



MEMBERSHIP MEETING

05.10.23

3:00pm - 5:00pm

<https://www.bricksandmortals.org/membership-area> (password protected: 8872)

1. Welcome by Jason Labate (10 mins - 3:05pm-3:15pm)

- Welcome - please put introductions in the chat!
- Annual Meeting on June 1st!
- Annual Membership Contributions due
 - Fiscal year ends 6/30, new membership contributions due starting 7/1
 - Online: <https://givebutter.com/annualmembership>
 - By check: Bricks and Mortals, 101 West 23rd Street, #129, NY, NY 10011
- Approve February meeting minutes
- Member announcements
 - Victoria Barreca (Enterprise) sent an event in the chat on 5/24.
 - Monica Dean (LISC) shared a statewide faith-based organization convening in September.

2. B&M updates (Kate Toth and Jason Labate - 10 mins - 3:15pm-3:20pm)

- [Venuely.org](https://venuely.org): Join us!, and Venuely events for your judicatory
 - Invitation to join Venuely, a space-sharing website for houses of faith.
 - There has already been a successful event with the Episcopal Diocese of New York and Episcopal Diocese of Long Island
 - Spread the word about Venuely in your community.
- Update on the Mayor's Working Group on Faith-Based Affordable Housing and

Community Development

- This time last year, the Mayor's office convened a summit of faith leaders on opportunities to address homelessness and housing and to discuss generally how the city and the faith community could work collaboratively. It was convened by Pastor Gil Monroe on behalf of the Mayor.
- The task force created recommendations for the Mayor's office but received no response from the Mayor's office as of yet.
- Trying to coordinate with the HPD as the lead agency to facilitate conversation.
- The chairs of the task force will meet initially to figure out what that process is going to look like.

3. Case Study: The Community Church of New York (CCNY), Geoffrey Newman, Executive Managing Director, Savills (40 mins - 3:20pm-4:00pm)

- These transactions are a long-term process. They are complex and require consensus building.
- He terms the process "concept to keys" - they stay with the organization through the concept stage until they get the keys to their new property.
- CCNY owned a sanctuary and four brownstones; a member attended a discussion of Geoffrey's on air rights and asked him to come speak to the congregation about their options.
- Process begins with, is there an opportunity here? This is a zoning analysis (and reading the zoning code). This helps determine if a project can be done here. The end goal of the transaction is money to help you last and a new space.
- Then there is a pitch involved, Savills would pitch as well (usually against other vendors).
- Timing needs to be right, with partners within the congregation; this might change over time. Often projects such as this need a driver within the institution. Pastor at CCNY organized internal campaign and whipped votes for this effort as part of the consensus building process.
- Part of the consensus building process is understanding what it would take to bring your current assets up to necessary standards. This is part of your due diligence.
- Whoever you work with should have experience with the type, size and scale of projects like this, and why their experience is relevant to this particular project.
- Present timeline. Shortest timeline is 4 years, more common is up to 7.

- This process brings up so many feelings, which you need to navigate as part of this process. Geoffrey manages this by providing an overwhelming amount of details.
- There will always be some people who will not be on board for these projects.
- “Real estate should be working for the institution not against the institution.”
- Presenting the rendering / preliminary architectural work helps sell the vision to the congregation.
- The end of the beginning: rent regulated tenants, finding relocation alternatives, etc.
- This process they go through is a speciality, and not typical for real estate brokers.
- When the sales process starts, finding a partner not a buyer per se - a series of interviews.
- Determine what highest and best use is for property.
- Went to Douglas Elliman and Corcoran and to see what development at this site could get - they both came back with a similar number. That’s where we start with the analysis. Then work from there to get a land value that takes into consideration returns, debt, etc. This results in a valuation. You need this to be able to negotiate with a developer (they will have this info).
- Craft an offering memorandum. Define the building that is going to be built. This is how you find your partner. Institutional requirements.
- After this whole process, you submit to the AG office; this takes 5-12 months. Those who object within the congregation can object to the AG.
- Q+A
 - What are the expectations from FBOs in engaging or providing you with exclusivity and at what point? Is there anything that needs to be provided by the church, either in terms of compensation or agreements and when does that come in?
 - Each case is individual. There is a fair amount of free work that goes into the beginning of one of these projects. That’s accounted for in the fee.
 - Typically charge between 3 and 4% of the sales price for these transactions. That typically gets paid at the point where the transaction closes or if it’s a leaseback they require the developer to put up money upfront. The second half of the

fee will be paid at closing.

4. Resource: The Pandemic's Real Impact on Clergy and Congregations, Dr. Scott Thumma is Professor of Sociology of Religion and director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research at Hartford International University (40 mins - 4:00pm-4:40pm)

- Dr. Scott Thumma presents on the pandemics impact on clergy and congregations.
<https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/>
 - Research efforts:
 - 15,000 congregations surveyed pre-pandemic
 - Four surveys from June 2021-June 2023
 - 250 churches followed over the span of 5 years
 - Pre-pandemic:
 - Attendance is declining in most congregations. 70% of congregations in the United States have less than 100 people.
 - Attendees are getting older and older. There are not many congregations where the age profile matches the country.
 - After COVID-19
 - 30% of churches had 1 or more members die of the virus
 - 52% of churches had a mild level of conflict over mask-wearing, vaccines, or closures
 - Demand for services from congregations increased and 55% of congregations surveyed added new ministries or increased existing ones.
 - Dramatic decline in volunteers - nearly 45% of attendees volunteer pre-pandemic and in 2022 that number dropped to 20%.
 - Many congregations who were impacted by the pandemic also don't have the capital or the facilities or the resources to adequately address it.
 - The congregations that were doing well financially during the pandemic (about 30%) also scored high on the optimistic outlook scale:
 - Our congregation is willing to change to meet new challenges.
 - This church will emerge from the pandemic stronger than before.

- We are thinking in new ways about our future mission and direction
- Congregations that has this more optimistic outlook also had:
 - More likely to be at or above their pre-pandemic attendance
 - Donations are more likely to have increased
 - Less likely to have their existence threatened
 - More likely to do online giving and live streaming
- Likely challenges faced by congregations:
 - Attendance, volunteering and giving
 - Virtual participation will not go away
 - Inadequate and alternative uses of space
 - Hybridity
 - Continued need for change and adaptation - leadership exhaustion
 - Closures and evolving demographic changes
- Positive opportunities and silver linings
 - Time to reinvent while everything is unsettled
 - Embrace a new vision and clientele
 - Incorporate new models and technology
 - Innovate rather than replicate old patterns
 - Collaborate with other churches, social services, etc
 - Be hopeful and optimistic
- Q+A
 - In the optimism scale, is there a causal relationship in which direction it is? Are they optimistic because they're doing well or are they doing well because they're optimistic?
 - We don't know.
 - We also asked about the pastors physical and mental health and those clergy look great. There is a correlation whichever way the direction goes.
 - Did geography make a difference?
 - There wasn't much of a difference between the four regional areas. The northeast was hit harder during the pandemic and their congregations less well off to begin with.
 - Did suburban vs urban vs rural make a difference?
 - Not much significance in the difference. As of March of

2022 it was similar.

- Urban congregations got hit the hardest in the beginning. Rural areas were able to come back in-person sooner.
- The character of individuals and the way they relate to each other (human behavior) has changed across the board.
- Is there more of a story with the correlation between going hybrid and recommending vaccinations to optimism?
 - Mainline congregations stayed virtual longer, and suffered more. Catholic and Orthodox congregations went back in-person much faster and appeared to have suffered less. Evangelical congregations were mixed but many are larger and may have already been doing online worship and are generally more optimistic.
- Where are the people leaving congregations going?
 - In some cases people are going to congregations that suit them more. Many went to Orthodox churches since they opened first and just never left.
 - People got used to worshiping online or not at all and creating alternative places for meaning.
 - Many have moved to be non-affiliated.
 - Many elderly members left due to concern for their health and when they returned they found others took their roles.
 - In some cases, people found the need for religious worship and have been returning to larger congregations.

5. Closing (Jason Labate)