



## **Church Land Theology: Discussion Guide for Congregations**

### **SESSION I for churches that own land**

If your church *does not* own a property, see the discussion guide on land in your neighborhood.

#### **1. Draw maps:**

Provide colored pencils, markers, paper and invite everyone to draw a map of your church property. The purpose is not to create a geometrically accurate map of your land, but rather, to show what parts of the property are important to your church community. For example, a “map” drawn by a 8-year-old might focus mostly on a church playground; for a person who tends the landscaping, the flower beds might be exaggerated.

#### **2. Discuss your maps together. Focus on how the land currently functions.**

- How do your church grounds encourage people to connect with God?
- How do your church grounds help build community within the congregation?
- How do your church grounds provide hospitality to people inside or out of the church? Welcome outsiders?
- How do your church grounds support a healthy planet? Provide hospitality to plants and animals?
- How do your church grounds meet your congregation’s needs for safety, energy, shelter, mission—or even food?

#### **3. Take a walk around your church property together.** The leader should scout beforehand to find several spots where the group might stand. Choose areas that provide fresh views of the property. For example, if most people park behind the church

and enter through a parking lot door, how does the church look from the street? If weather is a problem, discuss the questions you can, indoors.

- What do you notice about the property that you haven't seen before? What looks different to you after seeing other people's maps?
- Working as a group, make a list of all the other-than-human species that you have seen on your property.
- How might your church land be a part of your ministry in ways it is currently not? How might you strengthen the good things it is already doing?

*Prepared by Andrew Hudson and Jennifer Schrock*