be on the way. Rineer's book, with its snapshot in time 30 years ago, and its detailed documentation of building changes up to that point, provides the opportunity to note which buildings have transitioned to new congregations or other ownership multiple times. Of the 24 buildings that have changed hands since 1985, 10 had already changed ownership at least once prior to 1985. Of those ten, seven had already changed hands multiple times by 1985. And in this subset, while a small sample size, one can see warning signs of what may be to come. From the authors' sidewalk survey, it seems that several of these buildings are now in substantially deteriorated physical condition and likely have years of deferred maintenance. And the two buildings that have been converted to residential housing units in recent years are from this pool of multiple previous owners.

Reflecting on building transitions, *Philadelphia's Historic Sacred Places: Their Past, Present, and Future* stated, "If an old building was becoming too expensive for a congregation to handle, the new occupants may soon come to the same conclusion."¹⁸ Or to put it more directly, often congregations—whether knowingly or unwittingly—pass along years of deferred maintenance when they sell a building to a new congregation. Regardless of the good intentions of new owners, such situations can lead to a snowballing of building issues as the building stands through increasing changes in ownership. Added to this the likelihood that more rapid changing of ownership may signal lessening commitment to the long-term building stewardship, and this subset of historic sacred places is quite vulnerable—at risk of becoming blighted, at risk of flipping from a space serving the common good to a private property, at risk of being lost to the built landscape of the city.

A broken legacy of building transitions revisited

In 2018, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church decided to address the broken legacy of building transitions it oversaw during decades of "white flight" in the middle of the twentieth century. During the 1970s, as city demographics changed in Philadelphia, a number of predominantly white congregations were looking to leave their historic facilities, so the Conference worked to transition them to growing African American congregations. Yet, whether intentionally or not, many of the buildings had mounting deferred maintenance needs that have snowballed in recent years as the facilities aged, and the congregations now occupying them were going through their own membership declines. As one reporter put it,

what started decades ago as a freebie has turned into a financial millstone. Many of the black churches found themselves saddled with deteriorating buildings that cost a fortune to maintain, forcing them into crippling debt to banks and the denomination itself.¹⁹

In this case, the conference took action by passing a resolution to provide debt forgiveness and apologize for past decisions tinged with racism regarding 30 African American congregations.²⁰ It was a momentous action, though largely symbolic. As the pastor of one of the congregations pointed out, few of these debts were likely to be paid given the financial troubles churches like his were facing. David Brown, pastor of Wharton Wesley United Methodist Church, says it was, “Symbolically wonderful. But if you peel back the accounting, [the Conference] was never going to get that money back anyway. But now what? We weren’t able to pay it back, but we still have to pay for the heat,” he says, referring to the ongoing challenge of maintaining their outsized facility.²¹

The case of Wharton Wesley provides a cautionary tale about how the unexpected crises that inevitably arise in a congregation’s life can derail stability when it is already facing the growing pains of taking on a larger facility. Brown recalls what happened when the church first had the opportunity to consider moving into its current facility from a much more modest building nearby. At the time, the congregation had

A charismatic pastor who said, ‘Yes, we can do that.’ But he literally died in the church, unexpectedly at a young age. Then the church had a series of pastors who were less visionary. And over time the congregation fell into more of a caretaker mode.²²

It turns out that the congregation had moved into the new facility at the peak of its membership size and financial capacity, and has been in decline and facing mounting challenges ever since.

Older religious buildings, with their ornate designs and monumental scale, present daunting challenges no matter the owners. But, as the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference learned over years of painful challenges for its member congregations, and as our research reflects, transitioning these challenges from one congregation to the next without thoughtful and transparent maintenance planning creates yet more challenges.

Envisioning alternative outcomes—What makes for healthy transitions?

The story of a major Mainline institution apologizing for its past strategies around transitioning buildings to new congregations begs the question—What makes for healthy building transitions with potential to continue a vision of community benefit?

Based on Partners’ recent research and work, we highlight several possible alternatives that hold promise for better outcomes. The first two rely on congregations with sufficient resiliency for continuing to steward their facilities well, including a critical mass of volunteer energy and financial viability. They need not be bursting with new members or economically affluent, but they must have some ability to muster people and money.

Training and capacity-building support

Building a congregation’s capacity for building maintenance, fundraising, creating strategic partnerships, and assessing its own viability can be a crucial step in strengthening its resilience. Organizations like Partners for Sacred Places and an increasing number of area judicatory bodies have been investing in such training with some success. For example, through a recent program called *Sacred Places / Civic Spaces*, Partners and Philadelphia’s Community Design Collaborative challenged the notion that demolition and residential conversion are the only options facing at-risk properties, and inspired Philadelphians to imagine an alternative future in which sacred places serve as inclusive community hubs.²³ This program assembled working teams, each com-

posed of a congregation, a community group, and a design firm. Through an iterative design process, each team envisioned solutions for each congregation's property, creating concepts for renovating, and/or adapting their facilities to better meet the needs of their community and partners.

Sacred Places / Civic Spaces aimed to demonstrate that underutilized space in historic sacred properties throughout Philadelphia can be activated in ways that expand the civic commons, serve a larger secular purpose, and strengthen communities while also sustaining congregations themselves. Further, they can develop innovative, replicable models in which older and historic religious buildings house a multitude of co-existing religious and secular uses, and promote understanding of the realities faced by faith communities stewarding these properties.

The three Philadelphia congregations selected are predominantly African American commuter congregations (composed of a membership that no longer lives within the vicinity of the building). Two of the three are "hermit crabs," which own properties that were constructed by previous religious institutions, thus representing the types of congregations at risk of the vulnerability factors listed above.

Upon completing the program in 2018, each congregation had deepened relationships with organizations that represented the interests of their immediate communities; raised the public profile of their building, congregation, and programming through substantial press coverage of the project; learned how to work with architects and other professionals while developing an understanding of the important role they play; and had tangible plans in hand for improving their facilities. All services were provided *pro bono* to the congregations.

While this program is too recent to indicate whether or not the buildings featured in *Sacred Places/Civic Spaces* will fare better than counterparts noted earlier in this chapter, we remain hopeful that such training and capacity-building programs, leveraged at the right time in the life of a congregation and building, can set a more sustainable and viable path.

Infusing capital funds

A second alternative is like the first, in that many congregations need infusions of capital funding beyond what their membership can muster on their own if they are to properly attend to years of deferred building maintenance. The apportionment forgiveness granted by the United Methodist Conference and noted above is an example of an important effort to provide the needed capital. This was the rationale behind Partners establishing a national grant-making program in support of congregations' building needs—the National Fund for Sacred Places.²⁴

For example, Nueva Vida Norristown New Life Mennonite Church, in the small industrial city of Norristown (PA), purchased a historic Methodist church building in the 1990. Nueva Vida was formed through a merger of three culturally distinct congregations that had been planted by Mennonite mission workers spanning most of the twentieth century. After more than two decades of ups and downs managing several adjoining properties (including coming fearfully close to being forced to sell the church building in the wake of the 2009 financial crisis), Nueva Vida was accepted into the National Fund program in 2018.

The congregation has developed a rare network of affluent financial supporters from nearby Mennonite congregations who have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in Nueva Vida's properties to stabilize and grow a wide array of community programs focused on youth development, conflict resolution, and small business incubation. This support, paired with the anticipation of a substantial capital grant from the National Fund and deeply committed church members, is positioning the congregation to tackle urgent repairs to the historic building, including substantial interior improvements, making it much more serviceable for ministry

in the twenty-first century. These repairs include adding air conditioning to the sanctuary to expand opportunities for use on the hottest summer days, and improving compliance with building standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act to make the facility more accessible.

Guiding transition

For congregations that have exhausted the potential of remaining in their property, transitioning ownership may be inevitable. And, unfortunately, when making decisions related to real estate, congregations and denominational leaders tend to lack the knowledge and resources necessary to:

- Consider and evaluate the full range of options available to them
- Pursue alternative options, such as partial reuse or “condo-ization”
- Generate significant, sustainable income
- Maintain the availability of affordable space for education, social services, and the arts
- Ultimately, ensure the preservation of their most important buildings

The body of work that is currently available to congregations approaching transition does not address the issue of the building. Rather, it focuses on spiritual discernment practices, organizational decision-making processes, and caring for a community of people mourning the impending loss of their building.²⁵ The building is given only very basic consideration—for example, hiring a realtor and setting a price may be covered—and is treated as a means to an economic end.

Likewise, the preservation and planning communities have focused only on traditional interventions designed to prevent demolition and promote restoration, such as historic designation, federal and state grant programs, easements, and heritage tourism.²⁶

For these reasons, Partners (at the time of this writing) is in the process of developing a guide for the responsible disposition and preservation-minded reuse of religious buildings that are on the cusp of transition.

We have seen congregations wait too long before coming to the correct and inevitable conclusion that it is no longer possible to remain in their building, inevitably leaving the congregation in a position of vulnerability and with few good options. And we have seen congregations incorrectly determine that they are no longer able to retain ownership of their buildings. Therefore, we encourage congregations to begin to prepare for transition sooner rather than later so that the maximum range of options are available to them.

There are many alternatives to selling to developers who are undertaking projects that lack public benefit, including alternatives that may further congregations’ missions and establish a legacy that members can be proud of. Case studies such as that of Church of the Crucifixion—the crumbling African American Episcopal Church turned center for testing new ideas for ministry—can inspire congregations to “think outside the box.” In fact, congregations have more options than ever before in discerning what to do with their building.

Across the country, we have seen congregations carefully transition their buildings to stronger congregations. For example, Grace Evangelical Congregational Church constructed its church building in Lancaster City in the 1890s and continued to own and occupy the building for over a century. After decades of changing demographics within and around the congregation, Grace opted to give its building to *In The Light Ministries* in 2005. This relatively new, vibrant, and intentionally multiracial congregation took over the facility, but continued to share the space with Grace for more than a decade. In Philadelphia, the historic congregation of First

Baptist Church sold its building to a five-year-old congregation that had been renting space in its Center City building. First Baptist, which utilized only a small portion of the building, reinvented itself over the course of the ten years prior to selling its building by transforming it into a de facto community center that housed two theater companies, several non-profit organizations, and a number of support groups. Ultimately, the congregation did not want to manage a building and decided to sell it to a congregation on a different trajectory.

We have also seen congregations partner with real estate developers to repurpose their properties on favorable terms. A fine example of this is a project to redevelop most of Mt. Airy Presbyterian Church's property into 20 housing units. In 2014, the congregation sold the property to a developer, while working out a lease agreement to continue using the sanctuary into the future. The sanctuary will be untouched by the project, while housing units will fill the ancillary spaces. The project is a win-win for all parties involved and is resulting in an example of environmentally sustainable, adaptive reuse of a historic building—a best-practices approach that has since inspired several projects of this type.²⁷ Further, it is adding attractive, affordable housing to the neighborhood.

The viability of these types of alternatives, of course, depends on the congregation's or the judicatory's willingness to take on such a project, its ability to work with real estate professionals, its willingness to earn a bit less from the sale of its building in service of mission (in some cases, but not always), the market conditions, and the physical limitations of the property itself—including condition, size, configuration/massing, and zoning classification. Yet we are convinced that many historic religious buildings can remain valuable community assets through such creative solutions, even as religious practices change dramatically.

Notes

- 1 Grace Maiorano, "Historic Bella Vista church hosts baking bread sessions to spur social change," at *South Philly Review* (October 14, 2019). Available online at: <https://southphillyreview.com/2019/10/14/historic-bella-vista-church-hosts-baking-bread-sessions-to-spur-social-change/>. Accessed October 30, 2019.
- 2 This report was commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts' Philadelphia Research Initiative, and the study was conducted by PennPraxis at the University of Pennsylvania, with Partners for Sacred Places, including Rachel Hildebrandt, assisting with research. See: www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2017/10/philadelphias-historic-sacred-places.
- 3 Diane Cohen and Robert Jaeger, *Sacred Places at Risk: New Evidence on How Endangered Older Churches And Synagogues Serve Communities* (Partners for Sacred Places, 1998). Available online at: <https://sacredplaces.org/uploads/files/395429189155295863-spar.pdf>. Accessed August 23, 2019.
- 4 *Sacred Places at Risk* established a new methodology for documenting the public value of congregations and led to a new course of study inaugurated by Ram A. Cnaan's book, *The Newer Deal: Social Work and Religion in Partnership*, with Robert J. Wineburg and Stephanie C. Boddie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). See also Ram A. Cnaan, *The Invisible Caring Hand: American Congregations and the Provision of Welfare*, with Stephanie C. Boddie, Femida handy, Gaynor Yancey, and Richard Schneider (New York: New York University Press, 2002); and Ram A. Cnaan, *The Other Philadelphia Story: How Local Congregations Support Quality of Life in Urban America*, with Stephanie C. Boddie, Charlene C. McGrew, and Jennifer J. Kang (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).
- 5 Martin J. Rosenblum, *Attrition Survey of Community-Serving Sacred Places in North Philadelphia*, unpublished report (2002).
- 6 Katie Day coined this vivid term in her book, *Faith on the Avenue: Religion on a City Street* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2014). See p. 41: "Just as hermit crabs that have outgrown their shells scavenge the beach for larger shells to move into, so do newer, growing congregations move into the shells no longer needed by other religious groups."
- 7 Ram A. Cnaan, Tuomi Forrest, Joseph Carlsmith, and Kelsey Karsh, "If you do not count it, it does not count: a pilot study of valuing urban congregations," in the *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* (2013).

- 8 The methodology is detailed in: “If you do not count it, it does not count: a pilot study of valuing urban congregations” by Ram A. Cnaan, Tuomi Forrest, Joseph Carlsmith, and Kelsey Karsh in the *Journal of Management, Spirituality, and Religion*. 2013.
- 9 *The Economic Halo Effect of Historic Sacred Places* (Partners for Sacred Places, 2016). Available online at: <http://sacredplaces.org/uploads/files/16879092466251061-economic-halo-effect-of-historic-sacred-places.pdf>. Accessed August 23, 2019.
- 10 Partners’ data differ from national data due to the organization’s focus on older and historic, purpose-built buildings (the study did not include congregations in other types of spaces). According to the FACT study in 2015, only 62% of all congregations had one or more full-time clergy on staff, down from 71% in 2010. Accessed 17 November 2020. Available online at: <https://faithcommunitiestoday.org>.
- 11 “Church Project Theorem: The North Philadelphia Swath of Destruction,” at *Philadelphia Church Project*. Online at: www.phillychurchproject.com/north-philadelphia-swath-of-de/.

This theorem refers to the obliteration of nearly every Roman Catholic parish in North Philadelphia. The wave of decline and decay that turned the Northern portion of the city into a black hole also did a number on its churches. When the surrounding communities were cut down, their parishes didn’t stand a chance. They all fell one-by-one as said wave cut a massive swath of destruction across the North Philly landscape.

- 12 Interview with Rachel Hildebrandt and John Henry Scott. March 2, 2017.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Rachel Hildebrandt, “Church demolition by the numbers: more questions than answers,” on *Hidden City Philadelphia* (December 9, 2016). Available online at: <https://hiddencityphila.org/2016/12/church-demolition-by-the-numbers-more-questions-than-answers/>. Accessed August 23, 2019.
- 15 Raquel Laneri, “This small town in Amish country is the new Brooklyn,” in the *New York Post* (September 20, 2016). Available online at: <https://nypost.com/2016/09/20/the-new-brooklyn-boo-gie-on-down-to-buggy-town/>. Accessed July 11, 2019.
- 16 A. Hunter Rineer, *Churches and Cemeteries of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania: A Complete Guide* (Lancaster, PA: Lancaster County Historical Society, 1993). Research concluded in 1985 at the time of the author’s death.
- 17 Interview with Chad Martin, August 21, 2019.
- 18 *Philadelphia’s Historic Sacred Places* (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2017), p. 16.
- 19 Kristin E. Holmes, “United Methodist Church forgives black churches’ debts, and apologizes,” in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (July 19, 2018). Available online at: www.inquirer.com/philly/news/united-meth-odist-church-forgives-debt-apology-20180719.html. Accessed August 21, 2019.
- 20 See “Resolution 2018–25: Resolution Relating to an Act of Justice Cancelling all Allowable Apportionments 4 and Other Billings,” p. 37 of unpublished document available online at: www.epaumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018-Resolutions-4.25-Final-Draft.pdf. Accessed August 21, 2019.
- 21 Interview with Chad Martin. August 2, 2019.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 See: www.sacredplacescivicspaces.com/. Accessed October 30, 2019. See also: Caroline Cunningham, “Redesigning sacred spaces to serve their communities—and save their congregations,” at *Religion News Service* (January 2, 2019). Available online at: <https://religionnews.com/2019/01/02/redesigning-sacred-spaces-to-serve-their-communities-and-save-their-congregations/>. Accessed October 30, 2019.
- 24 The National Fund for Sacred Places is a program of Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation with major funding by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Available online at: <https://fundforsacredplaces.org/>. Accessed October 30, 2019.
- 25 See Alice Mann, *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (Alban Institute, 1999); and Keith Spencer, “Assessing Congregational Viability,” in *Ending With Hope: A Resource for Closing Congregations*, ed., Beth Ann Gaede (Alban Institute/Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, MD, 2002), pp. 16–29.
- 26 In recent years there have been a steady stream of news articles highlighting creative adaptive reuse projects in historic religious buildings. But less common is thoughtful news coverage articulating the challenges and opportunities congregations face when making decisions about building transitions. For example, see: C.J. Hughes, “For churches, a Temptation to Sell,” in the *New York Times* (October 4, 2019). Available online at: www.nytimes.com/2019/10/04/realestate/for-churches-a-temptation-to-sell.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&fbclid=IwAR3i3GwGAK53uipDTjNNUDeLIoZtC4jpswzN_

JCxkjOSEjn6Ztoit10pv0k0. Accessed October 30, 2019. See also: Sam Dunklau, “What’s Happening To Illinois’ Sacred Buildings In An Age of Decline?” on *NPR Illinois* (October 2, 2019). Available online at: www.nprillinois.org/post/what-s-happening-illinois-sacred-buildings-age-decline?fbclid=IwAR1ijfmAPyxiHkcgatKV2YgMjb3zv7QmXGryewtQOO3TksZN3fhWKAwwBTE#stream/0. Accessed October 30, 2019.

- 27 Arlene Edmonds, “No displacement for Mount Airy Presbyterian Church,” in *The Philadelphia Tribune* (December 4, 2014). Available online at: www.phillytrib.com/religion/no-displacement-for-mount-airy-presbyterian-church/article_0f6a1780-5dfd-580f-b563-9858b35b557c.html. Accessed October 30, 2019. Also, Virginia Lindak, “Bancroft Green Gives An Old Church New Purpose In Mt. Airy,” on *Hidden City Philadelphia* (March 22, 2019). Available online at: <https://hiddencityphila.org/2019/03/bancroft-green-gives-an-old-church-new-purpose-in-mt-airy/>. Accessed October 30, 2019. Kristin Holmes, “Congregations sell their deeds in order to survive,” in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 28, 2018). Available online at: www.inquirer.com/philly/news/church-sell-property-survive-met-phila-delphia-tenant-developer-20180928.html.

Bibliography

- Brown, Rev. David. *Interview with Chad Martin*. August 2, 2019.
- Cnaan, Ram A., Tuomi Forrest, Joseph Carlsmith, and Kelsey Karsh. “If You Do Not Count It, It Does Not Count: A Pilot Study of Valuing Urban Congregations.” *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* Vol. 10; Issue 1. pp. 3–36 (2013).
- Cohen, Diane and Robert Jaeger. *Sacred Places at Risk: New Evidence on How Endangered Older Churches and Synagogues Serve Communities* (Philadelphia, PA: Partners for Sacred Places, 1998).
- Cunningham, Caroline. “Redesigning Sacred Spaces to Serve Their Communities—And Save Their Congregations.” *Religion News Service*. Accessed January 2, 2019. <https://religionnews.com/2019/01/02/redesigning-sacred-spaces-to-serve-their-communities-and-save-their-congregations/>.
- Day, Katie. *Faith on the Avenue: Religion on a City Street* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- Dunklau, Sam. “What’s Happening to Illinois’ Sacred Buildings in an Age of Decline?” *NPR Illinois*. Accessed October 2, 2019. www.nprillinois.org/post/what-s-happening-illinois-sacred-buildings-age-decline?fbclid=IwAR1ijfmAPyxiHkcgatKV2YgMjb3zv7QmXGryewtQOO3TksZN3fhWKAwwBTE#stream/0.
- Edmonds, Arlene. “No Displacement for Mount Airy Presbyterian Church.” *Philadelphia Tribune*. Accessed December 4, 2014. www.phillytrib.com/religion/no-displacement-for-mount-airy-presbyterian-church/article_0f6a1780-5dfd-580f-b563-9858b35b557c.html.
- Forbes, Rev. Roland. *Interview with Chad Martin*. August 21, 2019.
- Frison, Rev. Gregory. *Interview with Rachel Hildebrandt and John Henry Scott*. March 2, 2017.
- Hildebrandt, Patrick. “Church Project Theorem: The North Philadelphia Swath of Destruction.” *Philadelphia Church Project*. www.phillychurchproject.com/north-philadelphia-swath-of-de/.
- Hildebrandt, Rachel. “Church Demolition by the Numbers: More Questions than Answers.” *Hidden City Philadelphia*. Accessed December 9, 2016. <https://hiddencityphila.org/2016/12/church-demolition-by-the-numbers-more-questions-than-answers/>.
- Holmes, Kristen. “Congregations Sell Their Deeds in Order to Survive.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Accessed September 28, 2018. www.inquirer.com/philly/news/church-sell-property-survive-met-phila-delphia-tenant-developer-20180928.html.
- Holmes, Kristin E. “United Methodist Church Forgives Black Churches’ Debts, and Apologizes.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Accessed July 19, 2018. www.inquirer.com/philly/news/united-methodist-church-forgives-debt-apology-20180719.html.
- Hughes, C.J. “For Churches, a Temptation to Sell.” *New York Times*. Accessed October 4, 2019. www.nytimes.com/2019/10/04/realestate/for-churches-a-temptation-to-sell.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&fbclid=IwAR3i3GwGAK53uipDTjNUDeLloZtC4jpwszN_JCxkjOSEjn6Ztoit10pv0k0.
- Laneri, Raquel. “This Small Town in Amish Country is the New Brooklyn.” *New York Post*. Accessed September 20, 2016. <https://nypost.com/2016/09/20/the-new-brooklyn-boogie-on-down-to-buggy-town/>.
- Lindak, Virginia. “Bancroft Green Gives an Old Church New Purpose in Mt. Airy.” *Hidden City Philadelphia*. Accessed March 22, 2019. <https://hiddencityphila.org/2019/03/bancroft-green-gives-an-old-church-new-purpose-in-mt-airy/>.

- Maiorano, Grace. "Historic Bella Vista Church Hosts Baking Bread Sessions to Spur Social Change." *South Philly Review*. Accessed October 14, 2019. <https://southphillyreview.com/2019/10/14/historic-bella-vista-church-hosts-baking-bread-sessions-to-spur-social-change/>.
- Mann, Alice. *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (Alban Institute, 1999).
- Philadelphia's Historic Sacred Places* (Philadelphia, PA: Pew Charitable Trusts, 2017).
- "Resolution 2018–25: Resolution Relating to an Act of Justice Cancelling all Allowable Apportionments 4 and Other Billings." www.epaumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018-Resolutions-4.25-Final-Draft.pdf.
- Rineer, A. Hunter. *Churches and Cemeteries of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania: A Complete Guide* (Lancaster, PA: Lancaster County Historical Society, 1993).
- Rosenblum, Martin J. *Attrition Survey of Community-Serving Sacred Places in North Philadelphia*. Unpublished Report, 2002.
- Spencer, Keith. "Assessing Congregational Viability." In *Ending with Hope: A Resource for Closing Congregations*, ed., Beth Ann Gaede (Lanham, MD: Alban Institute/Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), pp. 16–29.
- The Economic Halo Effect of Historic Sacred Places* (Philadelphia, PA: Partners for Sacred Places, 2016).