

Process Guide on

Starting New Churches

New England Conference
of the United Methodist Church
2004-2008

Office of Congregational Development

New England Conference of the United Methodist Church

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Why start new churches?

In the history of Christianity, no method for reaching new believers and making new disciples of Jesus Christ has even been as effective or as efficient as starting new churches. This shouldn't surprise us, because we almost instinctively know that new people are more likely to be involved in new things. Most mainline churches, including our own United Methodist Church, went through an intensive period of starting new churches, but then as our churches grew more stable we changed our focus. Today, if we expect New England Methodism to prevail into a new generation, we must regain that focus on starting new churches that reach new people in new ways.

Who's involved in starting new churches?

In our United Methodist system, District Superintendents are charged with the task of initiating and supervising new churches. Although the District Superintendents, Cabinet and Bishop retain final oversight, in our New England Conference functional responsibility for new churches is shared with other groups:

- *District Congregational Development Committee*
This team works within their District to start new churches, revitalize existing churches, and transition churches out of crisis. They are to identify necessary spiritual, leadership and financial resources for this work, and make appropriate congregational development tools available to pastors and congregations.
- *District Committee on Church Location and Building*
The Committee oversees the connectional responsibility for church property within its district. Starting new churches often involves conversations about property and location of existing churches, so this committee is often involved. This Committee also has responsibility for shepherding the property of closed or discontinued churches, which can be a major source of funding for new churches.
- *Conference New Church Starts Committee*
This is a Conference-wide committee focused on developing tools for District teams, organizing regional training events, managing Conference funding sources, connecting and support new church leaders, and advocating for new churches throughout the United Methodist system. They are transitioning out of direct supervision and initiation of new churches as more District Congregational Development teams come online.
- *Conference Director of Congregational Development*
This staff person runs (is) the Office of Congregational Development which provides resources to all of our District and Conference work related to starting new churches, revitalizing existing churches, and transitioning churches out of crisis. This office is often a clearing-house for resources and advocacy on all of these activities, as well as great first contact with questions.

Where should we be starting new churches?

Often this is our first question about new churches, and it is very tempting to pull out a map, some demographic overlays, and just start dreaming. However, before we begin, it's essential to think through some priorities for using our church starting resources. Our Director of Congregational Development uses three evaluative criteria and three priorities to help focus conversations and decisions about where to begin new churches:

Three Evaluative Criteria for Where to Start a New Church:

1. Where is God leading us to start a new congregation?
2. Where are passionate leaders willing to give their lives into a new congregation?
3. Where are their resources to start a new congregation (people, facilities, finances, demographics, partners)?

Three Priorities for Starting a New Church:

1. Does the new church reach an underserved population (geographically, culturally, economically, ethnically, generationally)?
2. Does the new church have partnering organizations or congregations willing to provide financial, spiritual or leadership support?
3. Does the new church have a reasonable chance of being self-supporting at the conclusion of the start-up period?

Although geography is important for a new church start, it turns out not to be predictive of the success of that new church. More important, by far, is the spiritual vision of the new church, the number of supporting partners, and the quality of the church planting leaders. The three criteria and priorities are in order of importance, and no new church start should be started that does not begin with a unanimous affirmation of God's calling to this endeavor by everyone involved.

How are new churches started?

In our not so distant past new churches were started whenever two or three Methodist lay-folks found themselves in a new territory that needed a new proclamation of the Gospel. Today, we have too often relegated the task of starting new churches to denominational agencies and officers, but historically this task was the work of every Methodist throughout the world. Our future relies on us reclaiming this fundamental freedom and responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and form communities of disciples to which we were all ordained by God's grace in our baptisms.

Preaching aside, our denominational system generally begins new churches in a handful of different ways. The best way to begin to describe this process is to look at the place from which the impetus for the new church arises:

- *Churches Starting New Churches*
This is the most successful and powerful method of starting new churches, and every healthy church of every size should be regularly challenged to prayerful discern whether God is calling them to begin a new church. This is most often done either by beginning a new congregation serving a new target group that is unlike the existing congregation or by seeding a new congregation in a nearby community.
- *District Teams Starting New Churches*
Through discussion and discernment, District committees may determine that they want to take initiative to begin a new church. They often begin by reviewing the existing ministries in their areas and developing strategies to better meet the needs of underserved populations. From this may come a list of hopes and dreams that, through prayer, they refine into priorities and calling. When appropriate resources are identified or marshaled, then the District start process begins.
- *Conference Starting New Churches*
In places where the District teams may be unable to focus their attention, or in a region that doesn't have many available partners for a new or unique ethnic group, the Conference New Church Start Committee or Office of Congregational Development may partner with a District in starting a new church. This is the least successful and riskiest model for a church plant, and our reliance on this model for the past generation somewhat explains our recent failure to start new churches.
- *Individuals Starting New Churches*
Many of our existing churches were started by entrepreneurial Christians who were following God's call to do a new thing in the name of Christ. Pastors and laypeople who are willing to step out without promise of compensation are still needed in starting new churches today. Although the individual assumes much of risk in this model, the denomination should do everything it can to resource and support those people God is calling in this way.

From these varied beginnings each new church will need to develop a proposal. The details of this proposal can be found in *The Church Planter's Toolkit* (Logan & Ogne, 1991), and are reprinted in this booklet on pages 7 & 8. This proposal is then presented to the District Superintendent, District Committee on Congregational Development, Conference New Church Start Committee, and Director of Congregational Development for review and approval. All of these folks approach this work with the desire to refine and improve the proposal.

Because the context and giftedness of each new church plant is unique, no one model of a church planting strategy can work everywhere and every time. That said most church starts in the last couple of decades have followed one of these two approaches:

1. **Worship Launch**
A core group of committed leaders uses an aggressive invitation ministry to gather 200 people for a first worship service that begins the new congregation.

This usually will require 20-30,000 contacts over several months and a very large advertising and marketing budget.

2. Small Group Launch

A core group of committed leaders recruit and begin 12 small groups of 12 people before the first worship service. This builds a sustainable worshipping community and sets the pattern for small group discipleship early on. Usually this will require 6-8 months and an ambitious ministry of personal invitation by a self-replicating group of leaders.

After developing a strategy, the next most important step is identifying leaders. With churches starting churches or individuals starting churches, they will have already self-identified key leadership. Regardless, the key leaders need to be assessed on the traits listed on page 6 of this guide. The Office of Congregational Development can assist with this assessment process, and the District Superintendent and Cabinet retain final authority on deployment of clergy leadership.

Following this conception and pre-natal stage, new churches are birthed according to their own strategic plans. District and Conference resources continue to support their work as they are regularly evaluated and meet quarterly milestones.

Some Basic Church Planting Resources:

All of the people involved in refining church planting proposals should work to keep up with reading and research in this changing field. The resource list in this booklet is a good beginning, but it is not exhaustive by any means.

- www.umcncd.org - Joint Committee for New Congregational Development of General Boards of Discipleship and Global Ministries
- www.link2lead.com – demographic & leadership information for churches
- cmtmultiply.org – Church Multiplication Training Center church planter’s bootcamp training
- *NextChurch.Now: Creating New Faith Communities* by Craig Kennet Miller (available from cokebury.com)
- *Churches Planting Churches* by Robert Logan (available from churchsmart.com)
- *The Church Planter’s Toolkit* by Robert Logan (available from churchsmart.com)
- *Beyond Church Planting* by Robert Logan, etc. (available from churchsmart.com)
- www.coachnet.org – with online worksheets and start-up guides for new churches
- *Planting Missional Churches* by Ed Stetzer (available from cokebury.com)
- *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups* by Bill Donahue (available from cokebury.com)
- *How to Start a New Service* by Charles Arn (available from cokebury.com)

Down and Dirty Summary

Qualities, Personalities & Gifts of New Church Pastors

distilled by Curtis Brown [curtis@neumc.org]

for internal District and Conference work only

from *Church Planter's Toolkit*, by Robert Logan & Steven Ogne

- 1. Has a “visioning” capacity**
 - Can discern and persuasively share a vision of God’s will for the congregation
 - Can articulate a pattern of ministry that expresses this vision through the work of a congregation
 - Believes in God’s capacity to do great things
- 2. Is intrinsically motivated**
 - Gives evidence of internal motivation, self-starting & initiation
 - Persistently and positively committed to personal and ministerial excellence
 - Willing to work exceptionally hard
- 3. Can create ownership of ministry**
 - Can help others understand and commit to vision of ministry
 - Establishes a congregational identity
- 4. Can relate to the unchurched**
 - Communicates and relates well outside of church culture and mentality
 - Loves and knows unchurched people
 - Can cope with crises faced by troubled people
- 5. Family/Friends are supportive**
 - Has explicit covenant of support from family/intimate friends
 - Family/friends have comprehensive understanding of extraordinary ministry
 - Deliberately plans to set appropriate boundaries around personal & public expressions of ministry
- 6. Is good at building relationships**
 - Displays God’s love through a comfortable compassion for others
 - Can quickly accept and assimilate relationship with new or different people
- 7. Is committed to church growth**
 - Understands the connections between numerical and spiritual growth
 - Can operate within established time-lines for financial self-sufficiency
 - Sees the church project as an expression of the Kingdom of God
- 8. Is responsive to community**
 - Has affinity, understanding and love of community that is site of ministry
 - Can effectively connect resources of church to spiritual needs of community
 - Can guide church to discern God’s direction in meeting community needs
- 9. Mobilizes the giftedness of others**
 - Can discern and deploy others to effectively use their gifts in ministry
 - Is good at working in teams
 - Is good at empowering leaders
- 10. Is flexible and adaptable**
 - Enjoys ambiguity and chaos
 - Enjoys rapid change
 - Constantly evaluates, improves and adapts ministry models
 - Will do “whatever” is necessary to further the Gospel of Christ
- 11. Can build a cohesive church body**
 - Can build a core group of leaders
 - Can connect and include new people regularly into church body
 - Understands and uses small groups well
- 12. Is resilient**
 - Can experience setbacks without defeat
 - Has positive self-image rooted in deep faith commitment and resources
- 13. Exercises a dynamic faith**
 - Understands and accepts a specific calling to church planting or church revitalization
 - Prays and practices spiritual disciplines
 - Has a passionate spirituality and displays an excitedly Christian lifestyle
 - Is marked by expectation and hope
 - Is willing to wait for God’s guidance

Writing a Proposal

Instructions

The following is an outline for a written proposal. Think through each section. Create a written description for each item and compile them in the following order.

Action

1. Why start a new church?

- State your calling.
- State your vision (briefly).
- State the reasons for church planting.
- Demonstrate the need for new churches.

2. Who is my ministry focus group?

- Describe your ministry focus group.
- Describe the community needs.
- Include appropriate demographics.
- Describe the proposed location.

3. What kind of church are we trying to plant?

- State your core values.
- State and expand your mission statement.
- Describe your church's ministry style.
- Define your ministry model.
- Draw your ministry flow chart.

4. With whom will you plant this church?

- Describe your ideal launch team.
- Include a profile of any confirmed ministry partners.
- Define the specific roles you expect to fill.
- List the team members you will need.

Writing a Proposal (continued)

5. How and when will you plant this church?

- Include a detailed strategic plan.
- Include a detailed time line for the first 18 - 36 months.
- Include a detailed explanation of how you will gather your core group.

6. How much will it cost?

- Include a start-up budget.
- Include a cash flow analysis.
- Define your funding strategy.

7. How can one be involved?

- Prayer needs
- Volunteer needs
- Potential contacts
- Equipment needs
- Financial needs

Some Pertinent Sections from the 2004-2008 Book of Discipline

Establishing a New Church

¶ 260.

1. A new local church or mission congregation shall be established only with the consent of the bishop in charge and the cabinet and with due consideration of the conference entity assigned the responsibility for congregational development. The bishop shall designate the district within whose bounds the church or mission congregation shall be organized. The district superintendent of that district, or his or her designee, shall be the agent in charge of the project and shall recommend to the district board of church location and building (¶ 2518) the method of organization, and whether a specific site shall be selected or an area of organization be designated. The district superintendent shall avail him/herself of existing demographic, lifestyle and ethnographic information in the process of establishing a new congregation and its location, or shall recommend to the board of trustees of a selected local church that they share their facility with the proposed congregation. If there is a city or district missionary organization, or if funds for the project are anticipated from a conference organization, those bodies shall also be asked to approve the method of organization and location for a new congregation.

a) A Mission Congregation may be designated when any of the following conditions exist: 1.) Membership opportunities and resources are limited and not likely to result in a chartered congregation for an extended period of time. 2.) A strategic demographic, cultural or language opportunity for serving a limited population is present. 3.) It is expected that long-term sustaining funding from sources outside the Congregation will be necessary to enable the congregation to exist, and the assumption of full connectional support items by the congregation is unlikely. 4.) It is probable that the Annual Conference will need to provide long-term administrative guidance, including attention to the distinctive property needs of the Congregation. When any of these conditions exist, the Cabinet, in consultation with the Congregational Development area of the Annual Conference, may designate an entity a Mission Congregation. The Mission Congregation may be organized in the same manner and have the same rights and powers as any local church.

2. The bishop may appoint a pastor to launch a new local church, or with the bishop's approval the district superintendent may authorize a local church or group of local churches to launch a new church by gathering interested people in small groups for Bible study, outreach, community building, and worship at a site in an area approved by the district board of church location and building.

3. A pastor of The United Methodist Church, while serving as the pastor of a new church prior to the convening of a constituting conference (¶ 260.7), may receive a person into the membership of The United Methodist Church under the conditions of ¶ 217. When a person is received as either a baptized or a professing member, the pastor shall send the name, address, and related facts to the annual conference secretary for recording on a general membership roll. These names shall be transferred as soon as possible to the roll of the new church, when constituted, or to another church upon the member's request. If the new church is being sponsored by an existing church, membership may be recorded on the roll of that church.

4. Each annual conference or its equivalent may determine the minimum number of members and other criteria required for the organization of a local United Methodist church.

5. When the number of people interested in being charter members of the new church reaches the number necessary as set by the conference to charter a new church, the district superintendent shall call the interested people to meet at an appointed time for the purpose of organizing them into a chartered (organized) local church, or may by written authorization designate an elder in the district to call such a meeting. The district superintendent or the designated elder shall preside and shall appoint a secretary to keep a record of the meeting. Following a time of worship, opportunity shall be given to those in attendance to present themselves for membership.

6. People desiring to become professing members by transfer or on profession of their faith in Christ shall also be given opportunity to present themselves for membership. Any who have not been baptized shall receive the sacrament of baptism, profess their faith and be received as members. Other baptized people are to be received as baptized members.

7. Those who will be members of the constituting church conference shall be those received into the professing membership.

8. The constituting church conference shall then be called to order by the district superintendent or by an elder whom the superintendent designates (See ¶ 246.5). A committee on nominations, elected on nominations from the floor as the conference may determine, shall nominate members of the proposed church council. The chairperson of the committee on nominations shall be the appointed pastor (See ¶ 259.1c). When the members have been chosen, the district superintendent or the designated elder shall declare the church properly constituted.

9. The district superintendent or an elder whom the superintendent designates shall then adjourn the constituting church conference and call to order the charge conference of the pastoral charge. The membership of the charge conference shall be those newly elected, and any others entitled to membership. The charge conference shall then elect such officers of the church as the Discipline requires, including trustees of church property, and shall organize its structure as provided in the Discipline. When such officers have been duly elected and such structure put in place, the church is duly organized, and from this point its work shall proceed as described in the Discipline, provided that when a newly organized church is attached to a circuit, the charge conference shall not be held until such time as representatives from all the churches of the charge can be properly assembled for that purpose.

10. The charge conference may take action, at its discretion, authorizing and directing the newly elected trustees to incorporate the newly organized church in accordance with local laws and the provisions of the Discipline.

District Boards of Church Location and Building

¶ 2518. Authorization and Establishment of District Boards of Church Location and Building

There shall be in each district of an annual conference a district board of church location and building. The board shall consist of the district superintendent and a minimum of six and a maximum of nine additional persons nominated by the district superintendent in consultation with the district nominating committee, if one exists, and elected annually by the annual conference; provided that in a district of great geographical extent an additional board may be so elected. It is recommended that the membership include one-third clergy, one-third laymen, one-third laywomen, and, where possible, should be inclusive of gender, race, age, and people with disabilities. These persons shall be professing members of The United Methodist Church. The members of the board, excluding the district superintendent, shall be divided into three classes. One-third shall be elected annually for a three-year term. A chairperson and a secretary shall be elected annually at the first meeting following annual conference. The board shall file a report of any actions taken with the charge conference of each local church involved, and the report so filed shall become a part of the minutes of the said conference or conferences. The board shall also make a written report to the district conference (or, if there is no district conference, to the district superintendent), and this report shall become a part of the records of that conference.

¶ 2519. Duties and Responsibilities of the District Boards of Church Location and Building

1. Local Church Building Sites and Plans—The board of church location and building shall investigate all proposed local church building sites, ascertaining that such sites are properly located for the community to be served and adequate in size to provide space for future expansion and parking facilities. (See ¶¶ 260.1, 2543.2.)
2. If there is a district strategy committee for parish development or a metropolitan commission (¶ 632.5j) in the district, the board shall consider its recommendations in planning a strategy for continuing the service of The United Methodist Church in changing neighborhoods. If no parish development committee or commission is operative, the board shall study the duties assigned to each and seek ways to provide continuity of service in parishes where there is a change in the racial, ethnic, or cultural character of the residents, to the end that the resolutions of the General Conference involving such neighborhoods be given careful consideration. One member of the board shall also have membership on the strategy committee or on the commission.
3. The board of church location and building shall investigate all proposed local church or parsonage buildings to determine the best method to make the structure energy-efficient.

Conference Committee on Congregational Development

5. The annual conference shall establish a committee on parish and community development or assign this responsibility to an existing agency in the annual conference that will fulfill the responsibilities related to the objectives and scope of the General Board of Global Ministries (§ 1312). The committee shall initiate and develop programs with institutional and voluntary ministries related to the work of the board. The committee may form subcommittees for these areas. The committee shall be accountable to the conference board of global ministries, or to such other agency as the conference may determine. The chairperson of the committee and the chairpersons of the subcommittees shall be members of the conference board of global ministries or such body to which the committee shall be amenable.

a) The committee shall include persons involved in significant types of parish and community ministries, lay and clergy representatives of rural, town, and urban small-membership churches, the area or conference superintendent or director of parish development, representatives of related church agencies and groups, and at-large community representatives.

b) The general responsibilities of the committee shall include research, evaluation, planning and strategy development, policy formulation, program implementation, local and national liaison (denominational and ecumenical) related to parish and community development, and such other functions as the conference or agency to which the committee is accountable may determine.

c) Responsibilities of the subcommittee on institutional and voluntary ministries related to the General Board of Global Ministries may include developing a relationship to all such institutional and voluntary ministries within the annual conference; consulting with them in cooperative planning and strategy for the implementation of national mission concerns relative to needs in the area of social welfare as implemented through the ministries of community centers, residences, health-care agencies, schools, and other educational agencies; and working with funding sources to provide the support needed for effective service in such agencies.

d) In annual conferences where church and community workers are assigned through the General Board of Global Ministries, responsibilities of the subcommittee on church and community ministry shall include reviewing and evaluating projects; serving as liaison between projects and the General Board of Global Ministries; and securing consultative and financial support for workers.

e) Responsibilities of the subcommittee on congregational development shall include encouraging and supporting the development of new and established congregations; conducting research studies and community surveys that plan for and assist with developing innovative strategies for mission; and reviewing, evaluating, and making recommendations for loans, donations, and grants from the General Board of Global Ministries. The subcommittee also shall encourage greater use of such pastoral ministry models as tentmaking/bi-vocational ministries, part-time local pastors, and cooperative ministries by advocating for the removal of impediments to their use and emphasizing the pastors' proven ability to produce effective nurture, outreach, and witness ministries as the primary criterion for appointment.

f) Responsibilities of the subcommittee on town and country ministries shall include mission development and ministry in town and country areas with a population of less than 50,000. These shall include incorporated areas of 10,000 to 50,000; towns, villages, and incorporated areas with 10,000 or fewer; and rural areas with population density of 200 or fewer persons per square mile, fulfilling the functions outlined in § 632.5h.

g) Responsibilities of the subcommittee on urban ministries shall include long-range mission strategy development and ministry for metropolitan communities with a population of more than 50,000, fulfilling the functions outlined in § 632.5h.

h) Responsibilities of the subcommittees on town and country ministries and urban ministries shall include the following:

(1) consulting with the bishop, cabinet, area or conference superintendent/director of parish development, district representatives of town and country ministries and urban ministries, and the conference agencies in the development of policies for cooperative parish ministries, securing of funding for staff, and in initiating and strengthening these ministries;

(2) developing a comprehensive related missional strategy for the mission of the annual conference, the districts, and the local churches and reporting this plan to the annual conference for consideration, with the understanding that the plan may relate to a regional mission organization for purposes of larger geographical coordination; and

(3) initiating and/or assisting with programs to deal with needs such as:

(a) local church and community outreach organization and development;

(b) ministries with specialized constituencies and sectors of community life, agricultural and industrial production, and other issue-oriented ministries;

(c) the development and strengthening of regional and/or national networks and/or associations;

(d) ethnic and language groups;

(e) churches in transitional communities;

(f) small membership churches;

(g) the impact of oppressive systems on town and country and urban people and their communities; and

(h) to fulfill other functions as related to the objectives and scope of work of the General Board of Global Ministries as set forth in ¶ 1312.

i) Responsibilities of the subcommittee on the small membership church shall include the following: (1) being informed about needs and opportunities of the small membership church in rural, town, and urban settings in the total life of the conference; (2) calling for representation by small membership churches in the decision-making structures of the annual conference; (3) informing and sensitizing leadership at all levels of the conference on issues that affect small membership churches; (4) enlisting the support of the bishop, cabinet, council on ministries, and conference staff on policies, plans, and practices that affect small membership churches; (5) working with the subcommittees on town and country ministries and urban ministries within the parish and with the community development committee to develop and implement strategies for the nurturing, outreach, and witness ministries of small membership churches.

j) In metropolitan areas with a population of more than 50,000, consideration shall be given to the establishment of a metropolitan commission whose purpose shall be to promote long-range planning and to provide a coordinating framework for United Methodism's mission strategy for that metropolitan area. The membership may include the bishop or bishop's representative, the district superintendents involved, a selected group of clergy and laypersons representing the annual conference board of global ministries and the annual conference committee on urban ministry, the conference commission on religion and race, the annual conference United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men, representatives from community-based ministries, representatives from district council(s) on ministries, representatives from other boards and agencies deemed appropriate, and groups and individuals who have skills and experience enabling them to fulfill creative planning and strategy functions for United Methodism in the metropolitan area.

When the metropolitan area includes more than one annual conference, representatives shall be elected from each conference's constituent boards and agencies to the metropolitan commission.