PATHWAYS OF PLANTING
THE 2018 GUIDE TO STARTING NEW CHURCHES IN THE MEMPHIS AND TENNESSEE ANNUAL CONFERENCES

NASHVILLE AREA OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
PATHWAYS OF PLANTING

Starting New Churches in the Nashville Area of The United Methodist Church
Memphis and Tennessee Annual Conferences
CONTENTS

Foreword
4

Why Start Something New?
5
Theological and Historical
Current Reality

Churches and Faith Communities
8
What Is a New Church?
What Is a Mission Church?
What Is a Faith Community?

New Church: An Overview of Planting
12
4 Stages of the Planting Process
8 Stages of Developing Planters and Leaders
Funding
Funding Support Scale
Other Sources of Funding
New Faith Community
Coaching

12 New Church Strategies
27
Parent Church
Classic Missionary/Parachute Drop
Multi-Site Expansion
Church-Within-a-Church
“Elijah Elisha”
Vital Merger
Closed/Reopened Facility
House Church
Intentional Communities
Surprise Birth
Integrated Multi-Ethnic Projects
Pregnant Church

3 Steps to Begin the Assessment
Process for Planters
41

6 Key Components Before Launching
42

Notes
43

Appendix A: The Method of Organizing
a New Church
44

Forms for Church Planting
47
FOREWORD

This document is an ongoing and ever-evolving comprehensive strategic plan to plant new churches and new faith communities in the Memphis and Tennessee Annual Conferences of The United Methodist Church. Being so, the information contained herein may have changed since the last printing.

To be faithful to an ecological stewardship, changes to this document may not result in new printed copies. Therefore, any changes in this document and the most current procedures and policies may be found online at the Tennessee Annual Conference website at https://www.tnumc.org/ and Memphis Annual Conference at https://www.memphisumc.net/.
Theological and Historical

Every church was once a new church. Every church began as a dream of a person or group of people who desired that a new group of people know Christ and be a part of the community that we know of as the church. We call these dreamers “planters,” as they have been called by God to plant the seeds that become a new church that grows, worships, and serves together.

The Apostle Paul was the most notable of the first church planters. As he traveled from place to place he introduced people to a saving grace in Jesus Christ. But Paul was a man on the move and understood that these new converts would require further nurturing and training as they strived to live this new life as disciples of Jesus. So, he began to establish small faith communities, led by people who would continue forming these new groups into authentic communities, the first churches.

As John Wesley traveled across the Atlantic, he intended to evangelize the natives and bring God back into the lives of the early settlers. His success in this endeavor was minimal at best. Journal entries reveal that he felt he left the colonies as an utter failure. But Mr. Wesley’s influence in this New World
was just beginning. From his home in London, Wesley dispatched a new league of exhorters to travel across the ocean and take up the mantle of evangelizing the new frontier—and that they did well.

During much of the nineteenth century, Methodist circuit riders were traveling throughout the frontier expansion preaching and teaching people to relinquish their lives to the love of Jesus. Wherever these early pioneer preachers could reach a settlement of people, either on horseback or on foot, they established some form of a worshipping and discipling faith community. The Methodist heritage is one of church planting, at one time at the rate of one church a day!

**Current Reality**

To fully appreciate the current reality of The United Methodist Church in Memphis and Tennessee, we must turn to statistical data. From 2006 to 2016, church attendance in the two conferences decreased by almost 15 percent. At the same time, the state of Tennessee saw an increase in population of nearly 10 percent. It should be noted that population growth coupled with decreased worship attendance is not the only factor that leads us to start churches. We start churches because it is our Gospel mandate to make disciples! It should also be noted that some areas have experienced rapid population growth (the Nashville area grew by 20 percent in the same ten-year span), while other areas have decreased (Memphis decreased by 5 percent from 2006 to 2016). We should be starting churches in Nashville and Memphis!

The stark contrast between population growth and decreased worship attendance shows us there is a problem. We have lost our biblical and Wesleyan church planting heritage. But we can recover it. With every problem there is a solution, and one solution is the establishment of new churches. Many will say that our existing churches can regain their vitality, and this is true for some. But study after study supports the fact that the biggest factor in overall growth is establishing new churches.
Some may see the current reality as too daunting to face. They may bemoan how our current culture is antagonistic toward the church and continue to slip into an irreversible decline toward closure. Others, though, will embrace this news as a challenge. They will take on a new awareness that the proverbial fields are “ripe for the harvest.” They will understand that the culture we live in is not against Jesus, but many people just do not know who He is. The Nashville Area will meet this challenge through prayer, a belief in God’s power, and a comprehensive strategy to create new churches and faith communities.
What Is a New Church?

The Apostle Paul regularly referred to the church as the body of Christ. From this we understand that the church is not some civic organization that is to engage in good acts, but is in fact a living and breathing organism with Jesus as the head. It also denotes that the church is more than just a structure.

As the hymn “We Are the Church” states,

*The church is not a building,*
*the church is not a steeple,*
*the church is not a resting place,*
*the church is the people.*

So, as the gathered body of Christ, ordained to carry out the Great Commission, we as United Methodists hold certain characteristics to our understanding of how a new church looks and acts. For us, new churches are newly organized places for people who are committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ and:

- are theologically Wesleyan,
- worship frequently and celebrate the Sacraments,
- have effective systems for developing disciples of Jesus,
- teach and practice biblical stewardship,
- are missional and work toward community transformation,
- will receive new members, embed multiplying DNA in all ministries and plant other new congregations, and
- will remain connected and accountable to The United Methodist Church.

Each new potential church plant is unique and will vary in context and strategy for starting. For a brief summary of the strategies for planting churches, see page 27.
THE CHURCH IS IN FACT A LIVING AND BREATHING ORGANISM WITH JESUS AS THE HEAD.
What Is a Mission Church?

A mission church is a congregation that is independent in every way except that it receives ongoing financial support from partner churches, district, conference, and other denominational and outside resources. Usually these churches have a mission to serve a population that is financially poor or highly transient and cannot fully fund the mission church's ministry. A mission church may start just as any new church with the exception that all involved know that it may never become financially independent and/or stable.

Paragraph 259.1 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church—2016* allows for this designation when any of the following exists:

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

With this direction in mind, the Memphis and Tennessee Areas will start mission churches to reach and serve as many people as possible. But, being mindful and good stewards of the resources available, all involved with the starting of a mission church must be clear on what financial resources are available, for what amount of time, and what the measurable benchmarks will be for continued funding. It is also strongly recommended that mission churches be partnered with other congregations for support.
What Is a Faith Community?

A new faith community can take a variety of forms. It ranges from a traditional/chartered church with its own building, staff, and committees, to a missional house fellowship without staff, budget, or facilities, as is seen in many Fresh Expressions. Regardless of the type, style, or structure, a faith community is a group of Christians who do these four things together:

1. **Worship:** Faith communities worship God together in a variety of settings, whether in large gatherings or in small and informal groups.

2. **Disciple:** Faith communities invite people to follow Jesus Christ and partner with the Holy Spirit in deepening faith and understanding.

3. **Serve:** Faith communities organize themselves as individuals and groups to serve their world through the love, mercy, justice, grace, and hope of God in Jesus Christ.

4. **Connect/Partner:** Faith communities are linked to a local congregation and to the wider body of The United Methodist Church for support, guidance, and theological foundation.

Faith communities are any organized gathering of people who seek to live out their love and knowledge of Christ through their worship, discipleship, service, and partnership with The United Methodist Church. A faith community may or may not become a chartered church.
Starting new faith communities is a lofty undertaking that will require much prayer, strategy, oversight, partnership, and persistence. The Nashville Area will commit to strategically planting and supporting a myriad of faith communities utilizing the best practices and resources. To guide us in the planting process, two emphases will be employed:

1. Plans and strategies for the development of new faith communities

2. Planters and leaders to carry out the plans and strategies
The process allows for the plans and planters to start together or independently and come together at some point. The plans and planters may be considered separately so that neither is initially dependent on the other.3

As seen in the diagram, the Church Planting Process will be described by looking first at the plan for a new faith community and then at the assessment of the potential planter. The final four stages will be as the plan and planter are combined to begin to give birth to the new faith community.

“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

ROMANS 10:15
4 Stages of the Planting Process

While this process, or some modification of it, can be used to plant any type of faith community, the stages below are specifically designed for the planting of new churches. For the most part, planting faith communities outside of the new church model are unique to each plan and should be addressed as such.

STAGE 1: VISIONING

God raises a vision for a new church in many different ways and among many different people. Some places where God lifts up this vision might include:

- an individual, lay or clergy
- a group of United Methodists
- an existing congregation
- a District Superintendent
- a Conference committee or team
- the New Church Development team
- the Bishop and Cabinet

Sometimes God will challenge us to envision a new church:

- through ongoing prayer and spiritual practices
- with underserved people, geography, or cultures
- with communities in deep transition
- with gifts of passionate leaders willing to invest their lives in a new church
- with resources and gifts

Regardless of how the initial vision comes from God, the need is evident to explore and develop that vision. God doesn’t always use “authorized” agents to deliver vision and mission to the church, so everyone’s ideas, hopes, and dreams for new faith communities are accepted and valued. At this point, a conversation with the District Superintendent and with the New Church Development Team Leader is planned.
CHURCH PLANTERS REQUIRE SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS.
STAGE 2: DISCERNING

In this stage, God’s guidance is sought to confirm and develop a vision for a new church. In The United Methodist Church, the District Superintendents are appointed to the special ministry of helping supervise and support the discernment and evaluation of new church plans. The process of discernment involves these elements:

- The District Superintendents, with the help of the NCD Team, will gather together all the visions, dreams, and ideas for new faith communities in their districts and prioritize potential projects for further development.

- The NCD Team Leader will review potential projects and make recommendations about them to the District Superintendent, the Bishop, and the Cabinet.

- The District Superintendents report on their plans and potential projects to the Bishop, Cabinet, and the NCD Team for affirmation of their priorities.

STAGE 3: PLANNING

Stage 3 refines the vision and develops a new church strategic plan.

The NCD Team works with the District Superintendent to develop a complete strategic launch plan for the new church. This plan must include:

- Specific location and target population of the new church.

- Specific launch strategy and timeline with benchmarks.

- Specific leadership already committed to the project and descriptive profiles of any needed leadership, including lead planter and any appointed clergy.

- Specific income and expense budget predictions for the start-up period until the church is financially self-sustaining (or stable).

- Specific covenants of support from partnering or sponsoring groups and letters of response from other area United Methodist congregations.
**Stage 4: Partnering**

At this stage, the plans intersect with the planter’s development process, which is described next, but there are still some plan-specific tasks to accomplish:

- The NCD Team Leader submits strategic launch plan for approval by the District Superintendent, Cabinet, and Bishop.

- The NCD Team Leader in consultation with the District Superintendent shall be the “agent in charge” to shepherd the new church project (¶259.1).

- The NCD Team convenes first stakeholders’ meeting that gathers the agent, leaders from any partnering or sponsoring churches, and any other committed leaders involved in the project for sharing and covenanted around the strategic launch plan prior to requesting any appointed leadership.

- The District Superintendent requests any needed clergy leadership from the Cabinet for appointment by the Bishop.
8 Stages of Developing Planters and Leaders

**STAGE 1: CALLING**

Before proceeding further, the identification and assessment of the potential planters must be considered. Developing planters is a unique and difficult form of leadership for lay and clergy. Helping leaders understand their gifts and call to planting ministries is critical to the success of starting any new church.

This process begins with a leader experiencing a call from God to help launch a new church. The call can come to lay or clergy leaders, to young or old, to men or women, to people of any culture in any community of any economic status. The strength of the Methodist church-planting tradition has always been its willingness to recognize God’s giftedness and calling to all people, not just to seminary-trained clergy of the dominant cultural type. Methodist leaders will come from a variety of sources:

- The District Superintendents may suggest leaders that they see as potential planters or suggest leaders that have self-identified as potential planters. Oftentimes potential planters also are discerning a vision from God that becomes an important part of the planting process.

- The District Committees on Ordained Ministry and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry may help identify and recruit potential new church planters.

- The NCD Team may identify and/or recruit potential planters through information events about new faith communities.

- Other new faith communities and their partners may identify and suggest leaders to explore planting.

---

**THE STRENGTH OF THE METHODIST CHURCH-PLANTING TRADITION HAS ALWAYS BEEN ITS WILLINGNESS TO RECOGNIZE GOD’S GIFTEDNESS AND CALLING TO ALL PEOPLE, NOT JUST TO SEMINARY-TRAINED CLERGY OF THE DOMINANT CULTURAL TYPE.**
STAGE 2: EXPLORING

A potential planter will explore new church development in order to learn as much as possible about this form of ministry. Not everyone who feels an initial call will or should decide to take leadership in a new church. Sometimes they discover that God may have a slightly different idea than initially perceived. The exploration stage is designed to equip potential leaders with the information required to best interpret God’s call for themselves. This stage includes:

- completion of the Church Planter’s Application
- completion of the introductory self-assessments: DiSC Profile, CliftonStrengths, and Spiritual Gifts
- discussion with the District Superintendent and the NCD Team Leader about the assessments, desires to plant, and new church opportunities for further exploration

STAGE 3: ASSESSING

In the assessing stage, the District Superintendents and the NCD Team, in consultation with the Bishop and Cabinet, work to best assess and evaluate a potential planter’s fitness and affinity for helping launch a new church.

STAGE 4: PARTNERING

Stage 4 partners an approved potential planter with a new church plan. Sometimes leaders will have been a part of developing this plan from the very beginning, especially when an existing church is sponsoring a new church plant. Even in this case, the leaders will need to be appropriately assessed and recommended before assignment or appointment. For the planters, the partnering stage involves:

- The NCD Team Leader or designee reviews the leadership needs and requests of the new church strategic launch plan and, if necessary, interviews other potential leaders to assess their affinity for a specific planting plan or community.

- The potential planter begins training.

- The Cabinet reviews the leadership needs and requests of the new church strategic launch plan and, with recommendation by NCD Team Leader or designee, assigns or appoints needed leaders from the assessed and approved pool of potential leaders.
• Should an appropriate leader not be available, the Cabinet may assign the NCD Team Leader or designee to conduct a wider search for an appropriate leader to recommend to the Cabinet for assignment or appointment.

• The District Superintendent, NCD Team, and other stakeholders meet with the new leader and, if he or she is appointed, this group shall serve as Staff Parish Relations Committee in consultation on appointment.

• The Bishop and the Cabinet make the appointment.

**STAGE 5: PREPARING**

After partnering together, the appointed planter will begin to develop a long-term and sustainable strategic action plan. This stage includes:

• The planter receives guidance through a planting coach assigned by the NCD Team.

• If receiving salary support from the Annual Conference, the planting pastor meets with NCD Coordinator to review payroll, benefits, and financial policies.

• The planter and team begin work in the target population.

• The planter and team begin to identify and recruit leaders.

• The planter and team work with their coach to review, adapt, and update the strategic launch plan and submit any changes to the NCD Team Leader.

• The planter and team work with their coach and NCD Team Leader to establish quarterly evaluative benchmarks based on their strategic launch plan.

• The planter and team begin receiving financial support from partners and participants.

• The planter and team establish prayer covenants with neighboring congregations and other United Methodist churches in the district.

• The planter and team begin cultivating new disciples in the new ministry field as they become engaged in ministry.
Different strategic plans will have different strategies, but general goals in this stage may include:

1. The team continues to make sufficient one-on-one contacts in the target community to ensure twice the first year’s average worship attendance at a launch worship service (for example, a church that is planning to support a full-time clergy leader would want to average 150 people in attendance, and so it will target 300 for its launch worship service).

2. Developing sufficient small groups and leaders.

3. Developing sufficient new leaders so that ministry teams are fully staffed and trained before public launch.

4. Securing all the necessary resources needed for launch including: location, marketing, finances, leaders, vision, ministry teams, and program structures.

The planter meets monthly with the planting coach.

The planter and team provide quarterly benchmarking and progress reports to NCD Team Leader and District Superintendent.

STAGE 6: LAUNCHING

Although often thought of as the “beginning” of a new church, the public launch comes after a great deal of work from many different people. Public launch often takes the form of the beginning of weekly worship services, but some planters launch plans in house church, organic church, or cell church models that may not include larger group public worship, so their public launch phase will look quite different. Launching includes:

• The planter and team execute the launch phase of the strategic launch plan.

• Goals of the launch phase include:

  1. Making new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

  2. Developing a church capable of sustaining its own financial, leadership, vision, and ministry needs within three years of starting the launch phase.
• The planter and team continue to meet or correspond monthly with the planting coach.

• The planter and team continue to provide quarterly benchmarking and progress reports to NCD Team Leader, District Superintendent, and Cabinet.

• The end of the launch phase is often marked by organizing the church within the structure of The United Methodist Church, including constituting as a United Methodist charge and welcoming charter members; fully participating in United Methodist connectional responsibilities, including apportioned giving and missions; regular reporting of statistical information; and active supervision by the District Superintendent.

**STAGE 7: GROWING**

New faith communities don’t stay new forever. They grow. In this stage a new church grows with support and accountability. This growth is marked by:

• The new church reaches self-sustainability goals and has enough resources to pass its ministry to another generation.

• The new church continues to set goals, make new disciples, and engage its mission field in worship-based ministry.

• The new church transitions into “normal” supervision, resourcing, and accountability structure within The United Methodist Church.
STAGE 8: MULTIPLYING

Healthy organisms don’t keep growing larger indefinitely. Healthy organisms reproduce in order to adapt and evolve in rapidly changing environments. Our new churches should follow this natural cycle of reproduction and multiplication in this way:

• When possible, plans for multiplication of the next new faith communities will be included in the initial strategic launch plans for each new church.

• Within five years of constituting as a United Methodist charge and welcoming charter members, the new church will partner with district and conference leaders to develop a plan and launch another new church.

• Leaders trained through their experience in a new church will prayerfully consider their calling to participate in leading another new church.

• The new church will develop intentional plans for sharing its experience and learning with other churches through workshops, training events, and coaching.

Funding

Without question, it is an expensive undertaking to start new churches. But, for all its expense, it is one of the best ways for the church to invest the money that has been entrusted to it. No other tool for evangelism will yield a greater return than the planting of new faith communities.

There are funds available to help approved new churches start, offering assistance for salary support, programming, and coaching. **Continued funding will be based upon periodic review of benchmarks and forward progress.** Funds for approved new church plants may be applied for through the NCD Team and other sources within the annual conference.
Funding Support Scale

Funding from the conference will be based on a fluctuating percentage scale. Such a scale insists on the planter and lead team of the new church plant to become entrepreneurial during the first year, but will inject a higher percentage of capital during the crucial second year, and then require the new church to become increasingly self-sustaining in the third and fourth years.

The fluctuating percentage scale will be based on the total compensation cost of a planter (salary, pension, health benefits, and basic housing allowance) plus an additional 35% to help with operating cost. This standard maximum financial support will assume the total amount funded by the conference and can be adjusted.

**New Church Plant Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year One</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Two</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Three</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Four</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To help clarify the standard maximum amount of financial support that a new church may expect over a four-year period, considering benchmarks are being met and all stakeholders agree to continue forward progression, an example is illustrated below.

**Sample (representative—not based on actual figures)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Salary for Full Elder (+ 20%)</td>
<td>$48,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Benefits</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Housing Allowance</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$86,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Support (35% of Pastoral Support)</td>
<td>$30,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BASE TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$116,100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using this base total, the yearly financial support the new church may expect will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year One</td>
<td>$87,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Two</td>
<td>$116,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Three</td>
<td>$81,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Four</td>
<td>$40,635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial planning and benchmarks can be found in the Appendices and Forms.

**Other Sources of Funding**

Those plants utilizing the parent church model will be expected to contribute a percentage of the new plant’s operating cost. Planters and leadership are encouraged to seek and apply for funds from the varied resources within the conference and denomination as well as outside resources. Listed below are suggestions for other funding sources:

- **Expect and train new church pastors to raise funds.** Set an expectation that planters will immediately begin to tithe to their churches. Also, establish a percentage of the new church’s budget to be raised by the planter. Train planters how to raise these funds for their ministries.

- **Encourage launch team members to raise “virtue capital” by inviting friends and family to support the church’s ministries.** Launch teams may develop a brochure or flyer that explains the vision, mission, and core values of their new church and whenever possible ask friends and family, in person, to consider making a financial commitment to their project.

- **Seek financial support from the missional network.** Invite congregations that are conducting (or considering) capital stewardship programs to designate a percentage of what they raise to new church starts. Inviting congregations to do this enables them to become church-planting partners.

**New Faith Community**

As stated earlier in the section “What Is a Faith Community?”, a new faith community most likely will not have a staff, budget, and/or facilities as does a new church plant. A new faith community is best exemplified by a Fresh Expression.
Coaching

New churches and their pastors will require significant support in order to be successful. Therefore, the Nashville Area will partner with the new churches and pastors to provide high-quality and relevant coaching. Opportunities for each will be offered. Coaches need to be:

• paid for by the district or conference

• able to work with the district or conference around achieving the Plan but protect the confidentiality of the church planter

• focused on the skills, options, ideas, and self-care of the planter

• provided at least one site visit with the planter, launch team, and DS or staff

• able to provide coaching over the telephone or through online video
12 NEW CHURCH STRATEGIES

In the early decades of the twenty-first century, United Methodists will use a variety of strategies and tactics for planting new congregations in the United States. Below you will find several of the most common strategies used within our denomination. We have ordered these from most to least pervasive along with some benefits, challenges, and tempting shortcuts associated with each. Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list and that United Methodists will likely plant hundreds of new churches by intentionally blending two or more of the strategies. Lay or clergy planters serving full-time or in bi-vocational assignments could lead each of the following strategies. Depending on the planting context, any strategy could be right for almost any people group.

**Important Funding Note:** $ denotes costs associated with these strategies; fewer $ means lower conference investment; more $$$$ mean greater conference commitment of resources. Most new congregations will become financially self-sustaining. However, some churches—especially those who minister to low-income populations, may require long-term subsidy—which may be justified if they continue to bear good fruit. We caution against the use of the conference budget as a major funding source for long-term subsidy. We encourage the conference to develop streams of funding beyond the conference budget (from local churches, individual donors, foundations, etc.) when long-term subsidy seems necessary. If we expect that a church will require many years of development before attaining financial self-sufficiency, it makes sense to plant such a church with the support of strong and committed connectional partners.

1. **PARENT CHURCH ($$)**

A parent church is an existing United Methodist congregation—or, perhaps, several churches coming together—as an anchoring, sponsoring, or parenting force in launching a new church. This could be a cluster of partner churches or a combination of partner church(es) and another entity: a United Methodist campus ministry, retirement home, or church agency. Each partner must have clarity about its role. In some cases, potential partner churches will need a year or more of preparatory time to be ready for the role. Also, each partner needs to be included in benchmarking updates. The planter often will serve briefly as associate pastor at a partner church or will come from the staff or lay membership of a partner church. The partner churches typically will provide some funding and launch team members. Exceptions to this member-sharing practice would arise when launching a church with a different racial-ethnic audience. In these cases, significant cross-cultural awareness and training will be important for all involved.
• **Benefits** - These types of plants have a higher than average incidence of success. The more credibility the planter has with the parent congregation(s) and the more the planting congregation(s) are willing to invest in the project, the stronger the new plant will be from the start. The planting project will be well connected to the United Methodist community, helping to facilitate various kinds of support from the partners without sole reliance on any. Launch team members can be cultivated from each partner in addition to the general community.

• **Challenges** - The planter may end up with too many chefs in the kitchen, essentially navigating competing visions among the partners. Partner church leadership may seek to limit how many members go to the new church or to backtrack on promises made. It is important for the District Superintendent or conference staff to review with the partner churches all agreements being made prior to commencement of the planting project. Covenants should be carefully discussed and preserved in writing. In the instance of multiple “parents,” the partners may shrink back from total commitment, counting (mistakenly) on another partner—resulting in the new church’s leader feeling and functioning more like a “parachute drop” than a partnered plant (see number 2, “Classic Missionary/Parachute Drop” below).

• **Tempting Shortcuts** - The cabinet may rush a planter appointment forward based simply on the casual interest of potential partners. It is essential that a detailed planting plan be developed, with special attention to assessment, funding, conference expectations, and the relationship of the planter to the partners. If several United Methodist entities are embracing the idea of the plant, the District Superintendent or conference staff may not insist on bringing all partners to the table to discuss roles, responsibilities, and specific commitments regarding the plant. Also, the Cabinet may fail to consult with partner church leadership about characteristics they believe are essential for the planter’s success. These kinds of plants work best when the planter aligns with the culture of the partner churches in key ways (although we also want her/him to fit the culture of the target mission population).

2. **CLASSIC MISSIONARY/PARACHUTE DROP ($$$$)**

This strategy reaches all the way back to Paul’s planting adventures in the first century. Any version of this approach, by our United Methodist polity, will be connectional in nature, unlike what may be experienced in other denominations. This type of plant happens when a Cabinet sends a planter into a territory to plant a church and (1) that planter is not from that territory, plus (2) there are no active partnerships in place with other United Methodist churches or institutions in the area. Many of the
famous examples in United Methodist history in fact were not pure parachute drops—if, for example, the planter had some relationships already established in the community or grew up nearby. Or perhaps the planter discovered a very rich local source of prospective members that would not exist in just every community. When the planter has an informal network of relationships and support within the community but proceeds without an official partner church, we could call this a modified missionary strategy.

• **Benefits** - In communities where no United Methodist congregations are ready or able to provide healthy partnership, this strategy offers a way to move forward. If the church we are planting will differ markedly in its congregational culture from any other United Methodist churches nearby, this approach can offer the necessary space and freedom to color outside the lines of local convention. Some leaders have strong and magnetic personalities, and this strategy enables them to collect people (what they do best), without having to negotiate constantly with partner churches (negotiation possibly being something the planter doesn’t do well). Many of our largest and fastest growing new churches began in this way.

• **Challenges** - This is a risky strategy, with a high rate of project failure in the first three years. For this reason, some conferences with limited resources may choose not to employ this strategy. If the project involves an elder in full-time appointment, it is also a very expensive strategy—since there are no people to share the planter’s salary expense for quite some time. Assessment of the planter is of paramount importance, as well as assessment of community readiness and of the match between the planter and the community. Clergy families that survive this type of plant will almost universally testify that this is stressful business—and not recommended for any but the heartiest marriages. Planters and their families may become isolated from others in the United Methodist connection and need to make a special effort to maintain supportive relationships.

• **Tempting Shortcuts** - When these projects succeed, they often succeed big—and it is tempting to model other projects after a very big and splashy success, assuming that we have discovered the eternal secrets of church planting. In reality, however, the highly successful parachute drops are rare. Most church plants will not grow as fast as the churches on the “planting legend” grapevine. Many church plants with excellent leaders will not take root at all, even when the leaders appear to be doing all the right things. Few among us truly have the gifts to pull off such an endeavor, and then only in the right circumstances. Diligent assessment and discernment by the appointive Cabinet is critical.
GOD DOESN’T ALWAYS USE “AUTHORIZED” AGENTS TO DELIVER VISION AND MISSION TO THE CHURCH, SO EVERYONE’S IDEAS, HOPES, AND DREAMS FOR NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES ARE ACCEPTED AND VALUED.
3. **Multi-Site Expansion ($)**

This strategy may look (at first glance) much like a partner church strategy where the partner church is simply very engaged. The difference here is that the new faith community meeting at the new site remains part of the original church, even as they may develop a distinct staff and ministry team system. Multi-sites may open up in other United Methodist buildings; in facilities purchased, leased, or constructed by the congregation; or in space that is essentially borrowed for a couple hours a week (e.g., movie theater, civic auditorium, school, etc.). Multi-sites vary in pastoral and staffing strategies. They typically have a site pastor—who may or may not be the lead preacher at the site. Some multi-sites utilize large video projection of sermons recorded by the senior pastor of the church at another campus. In some cases, Cabinets appoint pastors to the site directly. In other cases, Cabinets appoint simply to the church, which then deploys its staff and pastoral resources among its various sites.

- **Benefits** - This strategy enables healthy congregations to multiply their ministries and rapidly plant new congregations. Since the people of the original campus will remain organizationally connected to the ministry of the new site, it is often easier to raise local funds for the multi-site than for projects that will not carry the name of the original congregation. It may also be easier to share administrative resources, staffing expertise, etc., with the new campus when there is a perception that “we are all one church.”

- **Challenges** - The relationship between the pastors of the campuses is critical. Most multi-sites (beyond The United Methodist Church) attempt to utilize staff members from the original campus, who already have loyalty to the senior pastor and know how to team with her/him. Whenever the Cabinet appoints a planter to a multi-site project, that planter is typically an associate pastor. It is absolutely critical that the senior pastor of the church be consulted in the appointment. If there is a plan for the multi-site to possibly become a chartered congregation at some point in the future, this must be documented clearly from the outset. Otherwise, all parties (and pastors) should proceed with the expectation that the sites will remain bound together as one congregation permanently. These projects simply do not work when the pastors get caught in power struggles.

- **Tempting Shortcuts** - Because the funding and leadership may emerge mostly from within the congregational system, the District Superintendent and conference staff may assume that no external help is needed. In fact, coaching is as critical with multi-site projects as in any other strategy—and the coaching relationship may involve both the senior pastor and site planter. Also, we should not assume that the local church is able to fund every expense needed for an optimal launch. The conference may need to make an investment alongside the local church. Finally, the local church should not try to stretch the staff from the original campus to cover ministry on two or more campuses. New staff must be added.
4. CHURCH-WITHIN-A-CHURCH ($–$$)

In a world of very expensive real estate, many new churches will share space with other churches (both partner churches and other collegial congregations). Existing congregations choosing to share property may find that new churches better serve their immediate neighbors, especially when the new church specializes in a certain racial-ethnic culture and/or a certain generation or social group.

- **Benefits** - This strategy enables us to re-establish or renew United Methodist ministry within established neighborhoods and to utilize church property that may have become under-utilized in recent years as neighborhood populations changed. This strategy enables us to plant urban churches much more economically than if we had to buy or secure ministry space. Churches that serve economically challenged populations may discover the shared facility strategy as a pathway to financial sustainability.

- **Challenges** - Sometimes the mission field will best be reached in a setting outside the church building. If the new church is a United Methodist congregation, the host congregation should treat them as family, not renters. This means that negotiation of a reasonable building impact fee (sharing specific costs) makes more sense than a rental agreement. The new church does not exist to help the older church pay its bills, but rather to assist the older church in making disciples of Christ for the transformation of the neighborhood. Where the relationships fall into “us/them” and paternalistic patterns, trouble follows. It is critical that effective cross-cultural training be done before the start of the project.

- **Tempting Shortcuts** - In the early days we may not work intentionally to build a positive relationship with our partners. Prayer for one another and regular communication are essential. The District Superintendent might check in early and often to see how it’s going in the first months. Where strong, collegial relationships are formed, this strategy can work well.

5. “ELIJAH ELISHA” ($–$$)

This strategy involves congregations who haven’t borne much fruit for the past several years and/or who may be at the end of their natural life cycle. It requires a proactive discernment process with the District Superintendent or conference staff. The congregation may either discover a new vision and recommit to fruit-bearing ministry or respond to God’s call to become an “Elijah” new church start (2 Kings 2:1–14 tells how Elijah passed on the legacy of his ministry to Elisha). Elijah churches intentionally choose either to (a) join another church and give their physical assets to the conference to reach a new group of people or (b) open their doors to a planter and launch team that takes over management of the facility to start a new congregation.
• **Benefits** - United Methodist ministry continues for another generation in a community where otherwise it would end. The Elijah church chooses to offer a way forward in God’s mission rather than a dead end. With thousands of churches teetering in survival mode with just a handful of members left, this strategy offers a way to leverage untold millions of dollars in United Methodist resources for new church development.

• **Challenges** - If this becomes a well-known strategy in the conference, the prospective Elijah church may come to view their District Superintendent as the “grim reaper.” Some congregations may not be ready to face the reality that they need to let go of the past to enable something new to grow in their changed communities. Some districts and conferences do not have a system in place to recoup the assets of church closures for new church development.

• **Tempting Shortcuts** - In some cases, the temptation is to delay rather than to rush this process, allowing buildings to decay and cash assets to be depleted, with little ministry to show for all the lost years.

6. **VITAL MERGER ($)**

Most of the time, mergers do not truly create new churches. Two declining churches typically agree to share one facility and decline together rather than alone. However, East Ohio Conference, for example, has a strategy that requires both of the merging churches to sell their buildings, pool the funds, move to a temporary location, find a new name, receive a trained planter, and proceed as if they were a new church. Leadership by the planter is key.

• **Benefits** - This strategy may solve several problems and give us a fresh new congregation as well. The problems could be decaying buildings, buildings too large or too small, or problematic locations. The problem could be existing congregations with inadequate resources to do the quality of ministry they long to do. In a situation where transformational leaders are in short supply, the merger also creates a prime place to send such a leader.

• **Challenges** - Ghosts can abound. Old patterns, old prejudices, old attitudes—even old office-holders—these realities can really slow any possible momentum from the outset. Also, if the merging congregations remain significantly older or culturally different from the mission field, there must be a plan to infuse some younger, more indigenous community people into the mix.
• **Tempting Shortcuts** - Just because it is not a typical merger does not mean we can ignore the careful weaving of traditions and people that are essential to pulling off mergers. We also must not back down, once into the project, from selling all existing properties and utilizing a trained church planter.

7. **CLOSED/REOPENED FACILITY ($–$$)***

Similar to the above strategies, except that there is no church left to share its facility, turn over its ministry, or merge with another congregation to create something new. The new church begins to address the needs and culture of the community population.

- **Benefits** - There is an existing building, often strategically located with respect to a population currently underserved by The United Methodist Church.

- **Challenges** - There is an existing building, often with enormous structural issues and liabilities. Also, the community may still associate the facility with the former congregation; so, the story of the new church’s birth must be carefully shared to engage and serve the community.

- **Tempting Shortcuts** - We may choose to reopen the building prematurely without engaging the community first. Or we may be stuck on reopening a building when the wiser path would be to sell the building and find another facility within the neighborhood.

8. **HOUSE CHURCH ($)***

This may well be the oldest strategy for church planting that exists, certainly reaching back to Asia Minor in the first century and to frontier America when the population was very thin. House churches are typically small, limited to the number that can fit in a home or a small meeting space. These churches may begin with as few as six or seven people and grow to twelve, or given the right space and leadership, they may grow to fifty or sixty people. In some parts of the world, they multiply rapidly. Multiple house churches may gather monthly in a large worship venue. They are often lay-led, with clergy sometimes riding a circuit to bring the Sacraments.

- **Benefits** - These projects can be extremely low budget, and they do not depend upon a large clergy supply (think early American Methodism). New leaders can be trained and deployed, so that where there is one house church, there may soon be six or more. Some conferences may yoke the house churches with a station church and appoint a pastor to the station church who can also offer leadership to the house church leaders.
WORK INTENTIONALLY TO BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS. PRAYER AND REGULAR COMMUNICATION ARE ESSENTIAL.
• **Challenges** - It is easy for a house church to forget its connection. In Methodism, we do not do “disconnected church.” Some who feel led to a simple house church experience may resist United Methodist connection and accountability. Also, some house churches will quickly settle in and become closed groups with tight fellowship and few new participants. Those who lead such churches must help the participants keep an eye on multiplication, evangelism, and missional service in the community.

• **Tempting Shortcuts** - The easy shortcut is to send persons to lead who are simply unprepared in terms of spiritual maturity, theology, or group-leading skills. Just because the group is small does not mean that this is easy ministry. When leaders or potential leaders are unwilling to remain connected to the mission of the larger United Methodist Church, or to share in the discipline of accountability to the pastor assigned to supervise them, we must remove them and deploy those who will.

9. INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES ($)

While there is no singular micro strategy for creating intentional communities, they are, most basically, groups of people living together (in one residence or in several residences in close proximity) in a specific missional area who are bound by a covenant with common goals and vision. Often referred to as New Monastic or Neomonastic communities, these intentional communities gather together with the purpose of growing spiritually, following Christ, and aligning around a particular focus on social justice and acts of love, mercy, and hospitality toward others. The strategy is often traced back to the early church movement described in Acts 2. There have been intentional communities throughout most of Christian history, tracing their roots back to Franciscan, Benedictine, and early Celtic orders. More contemporary examples of this strategy, still in existence, were founded in the early 1950s. Typically, intentional communities remain small in size (three to twelve people) and have no plan to “formalize” as chartered churches with land and a church structure. These missional movements align and mesh with a particular community to develop intense relationships that seek to transform that community in kingdom-building ways.

• **Benefits** - Practically no cost to congregations and conferences to implement this strategy. Mutual support and accountability. Intentional spiritual formation. Healthy interdependence among participants. Opportunity to connect with other congregations and intentional communities.

• **Challenges** - Creating and abiding by a shared covenant. Learning to share resources (space, finances, possessions). Respecting privacy. Building peace with other residents (conflict management).
• **Tempting Shortcuts** - Failure to develop a covenant and the basic rules of life for the group. Taking on more mission/ministry than the community can handle at the start. Inviting persons to become residents before they are ready.

10. **SURPRISE BIRTH ($)**

Sometimes churches are born unexpectedly—just as children may come along in a season when we did not expect them. Surprise births include church splits, a group that decides to affiliate with The United Methodist Church, a group of laity who envision a new church, or a campus ministry that develops to the point that they desire to become a congregation in the fullest sense of *The Book of Discipline*. Whenever these new churches or new ideas pop up on the radar, it is easy for church officials to view them with skepticism, especially when “we did not think of it.” However, some of our best United Methodist congregations have emerged in this way, as a work of the Holy Spirit and faithful laity. With wise pastoral care and negotiation, these projects can often be brought into the United Methodist fold as official new church projects.

• **Benefits** - Church planting does not get easier than this. When your region has a goal of five new churches and you only have money for three, what a blessing to discover another congregation coming to life without any conference investment!

• **Challenges** - The district may have had no input in deciding where they would meet. Such churches may choose to worship in close proximity to other area churches. In most cases, their style is such that they draw very different people from those at nearby churches. Also, if the church has existed independently for a while, it needs to weigh carefully the commitments of moving into the United Methodist fold.

• **Tempting Shortcuts** - Be careful that financial incentives for groups to join The United Methodist Church are minimal, or at least that they are balanced by other connectional obligations. Money and subsidy could distract the church from the most important questions of what it really means to become United Methodist.
11. INTEGRATED MULTI-ETHNIC PROJECTS ($$–$$$)

This strategy results in an intentionally multi-ethnic church plant that worships as one integrated body to create a unique cultural expression and reflect all groups involved. This is what heaven looks like, so why not intentionally plant churches that are integrated? This strategy reflects the work of the Holy Spirit to bring together as one in Christ a multitude of cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. We recognize that The United Methodist Church is just learning how to implement this strategy effectively.

- **Benefits** - Great cities were established because of the gathering of diverse people groups; a diverse church grows through the diverse talents and gifts found therein. The United States is becoming more and more diverse, and church plants will begin to reflect this shift. This is a great opportunity to reach younger people, who often have more diverse natural networks of friends and colleagues than older generations. Often, they will bring their friends and families and may reflect a more economically diverse people. Ideally, this strategy brings authenticity, in that the church reflects our increasingly diverse communities and the unity that Christ prayed we would have (see John 17).

- **Challenges** - This is not an easy strategy to implement. Everything depends on the planter’s ability to relate to, recruit leaders from, and be empathetic toward diverse ethnic-racial groups in building a multi-ethnic team. Creating a “third culture” (a space where all people are respected and participate in leadership roles) is a constant challenge. Learning to find leaders in new places requires the planter and key leaders to make an effort to connect with an ever-expanding network of diverse people. There may be slower growth in numbers of participants than in predominantly homogeneous congregations.

- **Tempting Shortcuts** - The ultimate goal in this strategy is transformation of the mission field, not simply gathering diverse multi-ethnic/racial people. Diversity of the plant is a by-product of the lead team and the mission field, its diversity, and the desire to be in mission with all people in the community. Hiring ethnic/racial staff (either lay or clergy) only because of their particular ethnic/racial background is not a good idea. Great chemistry, competence, character, and commitment to shared values should be considered above all else.
12. PREGNANT CHURCH ($$–$$$$)

This is a new strategic paradigm for the successful parent church model. In this model, an existing church serves as the sponsoring entity for a new church. The new church plant pastor may briefly serve as associate pastor of the parent church. The parent church may also provide funding and a launch team for the new church plant. The hope from there is that the new church plant will then start a new church within its first ten years. The strategy of Planting Pregnant utilizes the same premise of the parent model while infusing it with much more momentum for replication. By doing so, the genetic code for growth and reproduction is altered so that each generation of new churches will reproduce every two to three years. This strategy may result in the doubling of a new church plant each season.

**Benefits** - Potential replication rate doubles every season, which may lead to exponential growth as opposed to multiplicative growth. The current standard of a church replicating after its fifth year only yields two new churches by the eleventh year: the original church plus its child and grandchild church. But, utilizing the Planting Pregnant strategy, by the third year there is the potential to yield seven new churches with eight more that are waiting to be born. Planting Pregnant every two years could have the potential for an even greater number of new churches: thirty-one new churches with an additional thirty-two waiting to be born.

**Challenges** - The immediate concern for the Planting Pregnant model is that it is intensive and costly. To be effective, all involved will need considerable training, coaching, and oversight. It will also be equally important for the parent church to understand the concept and be fully vested in the success of not just one, but two or more new congregations being birthed in a short amount of time. Such a task will also require the parent church to have sufficient training, coaching, and oversight, including a comprehensive and effective discipleship system that will be passed on as its DNA to the new churches.

**Tempting Shortcuts** - With the goal of beginning multiple new churches in a shorter amount of time, it will be tempting to take shortcuts to achieve the expected numbers. The greatest temptation will most likely be to place a greater emphasis on worship at the expense of discipleship, mission, and ministries. This desire will need to be recognized and monitored to ensure that the new churches are establishing a multi-faceted foundation that will be fertile for new growth and multiplication.
WE ARE COMMITTED TO HELPING NEW CHURCHES LAUNCH AND THRIVE.
3 STEPS TO BEGIN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR PLANTERS

STEP 1

1. The potential planter will take the DiSC Profile, CliftonStrengths, and Spiritual Gifts assessment tools and forward the results to the NCD Team Leader or designee.

2. Feedback from assessments is given to the potential planter by NCD Team Leader or designee. The NCD Team Leader has discretion to discuss the findings through email, letter, or face-to-face, depending on what the assessments share about their potential for planting.

3. The NCD Team will discern the level of their support for the potential planter and communicate whether the potential planter will be moving on to Step 2 or not.

STEP 2

1. The potential planter will take a more detailed church planting assessment (as determined by the NCD Team).

2. The findings will be reviewed by the NCD Team and an interview will be scheduled (or not) with the NCD Team.

3. The NCD Team will have periodic interviews with potential planters who have completed the detailed assessment and have been deemed ready to move on to this step.

4. The interview will lead the NCD Team to place the potential planter in the church planter pool, and this will be communicated to the Bishop and Cabinet.

STEP 3

The potential planters in the planter pool will attend church planting trainings as determined by the NCD Team in consultation with the Bishop and District Superintendent.
The Memphis and Tennessee Areas are committed to having all six of the following key components in place prior to launching a new church or faith community:

1. **The Right Place** . . . is the driver for starting a new church or faith community. Listen to the mission field and meet the needs it presents. Listen to the mission field to determine the style of worship, the focus of the ministry, and the scope of the project. Learn the mission field demographics from MissionInsight, and, more importantly, from on-the-ground observation and analysis.

2. **The Right Church Planter** . . . is the product of discernment, assessment, and training. “Past behavior is the best predictor of future performance.” We are looking for planters who have some track record of “starting something.” Online surveys to determine spiritual gifts and one’s passion for starting a new church are the beginning point. Being assessed, going through training, and working with a coach are all essential requirements.

3. **The Right Parent Church** . . . is the best indicator of the most thriving new church plants. Evidence demonstrates that the parent model has the best chance of success. The most important element a parent church brings to a new church start is its DNA. Healthy parent churches are required to: participate in assessment and training, show evidence of strong connection through 100 percent payment of their apportionments, and work with the NCD Team.

4. **The Right Strategy** . . . all new church plants must have a well-thought-out strategy. Because ethnic/language mission models are so tied to a cultural context, the NCD Team requires that an appropriate specialist assist us in assessing the viability of these plants as part of developing a right strategy.

5. **The Right Time** . . . in the Conference it is crucial to start a new church at the right time. Starting too soon is as dangerous as starting too late. We must take into account reversals and trends in housing markets, economic conditions, availability of resources, prioritization of investments, and other market-driven factors. To assist with this, we utilize the professional expertise of many outstanding laity with a heart for starting new churches.

6. **The Right Support** . . . no church should or can exist alone. This is especially true of new churches and their church planters. We remain committed to providing all necessary resources to help new church plants launch and thrive. Regular and scheduled stakeholders’ meetings will help to identify and clarify areas of success and areas of improvement, to meet benchmarks and establish a level of accountability.
NOTES


6. Pregnant Church Model presented by Dr. Tim Roberts of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference at the 2017 School of Congregational Development.

7. Adapted from North Texas Conference Plan for New Church Development.

The New Church Development Team for the Nashville Area of The United Methodist Church appreciates the Western North Carolina Annual Conference sharing their original work on Pathways of Planting used and adapted here. The original also included work by the Pacific Northwest and Texas Annual Conferences along with links to content from New Church Starts at Discipleship Ministries (Path 1).
¶259.1. 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 (¶251.9) 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 (¶259.7), 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 ¶258.1 c). 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.

“...NEITHER THE ONE WHO PLANTS NOR THE ONE WHO WATERS IS ANYTHING, BUT ONLY GOD WHO GIVES THE GROWTH.”

1 CORINTHIANS 3:7