

REGIONAL POLICY PLAYBOOK

PROVIDED BY
NEW CHURCH
MINISTRY



OUTLINE FOR REGIONAL POLICY PLAYBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a New Church Movement is to establish as many new churches in as many ways as possible. While our purpose seems obvious, an introduction to Regional Policies has suggested that we may have established a system that keeps congregations from starting. To be successful in establishing 1000 new congregations will require that we find ways to be engaged in what we like to call “Spirited permission giving”.

Spirited permission giving does not mean writing blank checks and creating an atmosphere where chaos reigns. Instead, it creates an atmosphere where churches can multiply with consistent support and accountability built in. It calls for flexibility and a certain oneness that allows the spirit of God to flourish in our church.

Church multiplication happens when we think about ways to duplicate our efforts instead of “centralizing” them. Too often our Regional structures require new church projects to hover around a central place so that we can maintain control and order. However, with church multiplication systems in place we can eliminate strict control and facilitate the new church movement, rather than manage it. The result will be a quantitative increase in the number of new churches established in our Regions.

This Guide was put together at the request of at least 10 Regions. It was also put together because the New Church Ministry Team has observed that New Congregations have failed a number of times because there were inadequate systems in place. This Guide is offered in hopes that we will create congregations that are self-sustaining and effective rather than dependent on a long term dependency on a Region.

Finally, a good Guide reflects our best suggestions for process. It is not meant, however, to be the definitive policy. Each new church is unique and there are too many variables to make a single policy that is effective for every part of the country and every type of new congregation.

The New Church process is like a birth and, in some cases, they can be messy, just like any human birth experience. But like a human birth, new congregations add a real dimension of joy, hope and expectation for the whole church. Like any birth, if you wait until everything is in order before launching congregations, you will never see your first one. However, I feel confident in the words of Paul who said: “I can do all things through Christ”. Together, the NCMT, your Region, and Christ can start new congregations. It is not a matter of funding and policy, it is a matter of passion and spirit.

May God be with us in this adventure together.

Rick Morse

DEFINITIONS & COMPONENTS

TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSION

Adapted from Catch the Vision Manual, by Rene Rodgers Jensen

What does the Bible say that can help us understand the imperative of starting new communities of faith?

Many of us learned John 3:16 by heart long ago: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life.*

Because we know this scripture so well, we find it easy to overlook the radical message that it proclaims: God is passionately in love with the world. As church consultant Kennon Callahan notes, the verse does not say that God loves the church, but the world. God is in the world. When the church is in the world, God is in the church. When the church abandons the world, God is still in the world. The church must love the world as God loves the world. And that means the church must be in the world, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. We cannot wait for the world to come to us.

This was certainly true of the early church. From the day of resurrection, the command has been, “Go and tell”. (Matthew 28:7,10, 19-20). The New Testament church went everywhere and told everyone the good news of Jesus Christ. The church spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire because each new convert claimed the identity of “evangel”, the bringer of good news. Despite the threat of persecution, Christians were so excited about their faith they couldn’t wait to tell others. And they continually gathered new communities of faith, which reached new people. The command to go and tell is as urgent an imperative for the church today as it was for the first century church.

Many people writing about the church in the 21st century note that the church today faces radically different challenges than it did only a generation or two ago. We no longer live in a church culture. The dominant culture in North America today is indifferent to the church. Many people say they believe in God, but they don’t believe they have to go to church. In many ways the church today has more in common with the early church of the first three centuries than it does with the church of the 1950’s. Like the early church, churches today face a population that largely has no knowledge of the gospel. Like the early Christians, we must be intentional about reaching out and inviting persons, convincing them of the relevance and plausibility of the gospel. New congregations are often most effective in reaching people who need the good news of Jesus.

Another reason to start new churches is the significant growth of the Hispanic and Asian populations. New immigrants are reached by new churches with worship services conducted in their native languages. We are in the midst of a great mission field. The church in the twenty-first century must be a missionary church. What do effective missionaries do? They go to where the people are. They start new congregations!

NEW CHURCH MINISTRY TEAM

The New Church Ministry Team is a group of persons whose mission is to ignite the New Church Movement. This team is housed at the office of Church Extension in Indianapolis and is comprised of people with experience in Church Planting. They provide resources, research, training and support for New Church Planters and consultations for Regions and Congregations in every phase of development.

NEW CHURCH

A new church is a congregation whose intent is to become an autonomous Disciple congregation. A new church starts once leadership has been affirmed for a project and is considered a new congregation for 5 years regardless of its charter status. Congregations in affiliation are considered new from the day in which the congregation contacts the Region until 5 years later.

CHARTER

A term used to define a congregation that is fully recognized by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). While charters are given at the discretion of Regions, a chartered congregaton usually can demonstrate: 1) Commitment to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by regularly giving to the Disciples Mission Fund. 2) Self-Sustaining, not relying on outside forms of support. 3) Relationship to other structures in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) regionally, and generally. Some Regions require a minimum average worship attendance or membership number. Some regions also may require a minimum formation time.

NEW CHURCH PLANTER

New Church Planters (NCP's) are individuals who are called to gather people into a faith community. NCP's are credentialed by the Region, and can either be ordained or licensed. Only about 10% of all ordained clergy have the natural abilities associated with successful planting, while a larger percentage of entrepreneurial lay people exist. The single most important factor in the success of New Church Planting is the NCP and their care and support.

See Section VII for more information regarding the ideal profile for NCP's.

DISCERNMENT

Discernment is the process by which potential NCP's prayerfully consider church planting. This guide which is provided upon request by the NCMT, includes scriptural references, prayer guides, and a spiritual gifts inventory. The process should take 60-90 days and concludes when the potential NCP sends in an application.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the process by which an individual is evaluated for natural abilities inherent in NCP's. There are two forms of Assessment: initial and formal. Assessments include a written statement of strengths and weaknesses presented by a candidate and are available for the candidate as well as the hosting entity.

Initial Assessment: This form of assessment is provided by 2 members of the NCMT. It is usually a 45 minute phone conversation scheduled at the parties convenience.

Formal Assessment: A day-long event held at the offices of one of three consultants nationwide. This Assessment includes behavioral assessment, as well as lengthy interviews by a psychologist with direct training in Assessment and is based on the work of Charles Ridley. Costs for the evaluation include transportation and housing related to the NCP making the visit, as well as a fee (usually around \$750).

TRAINING

The NCMT offers training events for New Church Planters. These events are facilitated by the NCMT and successful NCP's with at least 2 years of experience. The intensive training experience will enable the NCP and up to two core team leaders to create a Vision, Mission, and Values statement as well as create a ministry plan. It also includes emphasis on partnership and Disciple ethos. These events are subsidized by the NCMT, but does include some fees for participation. The sponsor must get transportation for the NCP to and from the training site.

COACH

A coach is a successful NCP with at least 2 years of experience, who is assigned to a NCP at the training event. This coach maintains a relationship with the NCP for two years. A Coach maintains close contact with the NCP, to help that person succeed with their project. They are not a supervisor. They work to help the NCP achieve their best effort through technical counsel. They also hold the NCP's foot to the fire in regards to their personal spiritual disciplines, continuing education, and balance in family and personal life.

SPONSOR REPRESENTATIVE

The Sponsor Representative is a member of the sponsoring organization and also a member of the regional new church committee. He or she has oversight of the plant but acts as a silent partner to insure the Planter is working his or her plan. The Sponsor Representative will preferably have some experience in church planting or at least be thoroughly trained in new church planting methods. The Sponsor Representative has the trust of the sponsoring organization to communicate with the board of the organization and to make recommendations, in consultation with the Coach, regarding the release of financial support to the church plant. The Sponsor Representative offers suggestions and critiques the planter or methodology only directly to the Coach. He or she raises concerns to the Coach before raising them to the sponsoring organization. The Sponsor Representative also prays daily for the Planter and the new church plant.

PEER SUPPORT GROUP

A group of 3 projects at or near the same level of development, that work together to provide spiritual and emotional support to one another. Facilitated by a coach, these clusters meet 3 times a year (once at each site) to check in, review technical skills, review balance of family and recreational life, and review spiritual practices. These groups determine their own direction.

VISION STATEMENT

A statement that gives a clear picture of a desired future, which describes what this ministry will look like in 5-10 years and develops positive mental images and pictures that motivate people.

MISSION STATEMENT

A formal statement that identifies the target group the new congregation hopes to do ministry for. It states this group's needs, and how the congregation hopes to meet those needs.

VALUES STATEMENT

A formal statement that articulates the core values of a congregation. These are values that are consistent, passionate, Biblical/theological, and distinctive convictions that determine our priorities, influence our decisions, drive our ministry, and are always demonstrated by our behavior.

MINISTRY PLAN

A plan that shows the starting point(s) and process for delivering a ministry to the target population.

TARGET

The specific population that is the focus of ministry. There are three types of targets:

- 1- Geographic Targets: A geographical area that has been targeted for a congregation. It is defined by psychological boundaries, and most frequently is rapidly growing.
- 2- Ethnic Targets: An ethnic group with cultural or language distinctions that require a unique new church start.
- 3- Affinity Group Start: A target in which the people have either an affinity towards a specific generation, or affinity to a specific learning style, or other categories.

MODE

The style of NCP services to be delivered and the funding source(s). Examples include:

- 1- Bi-vocational: The NCP works in another vocation for financial support either part or full-time. The NCP receives partial support from the project income or sponsoring unit.
- 2- Sponsored: The NCP receives complete salary support from either a Region or host congregation or other source.
- 3- Appeal supported: The NCP receives some financial support from relatives, former contacts, and other personal relationships developed in the course of their ministry. This may also include people who have been identified as having an interest in the mission of the project.

STATUS

E Emerging Congregation: This congregation is not listed in the yearbook, but may be reported with an E status. It is a project that is in the visioning phase, but has not yet started gathering participants.

F Congregation in Formation: A congregation in formation is one in which a church planter is in the field, actively gathering a community that will eventually worship together. It has not yet attained charter status as defined by each region.

Y Chartered congregation: This congregation has completed steps towards charter as defined by the Region. It has been accepted by the Region formally, and is listed in the Yearbook as a recognized congregation.

A Affiliating: This is a congregation that is in the process of affiliation with the Region. It is reported to the Yearbook, but its listing does not appear in the yearbook. It receives an A designation for tracking purposes. It is also assigned a PIN number for Mission funding.

NESTING CONGREGATION

A congregation that meets in another congregation's facilities.

HOST CONGREGATION

A congregation that makes its facilities available for a forming congregation.

LEAD SPONSORING CONGREGATION

A church that is taking the lead in sponsoring a Churches Starting Churches project. This congregation is the lead partner with additional congregations, and keeps the work of the visioning process on track.

CHURCH MULTIPLICATION MOVEMENT

The churchwide movement toward starting new churches that after 5-10 years start planting new churches on their own.

THE IDEAL NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Starting new congregations is the work of God, not an institution. Walter Bruggemann said it best;

“In our moments of sanity we know that the issues of evangelism do not concern the health of the institutional church. The issue is rather that the life of creation, the fabric of human community, is deeply in jeopardy among us. The crisis of evangelism is a world question and not a church question.”

This Biblical and theological perspective should have impact on how we organize ourselves towards the task of starting congregations. The task of our Regional committees is not to make people adhere to policies, instead it is to reach out to the human community with a vital witness. While that seems simple, it is key to being not only effective, but being faithful to the challenge of “going forth”.

We cannot simply structure a New Church committee using the same parameters that we use for other important regional committees. Instead, this committee needs to be structured so that it facilitates action, not minutes. It is likely the only Regional committee that has something physical that takes form under its guidance. And when it is not working, there is nothing to show at the end of the day.

This has many implications for structuring Regional committees around the task of starting new churches. The committee must have a bias for action, fluid policies, and most importantly, a passion for reaching new people.

FORMING THE COMMITTEE

1) Don't select members based on where they live. The criteria should be their passion towards the task. In fact, it may be more beneficial to have a committee of passionate people that live within close proximity of each other.

2) Don't saddle the new church committee with the work of Revitalization. While somewhat similar, it is a complete different task that will take time away from the committee.

3) The task of developing congregations does not take a vacation, and is in constant change. A committee should meet at least 6 times annually. Like any new child, these new congregations require a lot of attention at first. 4) Recruit a great chair. This entrepreneurial, kingdom minded person doesn't have to do

all the work, but is one who can organize people around a vision. They will likely be clergy, and have a good understanding of church structures. They will also be able to organize a meeting, establish an agenda, and promote good communication throughout the Region.

5) Recruit someone who is willing to do research. This person would become the Regional demographer, and should be someone who has a computer and knows how to run a search engine.

6) Recruit a good secretary. This person is someone who takes good notes, can remind people of action items at the end of a meeting, and has an eye for details. This person has access to an office, can produce meeting notices and tracks the history of the projects and actions.

7) Appoint a Regional Liaison for the committee. This Regional staff person will have New Church in their portfolio, and be able to commit at least 10% of their time to this initiative. They know how to empower a chair, and support the committee with solid information about the entire life of the Region (including finances). This person has good communication skills, and is willing to be in partnership with the NCMT.

8) Select quality committee members. Since this is a working committee it is best to appoint people who will work between meetings. Each committee member will have eventual responsibility with a specific project as the Sponsor Representative to that project. They will be able to report progress of the project to the committee, as well as communicate the committees desires to the project coach. They are responsible for monitoring finances for the project, as well as the essentials of Disciples Ethos.

Once the committee is formed, it is important to begin organizing for the long term. Below is a list of initial steps committees should take during their first year.

STEP 1 ENGAGING THE REGION IN PRAYER

Starting new churches is a movement that requires prayer and centering. This kind of effort requires the mobilization of a broad cross section of the church as well. Most of us who work on New Church Committees value results, and often “blow through” spiritual preparation and prayer. Prayer however is central to the new church movement, and deserves focused attention.

An individual, or committee cannot start large numbers of new congregations. It is God’s work, and requires our listening to God, as well mobilizing the people of our existing churches to pray for those who are not in relationship with any faith community.

What this process will do for people in the Region is help them open themselves to the Holy Spirit who can ignite their passion for sharing the Gospel and give them motivation for starting new congregations.

A tested, proven resource entitled “ENGAGING THE REGION IN PRAYER” can be found in Appendix J. This process has been used widely in Kentucky and has been found effective. We commend it to you for your use.

STEP 2 DEMOGRAPHIC REVIEW

Before the committee begins planting its first church, it should be aware of the people you serve. This requires getting to know the Region. This step is often assumed, and is skipped. However if you begin without, you will discover that Passion around new church will wane.

Appendix A is a worksheet for the demographer to use in preparing for a demographic

review of the Region. While there is far more information than you can imagine available about your region, these basic questions will stimulate some significant conversations. This worksheet is only a starting point.

It is not important at this point to name new targets, but it is important to note the surprises that the data indicates, as well as the implications for your Region. Does the Region look like the face of the population you hope to serve?

STEP 2 WRITE THE MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

The mission of a new church committee must be focused. Unfortunately, about half of our regional committees also have responsibility for revitalization. While both responsibilities have numerous overlaps, they are distinct from one another and require our best attention. Ineffective committees have both in their portfolios. While the Region must be about the business of both, it would be better served to have two separate committees.

Regional committees used to establish new congregations. However, the rules have now changed and we are now working with individuals who start churches, Churches that start churches, and a number of affiliations that are coming into relationship with the region. Rightly, the mission of Regional Committees has changed. Of the first 33 congregations started in 2002, only 14% were started by Regions. If we were still dependent on Regions to initiate every project, we would have only started 10 congregations instead of the projected 45.

Instead of starting churches, effective Regional committees will facilitate a church multiplication effort in their region by encouraging all existing congregations to start new congregations as well as challenging new churches to include in their mission the goal of starting yet another church in 5-10 years. If you think about it, there are only thirty-three Regional committees. By giving spirited permission to congregations, and individuals, the Region will multiply its efforts a hundredfold.

'Remember the customer' is a phrase that successful businesses use. During the early efforts of starting congregations, we acted as if the Disciples of Christ were the customer. The truth is, however, that the customer is the unchurched. Our structures were established to make these new congregations accountable to the whole church (which seems funny in a system of congregational polity). The church does not exist to serve the denomination, the denomination exists to serve the local congregation and help it become effective in its ministry.

Therefore we would suggest that the mission of the New Church Committee should be something like this:

Out of recognition of God's love for all people, The New Church Committee's mission is to identify and call into relationship, people who have yet to experience the joy of Christ with new, authentic Disciple faith communities. By igniting the passion of our existing congregations, individuals who feel called, and this region we will facilitate the establishment of congregations.

STEP 3 WRITE THE VISION STATEMENT FOR THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

We all work better with goals. Effective new church committees will select a target goal for the year 2020. A vision statement for a committee will take some time and prayer. The NCMT has three formulas for goal setting that we can suggest to every Region.

- 1) Demographic Growth goal: This goal would be based on the population growth of your Region over the past 10 years. This calculates to a percentage of the whole, and that percentage of 1000 congregations would indicate the Region's demographic goal.
- 2) Strength Goal: This figure is based on three figures. Operating income for all congregations in the Region, Disciples outreach for all congregations, and Average Worship Attendance. We take the percentage of the whole of each of those figures, and average it. That average is the percentage of 1000 congregations that would indicate the Region's strength goal. This figure indicates what we believe a region is capable of doing.
- 3) Church Multiplication Goal: Based on the work of George Bullard, the multiplication goal is simple. For 2001-2006 the Region should grow the number of congregations by 1%. For 2006-2011, the growth rate should be 2%, and finally from 2011-2020 the growth rate should be 3%. While you come up with a large figure, this formula is very doable.

The NCMT has calculated the figures on the Regional Potential Spreadsheet (Appendix B).

Selecting the targets for these new congregations requires some intentionality and reflection on the values of your region. For example, what are the essentials of Disciple ethos that you would like these congregations to reflect? Also, is it the Region's hope to become more diverse? Are there some gentrified metropolitan areas that would benefit from a new congregation? Are there new geographic targets? Are there certain socioeconomic groups missing from the life of our Region?

Once these values and goals are set, the committee can then create a Vision Statement that would be similar to the one below:

It is our vision to facilitate the establishment of X congregations by the year 2020. We will seek to increase the ethnic diversity of our Region, as well as reach out to generations that are not generally represented in our churches. We will seek to plant a witness in new and rapidly growing communities and work with those who feel called for this ministry and facilitate their success.

ORGANIZING FOR BUSINESS

If we could wave a wand and select a premium New Church Committee, it would look like this:

CHAIR A business person who has extensive experience in marketing. This person knows how to organize an agenda, and keep people to the task at hand. They are passionate about the church, and recognize the opportunities that are present in the Region. They know how to delegate and check up on committee progress. When the meeting ends they have little to do, but everyone on the committee has a good idea of their responsibilities.

DEMOGRAPHER A person who has access to the internet and a keen interest in demographics. This person is curious about places and people and is able to read in-between the lines about what the data is saying. It would be excellent if this person had some marketing background as well.

SECRETARY This person would be the glue of the committee. They have good attention to details, keep careful notes of meetings and decisions, and mail reminder cards prior to meetings. This person would also represent the committee at other Regional meetings to free the chair of the networking responsibility.

PENTECOST OFFERING CHAIR The Pentecost offering offers an opportunity each year to communicate the goals, progress and needs of the New Church Movement in each region. To coordinate these efforts, each Region is encouraged to have a Pentecost Offering Chair. This person's role will be to enlist participation of local congregations in this special day offering, as well as see to it that the Region is represented in the Special Day Offering materials.

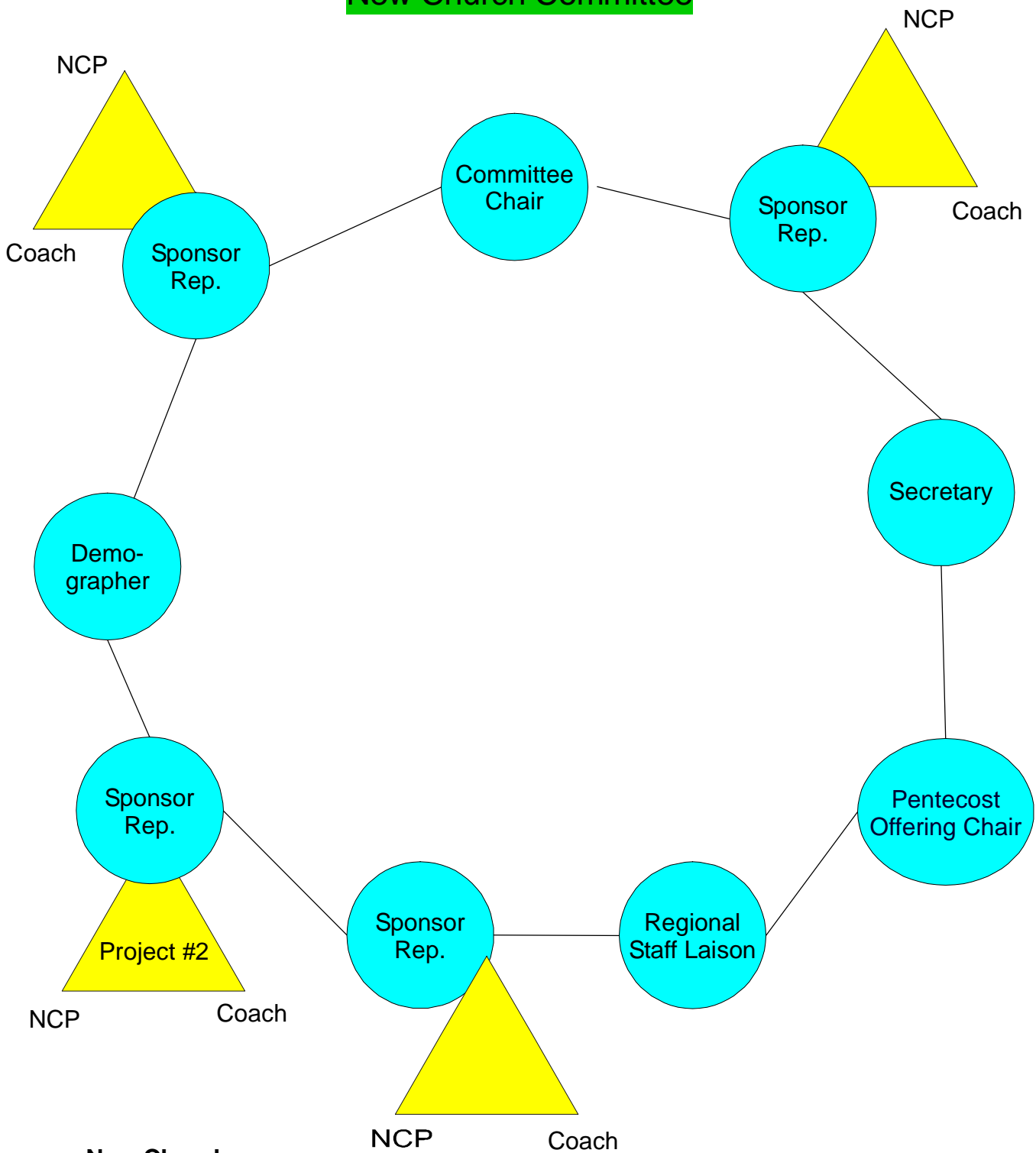
The Pentecost Special Day Offering is a tremendous opportunity to raise much needed funding for new congregations. While some funds are used for indirect support of new congregations, it is planned that 50-90% of the offering will be used for direct support of new churches. This can make a real difference.

The ideal Pentecost Offering chair is someone who knows the churches of the Region, and is able to establish networks of communication. This person could make direct contacts by phone, coordinate guest speaker with New Church Planters, or may even make direct appeals themselves through the Pentecost Season.

REGIONAL STAFF LIAISON This person has responsibility for New Church in their portfolio. They know how to empower the committee chair so that they are equipped to organize a meeting that meets the needs of the regional structure. They also have up to date knowledge of the New Church Budget, and the authority to make decisions regarding spending based on the budget.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS Each committee member would have a passion for the new church movement, and want to be involved with it closely. As a committee member, they may be asked to serve as the Sponsor Representative for a project. Ideally, there will be one committee member to represent each project at the table. They are also responsible for encouraging continued growth in the new congregation, as well as the essentials of Disciple ethos in the congregation.

The Ideal Regional New Church Committee



New Church Ministry Team
 Christian Church
 (Disciples of Christ)
www.newchurchministry.org

MINISTRY PLANS AND POLICIES FOR PROJECTS

Ministry Plans are strategic plans for “how” we plan on proceeding with establishing a new congregation. Each new church will have a Ministry Plan, but Regions will also need to have a plan for how to proceed with new congregations. The following plans are based on the ways in which projects initiate. They are meant to be a guide, not necessarily a policy. Remember, the goal of the New Church Movement is to start 1,000 new congregations in 1,000 different ways.

For too long now, we have made accountability and support a part of a committee's task for working with New Church Planters. It has been very awkward for these committees to push the planter for more results, while at the same time saying that they are praying for them. We recommend that each project have different groups working for single purposes. Prayer partners for emotional and spiritual support and an accountability triangle for the fiscal and Disciple ethos issues.

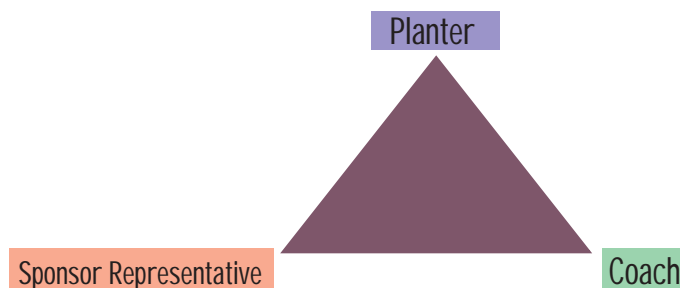
ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT PLANS

Every project has to have an Accountability and Support element in place before launching.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The NCMT calls this “Spirited Permission Giving”. While we are open to many new methods, and types of new congregations, we do have some values that are important to us as Disciples. Also, since we enjoy nonprofit status from the IRS, we have some fiscal responsibilities. This raises the question: How can we have accountability while supporting a “Permission Giving” atmosphere?

The Accountability Triangle



In the pastor developer model, the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) served well to provide a system of accountability to the sponsoring organization. However, as the pastor-developer model has become increasingly expensive and decreasingly effective, new models of starting churches have emerged. As these new models emerge, sponsoring organizations need newer and more effective models of accountability.

One challenge of the PAC was that it functioned similar to a church board. In fact, the idea was to rotate members of the new church onto the PAC, thereby creating a board for the new church. This tended to create churches that carried strong genetic ties to the sponsoring organi-

zation. Rather than the new church taking on characteristics, values and mission of its own, the new church reflected the sponsoring organization.

Healthy and effective churches are increasingly moving to team-based ministry. The PAC stands as an obstacle to that model of ministry in many cases, imposing instead a hierarchical board and committee structure. How do we provide the freedom for the church to reach pre-Christians, allow it to take on a genetic code of its own and yet provide accountability to the sponsoring organization and motivation to the new church planter?

The New Church Ministry Lead Team, working with the New Church Ministry of Church Extension, has suggested a **team** of three people to provide support and accountability for a church plant. These people are the church **planter**, a church planting **coach**, and a **sponsor representative**. Each person on the team is gifted, equipped and, in most cases, formally trained for their task.

Three people will serve as a committee that organizes the details of the new church project. After reaching agreement the "triangle" makes recommendations to the NCD Committee or sponsoring organization. The roles are fairly clear, with the New Church Planter as the main initiator of contact. Effective Triangles will meet together at least quarterly.

Existing congregations can determine expense needs a year or even two ahead. New churches however work more hand to mouth, with continuous adjustments. The triangle is meant to allow maximum flexibility, while maintaining accountability. It is a robust design.

THE NEW CHURCH PLANTER

The Planter is in the field, and directly involved with the mission. They are keepers of the Vision, and work towards finding ways to reach people with the new work. As they recognize new methods and ways of reaching people, they will propose changes to their ministry plan in relationship with the coach. Additionally, if they perceive a need for adjustments in the budget, they will work them through with the coach.

Ideally, New Church Planters are assessed, and trained by the NCM.

THE COACH

The Coach is trained and assessed by the NCMT to work with NCP's in their field. There are two kinds of coaches, formal and informal. Formal coaches are compensated, attend training events, and report regularly to the NCM. Ideally, our coaches have two years experience in the field of church planting or revitalization. They have also developed a self-sustaining congregation.

The coach is available twice each month to the planter, and usually will conduct a 45 minute contact by phone. These telephone conferences are initiated by the NCP. Our coaches will also organize cluster meetings with 2 additional projects in close proximity. The coach is also expected to visit the planter at their site annually. The coaching relationship lasts up to 2 years, at which time the new congregation has developed it's own mechanism for governing.

The Coaches role is to review the Ministry Plan, Vision, Mission and Values statements of the project with the planter. They work with the planter until these plans are clear and articulate. When the project is under way, the coach will come along-side the planter, to insure that the NCP is staying true to the design of the project. The coach will also encourage excellent self-care, and spiritual disciplines by the planter. The coach will also be a prayer partner for the project, praying for the planter and their family.

The coach also relates to the Sponsor Representative. In this capacity the coach serves as advocate for the planter. Should the planter and coach perceive the need for a change in the ministry plan, the Coach will advocate for the changes with the sponsor rep. Should the Sponsor Representative have concerns about the project, or its progress, they will contact the coach who will address those concerns in the next schedule contact with the planter.

THE SPONSOR REPRESENTATIVE.

While the Coach and NCP remain true to the Vision and Mission and Ministry plan of the project, the Sponsor Representative is the one who remains true to the Values of the project. These Values, which are determined by the NCD committee before launching projects, are clear statements about the "to die for" issues for Disciple congregations in that region. For example, if the concept of an open table is challenged by the new congregation, it is the role of the Sponsor Rep. to share concerns with the Coach.

The sponsor representative is also the keeper of funds from the sponsor organization. That means financial reports need to be made on a regular basis to the Sponsor Rep. for the New Congregation. These reports should be complete accounts of offerings as well as Sponsor organization income, to insure that the new congregation is operating under the guidelines of a non-profit organization.

Should the Sponsor Representative believe the congregation is off track, and is no longer in keeping with the values of the Sponsor organization, they can submit their misgivings to the Regional NCD committee for review.

The Sponsor Representative also serves on the Regional NCD committee. Should the project be sponsored by a congregation (Churches starting Churches) the Sponsor Rep. should be a member of the host congregation, and relate to the host congregation as well.

THE GOAL:

The goal of the Triangle, is to work with the forming congregation until it can get its own leadership in place. In harmony, the Triangle works towards supporting and nurturing the new congregation.

SUPPORT

When we talk about support in the New Church movement, we are not talking about money. Each new church planter will undergo a major challenge in their new church project. They will be challenged emotionally to keep up a positive spirit, while ministering to groups smaller than they expected. They will be spiritually challenged to trust God for the vision and wisdom for gaining success in this important kingdom work.

To support the New Church Planter, we would encourage that intentional emotional and spiritual support be provided for each new church project. This support can be manifested by a group of "intercessors" or even a group of colleagues in ministry who gather for the expressed purpose of supporting the NCP in their project.

INTERCESSORS God gives vision and direction, material and human resources, the necessary strength and courage for new church leaders. These gifts are released through prayer. Each new church project must have a group of people praying regularly for the effort. These intercessors should be selected by the NCP and asked to make a commitment for 6 months. The NCP should select people known to be people of prayer who have expressed passion for reaching new people through new churches. They need to be people with whom the NCP can easily relate and who can share the vision for the new church. They need to be vitally involved in a congregation, but will probably not be part of the core group of the new church. There should be 10-12 intercessors called. Do NOT confuse intercessors by requesting financial support from them.

The intercessors are asked to pray daily for the planter, the planter's family and the project. At least once a week the NCP communicates with the intercessors (probably through an e-mail message), sharing specific prayer requests and how previous requests have been answered. The intercessors can communicate with the NCP to offer any insights that have come through their prayer and to offer encouragement. At the end of each 6 month period the NCP should check with the intercessors to see if they still feel called to this ministry and want to commit for another 6 months. The NCP should have intercessors through the first several years of the project.

A person of prayer once said, "Where prayer focuses, the power falls". Intercessors offer their love and energy to be used by God to meet the needs of the NCP and the new church. Their prayer ministry is crucial. Regular communication from the NCP helps them remain faithful and focused in their prayer. Communicating with the intercessors will also help the NCP in his or her own prayer life, as he or she expresses needs in terms of prayer requests and shares perceived answers to prayer.

SUPPORT GROUPS The NCP also needs a group with whom to share hopes, joys, fears, failures and celebrations. Ideally, the NCP will work with a coach who is also working with other new church planters. The coach can facilitate a quarterly gathering for these new church leaders to provide support and ongoing training. Even without a coach, the NCP can form a group to meet with him or her at least once a quarter to provide friendship, emotional support and spiritual undergirding. The group can be colleagues in ministry or lay people the NCP respects and feels comfortable with. The group covenant with the NCP to meet regularly, to keep confidentiality, and to keep him or her in prayer.

Each gathering can begin with an update by the NCP on celebrations and concerns in church life and family life. Members of the group listen, express concern, and ask questions, but do not offer advice unless the NCP specifically asks for their ideas or suggestions. Although members of the group may share from their experience, the focus remains on the life and ministry of the NCP. The NCP can also share personal prayer and spiritual growth issues. The group gathering concludes with a time of prayer together.

MINISTRY PLAN FOR NEW CHURCH PLANTERS

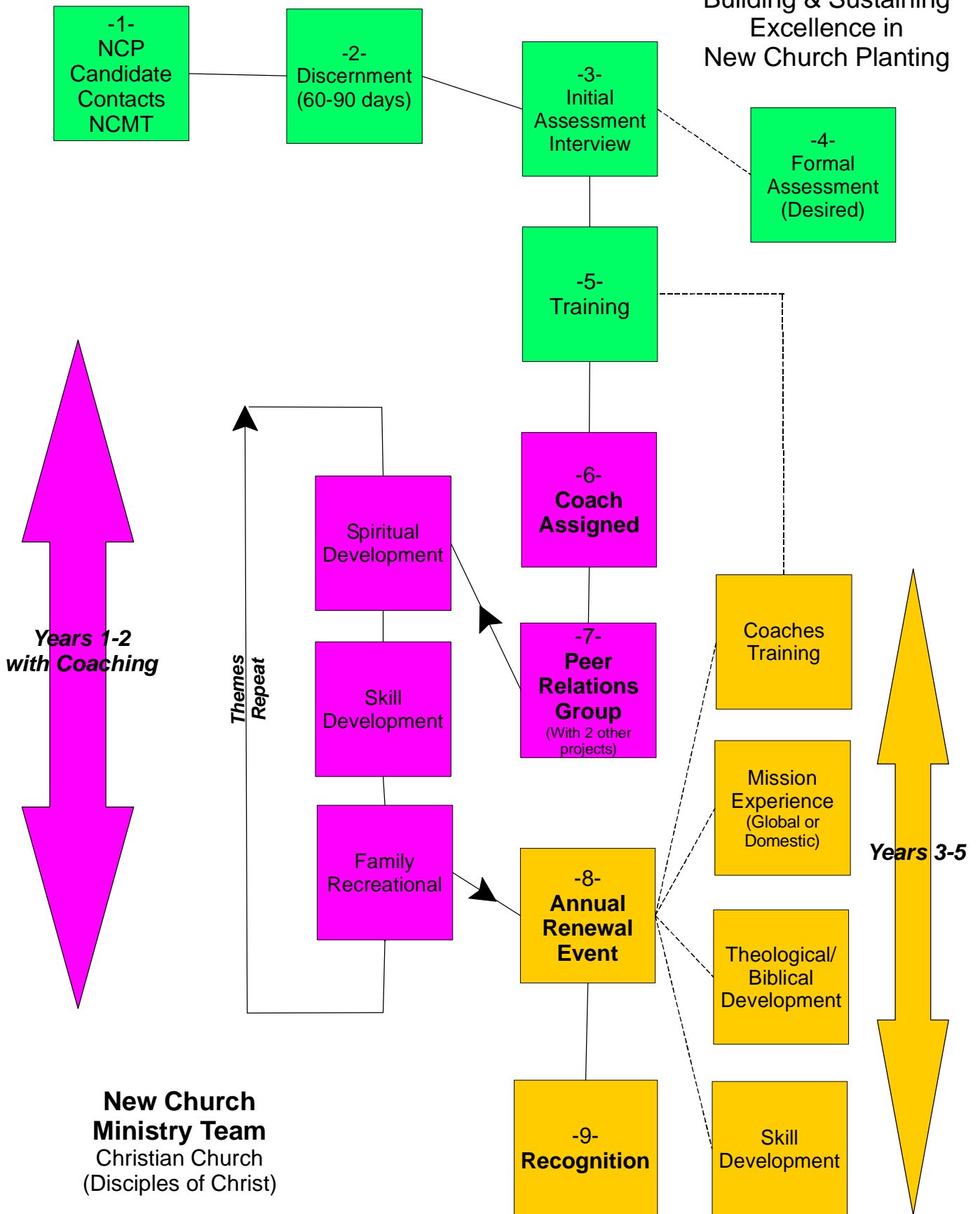
The first flow chart (on the following page) is related to the way in which we deal with New Church Planters, from the time they begin to consider this ministry until they have completed the first five years of their project. After much prayer and reflection, as well as some conversations with some national consultants, the NCMT has devised a flow chart for the ideal way to engage NCP's during the first 5 years of this special ministry.

Not every NCP will follow this chart in its entirety. For one thing, it will take us several years to develop enough coaches to coach the growing number of new projects. Some NCP's have successfully started projects in the past and needed little or no training. Affiliation congregational pastors need other vehicles.

For most new church planters, this model will provide the essentials that are evident in successful new church plants: 1) Assessment 2) Training, and 3) Coaching. We have added additional elements to this plan that are beyond the essentials, namely: Discernment, Peer Relation groups, and renewal opportunities. We believe these additional elements will save our NCP's from burnout, while being more effective in their ministry area.

PROGRAM DESIGN

Building & Sustaining
Excellence in
New Church Planting



The New Church Ministry Team of Church Extension has taken some important steps in helping potential new church pastors start well in assessing their gifts and calling and in providing initial training.

1. The initial contact with New Church Ministry Team (Box 1) can come through our web site, a telephone call to our office, or a conversation with one of the Team members in the field.
2. When the candidate requests further help with discerning a call to be a new church pastor, The New Church Ministry Team sends a document we have created called "Discernment Guide for Potential New Church Planters" (Box 2). This discernment process involves 90 days of prayer with scripture passages, taking a "Spiritual Gifts Inventory," talking with new church pastors, and filling out an application for the new church ministry pool of recommended new church pastors.
3. When the team receives the completed application, two of the Team members conduct an Initial Assessment Interview with the candidate, usually by conference call (Box 3). Interview questions are designed to make apparent whether the candidate has demonstrated some of the qualities of effective new church planters. Team members write an "Initial Assessment Report," describing the candidate's strengths and weaknesses for new church ministry. A copy of the report is sent to the candidate to help with his or her ongoing discernment. A determination is made by the Team as to whether this person should continue with the process and receive training in new church ministry.
4. In some cases, there is a sponsoring body which asks the New Church Ministry Team for the Initial Assessment Interview of a candidate. If these sponsors have the resources to pay for a formal assessment with a behavioral psychologist, the team recommends this step and refers the candidate to a psychologist who does in-depth assessment interviews (Box 4). We have currently identified 3 psychologists who conduct behavioral assessments for potential new church pastors: one is in Indiana, another in California, and the third in Georgia.
5. Candidates who have potential for new church ministry and pastors who are already working with a project in its initial stages are invited to a week-long intensive training event (Box 5). This training is led by the New Church Ministry Team, by effective new church pastors and by other denomination partners. During the week participants develop clear and compelling statements of the vision, mission, and values of their new church projects. They also develop a Ministry Plan, which outlines how the new church will attract and assimilate new people. Participants sharpen skills in critical areas such as evangelism, marketing, small group development, leader development, stewardship development. The vision for church multiplication (that this new church will start other new churches) is instilled. Important time is spent in worship, prayer, biblical study and theological reflection.

A

A grant from the Lilly Endowment makes possible a system for ongoing support, training, and nurture of new church pastors. This is indicated by the pink and yellow boxes.

6. We link coaches with new church pastors (Box 6) at the training event. The coaches will work with the pastors for the first two years of their new church ministries. Good coaches are critical for the effectiveness of this program and will be carefully selected and trained before being matched with new church pastors. Coaches need to have the following qualifications:

- Effective leader of a new church start within the last 7 years
- Spiritually and biblically grounded
- Good listening skills
- Good communication skills
- Ability to care and yet challenge
- Creative thinking to help develop strategies for each unique context
- Ability to encourage and motivate
- Knowledge of the skills needed for effective starting of new churches and the ability to help the new church pastor develop his or her skills
- Maturity and integrity
- Displays the passion to reach new people for Christ through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- A willingness to devote time and energy to this ministry of new church pastor support

Those who are selected and trained to be coaches will be paired with 3 new church pastors in the initial stages of their projects. Coaches and new church pastors will participate together in the training event offered by the new church ministry team and its partners to develop initial strategy together and to build relationships. The coach will make one on-site visit per year to each project and will communicate with each new church pastor at least once a month by phone, fax, or e-mail for the two-year period. This support and accountability relationship is represented by the pink arrow on the left side of the flow chart. Coaches will be compensated for these many hours of valuable ministry, and will be reimbursed for their mileage and other expenses.

During the two years, coaches work with the new church pastors in keeping a clear focus on the vision, mission, and values of the project, in engaging in theological reflection and in developing strategies for fulfilling the mission. They help pastors set priorities and goals, and accomplish them. Coaches help pastors deal with challenges and obstacles, learning from failures, celebrating victories and finding patience when it is needed. They encourage spiritual growth and healthy balance with work and family life. Coaches work with the sponsors of the project in holding the new church pastor accountable for good ministry performance. The coach is the one who communicates directly with the new church pastor. Having been a new church pastor, the coach will understand the dynamics of this pioneering ministry and can communicate concerns of the sponsoring bodies in a helpful way. The coach can also serve as an advocate for the new church pastor with the sponsors.

We envision a much more productive accountability system as well as a support system through the ministry of the coaches. The accountability models of steering committees and project advisory committees that were often counter-productive in the past can be replaced with the model of the "Accountability Triangle", involving the new church pastor, the coach and a liaison with the sponsoring bodies, which may be a congregation, a cluster of congregations, or a region. Thus, through the ministry of the coaches, the need for more intentional support for the new church pastors and the need for a better accountability structure are both filled.

7. In addition to the work done one on one with three new church pastors, the coach will facilitate gatherings of the key leaders from the three projects he or she mentors (Box 7). These gatherings are called "Peer Groups". The Peer Group meets three times a year and includes lay leaders from each of the projects as well as the new church pastors. Coaches will be assigned new churches in geographical proximity with each other to facilitate the regular meeting of the Peer Groups.

The Peer Group may also include liaisons from sponsoring groups. The liaison is a prayer partner for the new church and participates in the Peer Group so that he or she can learn everything the new church leaders are learning.

The Peer Group will meet for its first session at the New Church Ministry training event, and will covenant to stay together for the first two years. Together the Peer Group participants design the format and content for the 6 sessions they will experience, and the coach takes the primary responsibility for facilitating those sessions. One session each year will deal with skill development for new church leaders. This might include bringing a widely respected resource person, such as church consultant George Bullard, to the gathering. It might involve taking the participants to a teaching church or a seminar, or discussing an appropriate resource. One session each year will engage new church pastors and their families in a recreational event. This event will allow the families to discuss issues related to church planting ministry and family life. A third event each year will deal with spiritual disciplines and ministry practices, and may include a retreat, a meeting with a spiritual director or seminary faculty member, or attending an event focusing on spiritual development. Of course, each session will include time to check in with one another for the sharing of ideas and challenges, as well as time for worship and prayer together. The coach will also encourage the participants to contact one another between sessions so that this triad of new churches will become a source of support for one another during this initial period and beyond.

8. The New Church Ministry Team will provide an annual event for new church pastors from across the country (Box 8). This is an event for any pastor in the first 5 years with a new congregation and will provide opportunities for worship and prayer, for networking with other new church pastors across the church, and for individual consultation with the New Church Ministry Team or other denominational partners. This event is also for coaches. It provides the setting for training new coaches and for face to face sharing with those already doing coaching ministry. The Renewal Event allows coaches the opportunity to network with and learn from each other. A skills development component will also be offered for coaches at the

Renewal Event. The focus of this component will be determined by the weaknesses coaches have identified in their coaching ministry through the year. The New Church Ministry Team will arrange for a resource person to help the coaches strengthen their skills in these weak areas.

9. During the first two years of the Sustaining New Church Pastoral Excellence process (Yellow Arrow to the Right), new church pastors deepen their faith, learn basic skills of starting a new church, establish a good life pattern of practicing spiritual disciplines and attending to important relationships. After two years the congregation has grown in numbers, has become a worshipping community, and is likely starting an active program life. While this kind of growth is often invigorating, there are new kinds of challenges on the horizon. The life cycle of new congregation establishment is such that membership changes radically in the first five years. Persons who were highly invested in the initial evangelism projects often do not stay to invest in the development of program life. What is more, the “institutionalization” of the new church involves a new set of skills which include organizational development as well as the ability to initiate building or renovation projects.

This new rhythm of ministry in the program development phase of years 3-5 requires a different kind of engagement with the new church pastor. Peer networks, continuing education, and denominational support are all still imperative, but in different ways. In years 3-5 of a new church ministry, it is important to expand the pastor’s world with opportunities to experience other contexts, cultures, and even countries. Continuing to engage in rigorous theological and Biblical reflection are necessary to help the congregation grow in mission and witness. Continuing to learn new church skills and being in settings that will rekindle passion for new church ministry are also important.

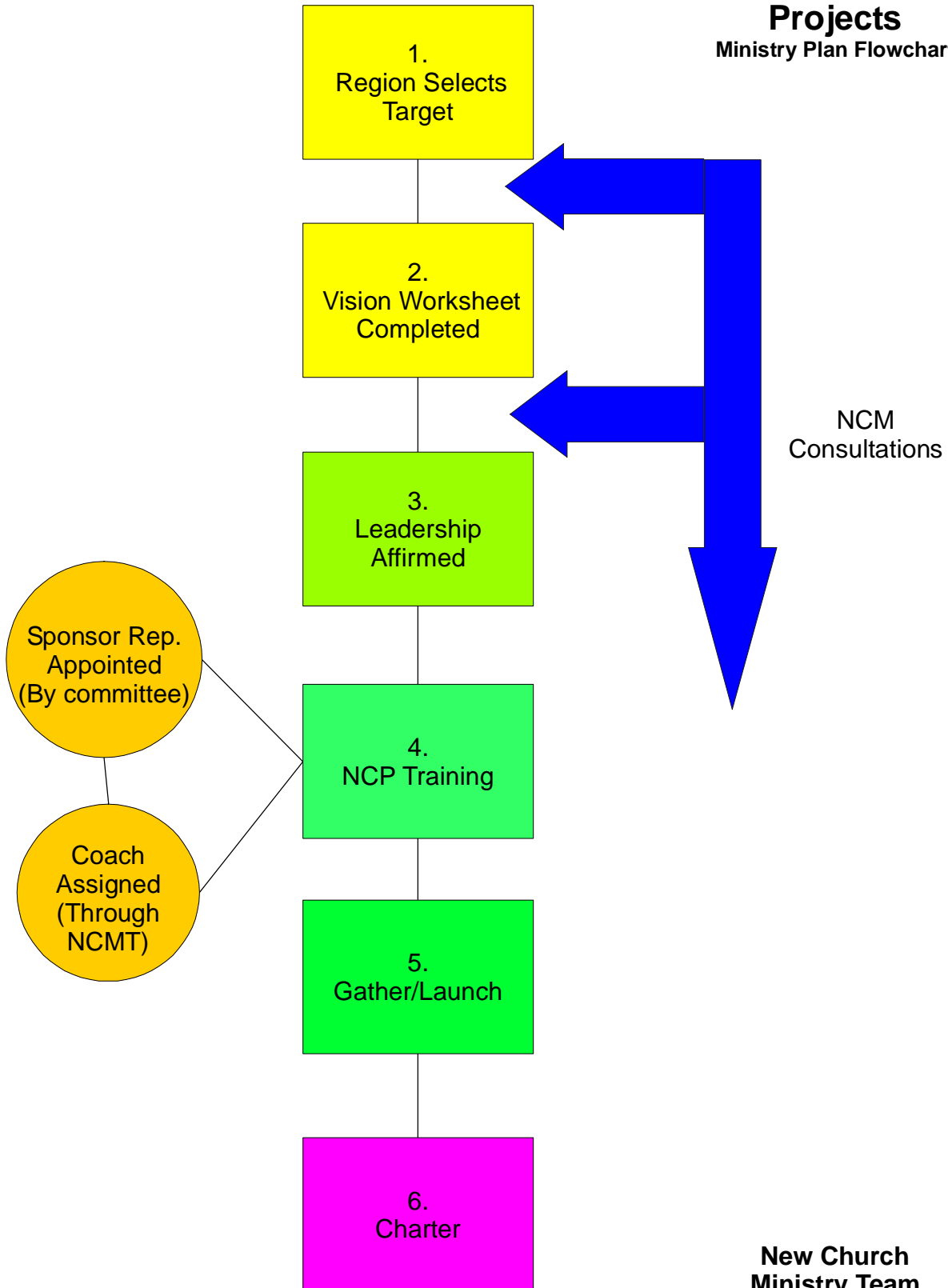
To meet the challenges and needs of years 3-5, the New Church Ministry Team and their partners will provide a list of a number of growth events and learning opportunities for ministry enhancement. The list will be developed in response to what the new church pastors and coaches say they need.

Partnerships for continuing education in seminaries will be developed so that continuing education events are specific to sustaining the excellence of new church pastors. In addition, partnerships with Regions, the Division of Overseas Ministries, and Homeland Ministries will be enhanced so that new church pastors are more fully connected to the resources needed for program and personal development. The Division of Overseas Ministries has already committed to offering overseas mission experiences for new church pastors, providing not only the mission guides but also scholarship funds for help connecting new church local and global mission. In addition to the list of events pastors can choose from, new church pastors will be invited to submit proposals (and receive funding) for creative initiatives which can enhance their effectiveness. In year 3, new church leaders will have the opportunity to apply for a coaching position. These positions will be offered to leading candidates. Coaching allows new church pastor to continue learning the art of new church ministry, to make a significant contribution to the new church movement.

Those invited to become coaches will participate in training for coaches and be paired with new church pastors whom they will mentor. They will facilitate Peer Relations Groups so as to perpetuate the coaching process with a new group of new church pastors and leaders.

REGIONALLY INITIATED PROJECTS

Regionally Initiated Projects Ministry Plan Flowchart



**New Church
Ministry Team**
Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
www.newchurchministry.org

In 2002, 14% of all new church starts were Regionally Initiated. That means that a Regional committee selected the target area, came up with the vision and funding, and placed a New Church Planter in the field to develop a congregation.

To accomplish the 2020 goal of establishing 1,000 new congregations, Regions will need to establish about 30% of the new congregations. Regional committees can be effective in planting new congregations when the following elements exist: 1) A highly committed and skilled committee, 2) Established partnerships with the NCMT, and 3) the willingness of members to work outside of committee meetings.

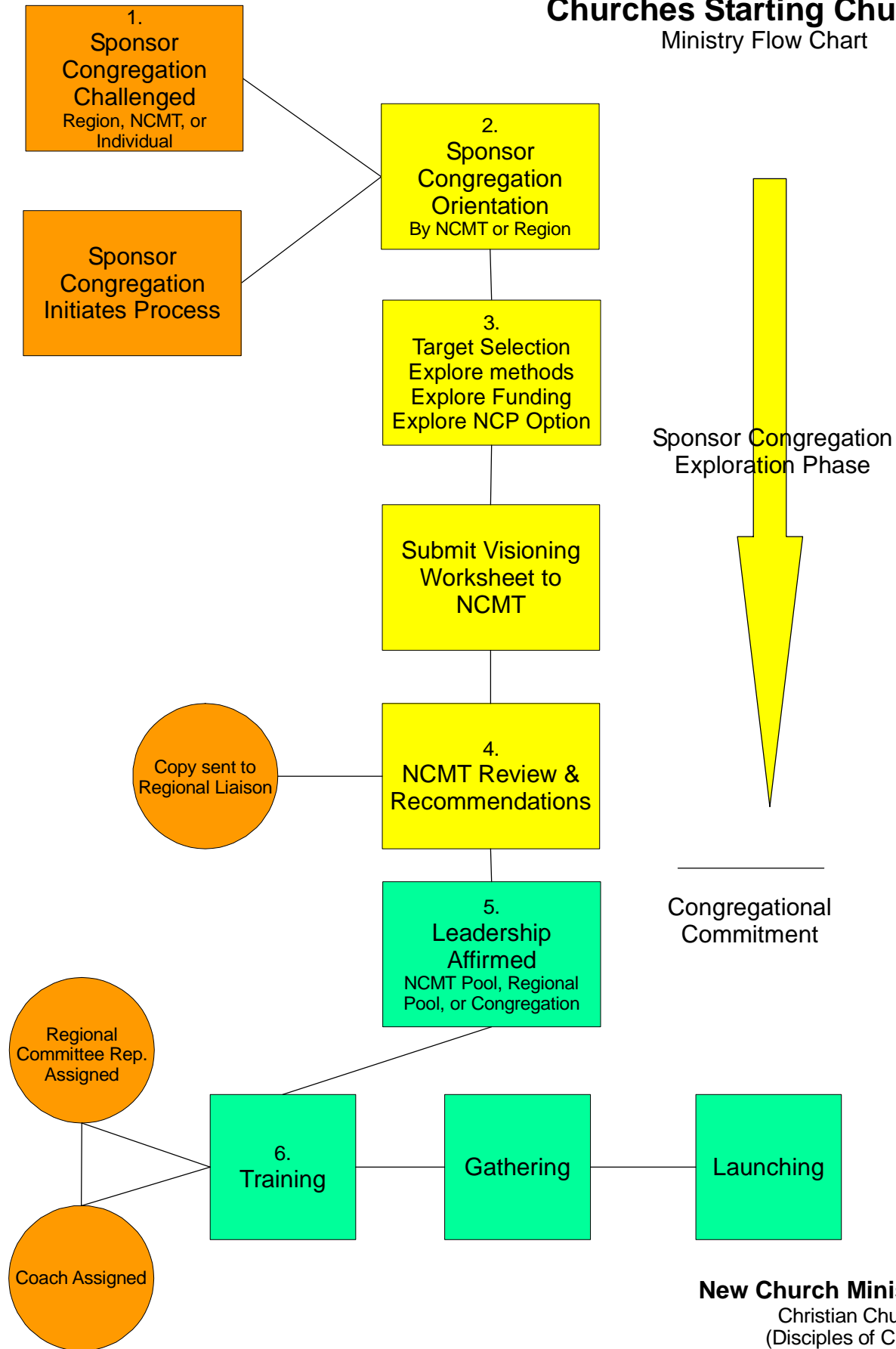
Regionally initiated projects are important. They can establish certain kinds of ministries that local congregations may not be interested in forming. For example, in some regions, there is a large need for establishing ethnic congregations. Local congregations may not be interested or have the resources to be successful in those efforts.

Regional committees will also have to continue to monitor Individually initiated, and Church initiated projects as well as affiliations. That means an effective regional committee will be engaged in challenging people to start churches as well as setting the path by establishing congregations too.

1. REGION SELECTS TARGET
Sometimes the Region cannot get a local congregation motivated to start a new church in a specific area, or for a specific target. In that case, the Regional committee needs to act as a Visioning committee for a new project. This is especially true for the establishment of ethnic congregations or generational groups.
2. VISION WORKSHEET COMPLETED
Just like a Visioning group, the Vision Worksheet (Appendix C) can be completed. If you wish, you can send it to the NCMT for review.
3. LEADERSHIP AFFIRMED
In a similar fashion, the Regional committee can seek leadership for the new work utilizing the best search methods of the Region. Like always, the NCMT would be happy to assist your committee with the selection process.
4. NCP TRAINING
From this point on the Ministry plan is like others. Once the accountability triangle is in place the Regional committee will no longer have oversight of the project and will rely on the Regional Representative to report progress, and funding needs.

CHURCH INITIATED PROJECTS

Churches Starting Churches Ministry Flow Chart



New Church Ministry Team
 Christian Church
 (Disciples of Christ)
www.newchurchministry.org

We project that 60-80% of all new congregations will have to be Congregationally initiated if we are to reach 1000 new congregations by 2020. That means nearly half our congregations need to be engaged in starting churches! These congregations will not likely volunteer without an invitation to become engaged in this ministry. Therefore our Ministry plan will include a process for approaching host congregations.

Congregational strength can help determine which congregations can be effective in starting a new church, but it is not the only determining factor. In selecting host congregations, a region should consider the growth rate of existing churches too. Congregations that have a significant outward focus will be successful in this initiative, regardless of their size.

Generally speaking, congregations that average 200 or more in Average Worship Attendance (AWA) should have the resources to start a new congregation. Congregations between 100-200 AWA can partner to establish churches, while congregations with an AWA of 100 or less should consider triads for developing new churches.

For Regions to be successful in this arena of new church development they must select congregations and challenge them to start a new congregation. The wait and see method does not work.

1. CHALLENGE

You can attract host congregations in several ways. 1) Invite a cluster of congregations to a "Come and See" workshop introducing the new church movement. 2) Call and challenge the congregation personally by approaching the pastor and at least 2 key leaders personally. 3) Offer "incentive grants" to congregations that are willing to start a new church. These grants could be \$5000-\$6000, per year, renewable up to three times. The NCMT has a speakers list of individuals who would travel to your region as well as our team members, who are always looking for opportunities to "ignite the passion". Another resource is the free Churches Starting Churches manual which can be downloaded at www.newchurchministry.org.

2. ORIENT

Once a congregation or cluster is serious about starting a new church, the NCMT would be happy to send a representative to orient a steering committee. This orientation would enable the steering committee to select a target, explore an initial budget, and give some thought towards the needs of the target and how a new church would be helpful. Additionally, the committee will describe the ideal NCP to work in the target.

3. EXPLORE

A Vision Worksheet (Appendix C) will be given to the steering committee to complete and return to the NCMT.

4. REVIEW

That worksheet, with NCMT suggestions, will be forwarded to the congregation and

Regional Staff Liaison.

5. AFFIRM LEADERSHIP

Once completed, the steering committee will add a sponsor rep. This person can be from either the Regional New Church Committee or the steering committee can appoint a member of their committee to add to the Regional New Church Committee. At this point the steering committee becomes a search committee that affirms leadership either from the NCMT Pool, the host congregation, or a regional pool. The search is done in compliance with Regional search policies, but also includes qualified lay persons who could be licensed by the Region. If a candidate is selected from outside the NCMT Pool, we would encourage assessment by the NCMT before extending a call.

Please note that this selection is very important. The success of the new congregation depends a lot on the decision that this committee makes. It may take from one year to 18 months to make a decision.

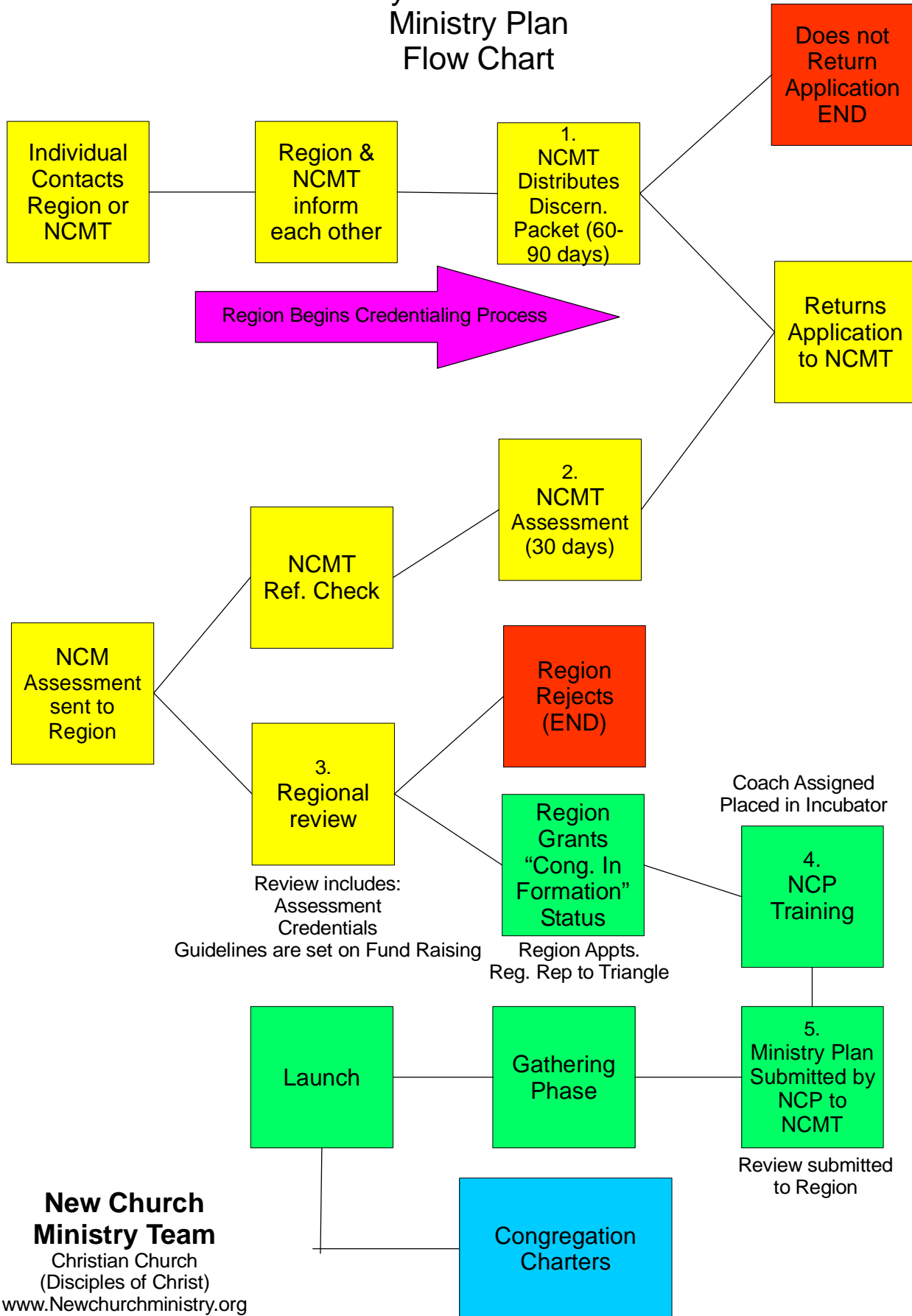
6. TRAINING

Once leadership is affirmed, the steering committee continues to work with the NCP until he or she can attend training and receive a coach. The NCMT will offer training at least once a year and assign a coach and cluster group to the project. (See leadership Ministry Plan) Coaches and Clusters are only available to projects that attend NCMT training.

Once the coach is in place, the accountability triangle begins to work, replacing the steering committee, except for the Sponsor Rep. who continues with the project for the next two years. The goal is for the congregation to take responsibility for its own budget at the end of two years.

INDIVIDUALLY INITIATED PROJECTS

Individually Initiated New Church Ministry Plan Flow Chart



New Church Ministry Team
Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
www.Newchurchministry.org

More than a third of recent new church projects have been Individually Initiated Projects. In some cases, an ordained pastor is the trailing spouse to an area without a Disciple congregation and decides to start one. In other cases, some pastors and lay people have been infected with a vision to plant a new church, and that vision won't let them rest until its done.

We used to send those people to counseling (haha). However, a reflection of scripture sets numerous precedence for this kind of call and for what our response should be. The NCMT values these explorers of the faith and believes that it is not our place to determine the authenticity of their call. We will work to help them seek funding, to train them, and even to assess them, as long as they work with the Region towards credentialing.

These projects have been difficult for Regions, as few have any policy for dealing with these types of calls. The proposed ministry flow chart addresses some of the issues that have hampered both individuals and regions in the Establishment of these exciting new congregations.

Communication between the NCMT and the Region is extremely important in these projects. The NCMT will make contact with the Regional Liaison, who in turn will advise the Regional New Church Committee. In addition, the NCMT assumes that the Region takes responsibility on credentialing candidates and is in conversation with the individuals.

1. DISCERNMENT
When an individual announces their intentions to start a new congregation, and makes contact with our office, we invite them to pause for 30-90 days for Discernment and begin the credentialing process. The spiritual discernment process is important to allow the individual confirm their call from God for this project.

2. ASSESSMENT
If they return the application at the end, the NCMT sets up an Assessment and makes a report to the Region, along with a reference check. This neither confirms nor denies a call. It suggests strengths and weaknesses related to this ministry. Its purpose is to help the NCP prepare for this ministry.

3. REVIEW
Once the Region either recognizes their ordination, or gives the candidate a license, the Regional New Church Committee offers the individual a "Congregation in Formation" Review. During this review, the assessment is reviewed and guidelines are established for fund raising for the project. A favorable review grants the Church Planter "Congregation in Formation" status which allows the NCP to raise funds, and give charitable tax credits. It also gives the region an opportunity to offer encouragement to the NCP, and perhaps make an incentive grant. The Region can make plans to send the NCP to training with the NCMT at this time as well. The NCP may begin to gather the new congregation, but should be discouraged from launching worship with the new project until training can be completed.

At this point, the Regional New Church Committee appoints a Sponsor Representative from the committee. The NCP may choose at this time to select a group of prayer partners.

4. TRAINING

Once the NCP has attended NCMT training, they will be assigned a coach who completes their triangle.

5. SUBMISSION OF MINISTRY PLAN

At training they will submit a ministry plan for their project for review by the NCMT. This plan, with NCMT comments, will be forwarded to the Regional Liaison who in turn will submit it to the Regional New Church Committee. The congregation will then follow the plan towards development.

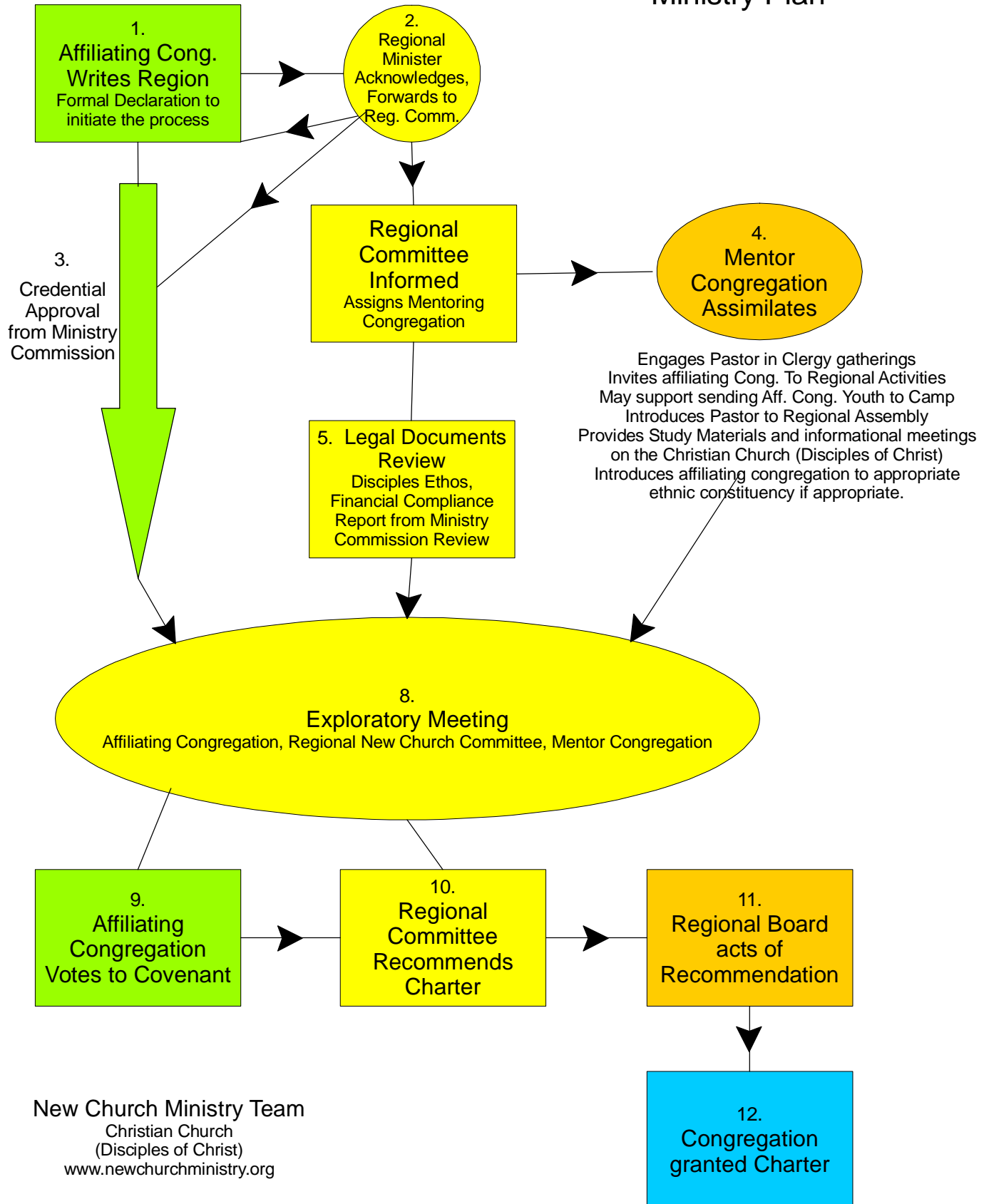
It is important to note that Individuals starting new congregations often feel that the Region puts too many roadblocks in front of their project. It is important to communicate with the individual early on what the process is and remind them that their regional and national partners are only interested in their success and that we are not trying to control their vision or call. Most will appreciate the support and backing.

If the individual is a new Disciple, it may prove worthwhile to introduce a mentor pastor from a neighboring congregation. This mentor will be responsible for introducing the individual to Disciple ethos, and for assimilating the NCP into regional and district life.

Many of our fastest and least expensive new church starts have been completed by individuals. Most are bi-vocational and deeply committed. Their congregations develop deeply committed individuals as well. This form of new church start is very worthy of our support and attention. Most of these individuals will have little regard for demographics, and may want to start congregations in areas that are nonviable. It is important to show them the data, but in the end it has to be their call.

AFFILIATIONS

Congregational Affiliation Ministry Plan



Many ethnic congregations have been welcomed to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the affiliation process. These congregations often sprang up spontaneously and are often looking for a church building to nest in. That nesting can often lead to affiliation with the denomination. (See Appendix E for more discussion on the difference between nesting and renting).

Painfully, sometimes the congregation is only interested in the nesting arrangement and takes on the denominational name only until they decide to move to another building. A good affiliation process will engage the new congregation into FULL participation with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and assimilate them into the life of the church.

Affiliations are a good thing. They give us the chance to increase our diversity, while often times giving us a chance to work with groups and increase our witness. An affiliation with our first Vietnamese pastor produced 3 more Vietnamese congregations within 5 years. This obviously got our foot in the door with the 4th largest Asian population in the United States. During the writing of this document, some additional inroads have been made with Indonesian congregations. We could never have done this intentionally. These congregations are truly a gift. There are, however, large groups of people in the growing fabric of American diversity which the Disciples have yet to reach and affiliations will help our church look like the communities we serve.

As a church, we have been called to hospitality towards all people. Our church is a place of the "Welcome Table." Regional new church committees that recognize their roles in terms of hospitality instead of accountability will be successful with affiliations. Please review appendices E and F on nesting and sensitivity towards ethnic groups.

AFFILIATION PROCESS GUIDELINES

There are a few steps in the affiliation process. Regional policies generally follow these steps in some fashion.

1. A congregation seeking to affiliate with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) writes to the Region or Area indicating the desire to initiate the process. Included in that letter are as many of the following as are available:
 - Congregation's History
 - Core Values and Beliefs
 - Vision/Mission Statement
 - Reason for seeking affiliation
 - Membership lists
 - Worship Attendance records for the past year
 - Constitution or description of how the congregation is governed
 - Names of board officers
 - Financial Reports of the past 3 years
 - Current Budget
 - Names of ministerial staff and intention of staff to affiliate with Disciples of Christ
 - Biographical notes on ministerial staff
 - Congregation is listed in the Yearbook with an "A" status

2. Once this application is received, the Regional or Area Minister refers the file to the new Church Commission/Committee.
3. The ministerial staff of the affiliating congregation initiate the process of obtaining standing in the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the Regional Commission on the Ministry.
4. The New Church Committee appoints a partner congregation and a mentor, an individual leader from that congregation, to provide support and guidance throughout the affiliation process. The New Church Committee informs the affiliating congregation that a partner congregation and a mentor have been appointed for them.
5. The Committee also reviews the constitution or governing documents of the affiliating congregation to see if changes need to be made to reflect Disciples values and ways of governance.
6. The Committee works with the affiliating congregation on legal status issues, such as their Employee Identification Number, their Incorporation Papers, their Non-Profit Status.
7. The New Church Committee provides study materials for the affiliating congregation which may include the following:*

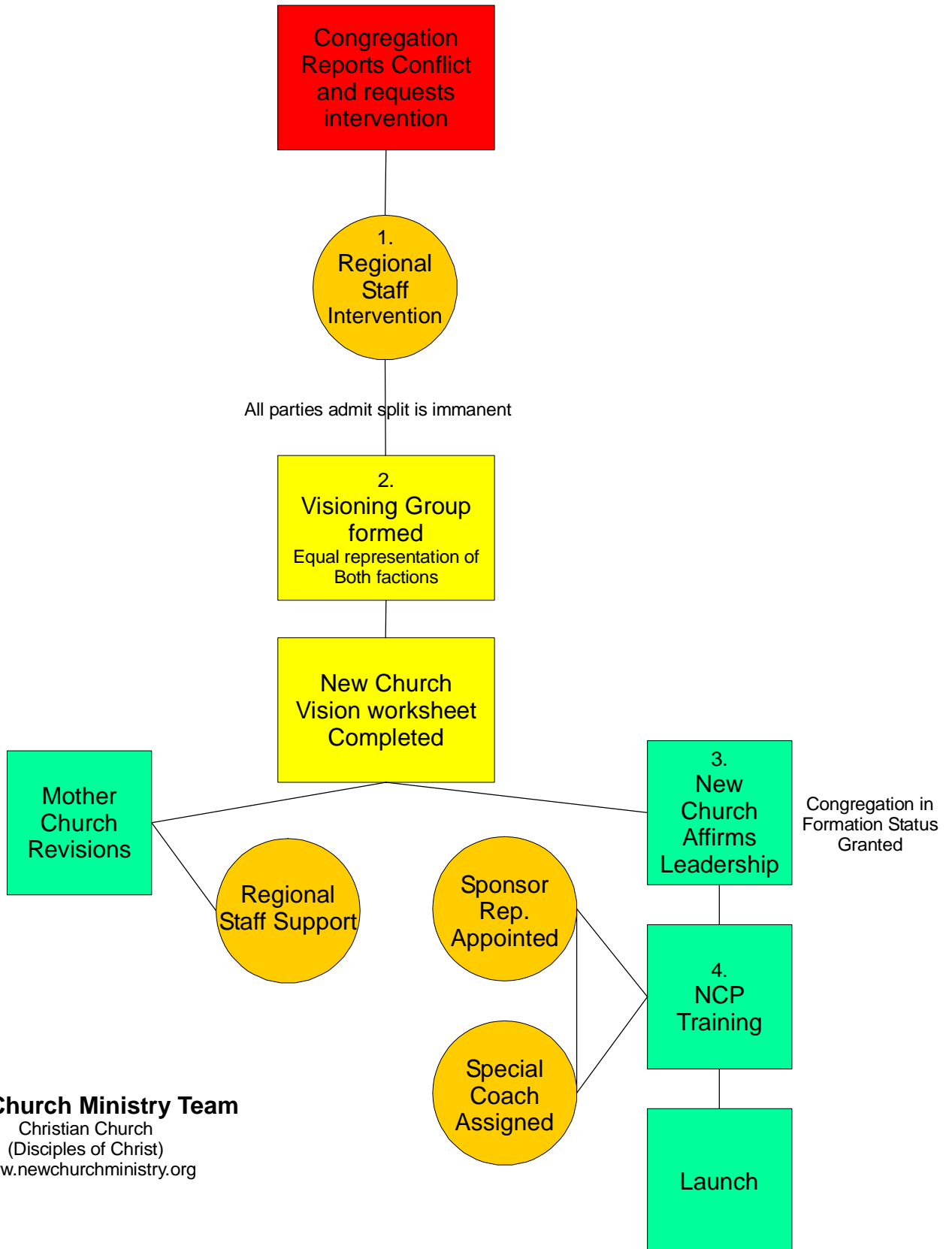
A Handbook for Today's Disciples, by Duane Cummings (available from CBP)
 A Mini-History of the Christian Church, (available from CBP)
 "A Church for Today" Video (available from Communications Ministries of the Christian Church in Indianapolis 317-713-2493)
 Materials from the Disciples Web Site (www.disciples.org)
 Sample copies and subscription forms for "Disciple World" magazine and the Regional or Area Newsletter
 Information about Disciples Mission giving opportunities

*Efforts will be made to provide materials in the language of the congregation

8. The New Church Committee and the Regional/Area Minister provide an Exploratory Session on the basic beliefs and practices of the Disciples of Christ, with a question and answer time. The three manifestations of the church are explained. The affiliating congregation is encouraged to begin supporting the mission of the wider church through BMF and Special Day Offerings.
9. The Mentor makes sure that the Partner Congregation has regular contact with the Affiliating Congregation, sharing worship and fellowship. The Partner Congregation encourages the Affiliating Congregation to participate in all the activities of the Regional and General Church, such as Regional Assemblies, Youth Camps, Women's Retreats, Men's Retreats, etc.

10. The Affiliating Congregation engages in study and discernment for at least 6 months. In accordance with the congregation's by-laws, the congregation decides to affiliate by approving and signing the "Congregation in Formation" covenant (Appendix D), and informing the Regional/Area Minister of their decision in writing.
11. The New Church Committee decides whether to make a recommendation to the Regional/Area Board that the congregation be officially acknowledged as a "Congregation in Formation" at this stage.
12. The Regional/Area Board acts on the recommendation.
13. If the Board's decision is affirmative, the congregation is given a Yearbook "Y" designation.
14. The affiliating congregation is acknowledged at Area and Regional Assemblies.

It is important to recognize that we are not talking about a one-way relationship here. It is important to learn about the congregation, its life, vision, mission and values. Nobody wants to be a part of a one-way relationship.



New Church Ministry Team
 Christian Church
 (Disciples of Christ)
www.newchurchministry.org

We don't make a big deal about this, but a good old fashioned church fight occasionally leads to a split. Once in awhile the faithful remnant initiates a new congregation. In some ways that congregation is new, but it is also important to note that the "new" congregation brings with it traditions, pain, and grief from the past.

Sometimes both congregations remain Disciple. Most often, however, one congregation will go independent. The painful thing is that one group usually winds up with the assets, and the other group has none.

We treat these incidences as "new" congregations because they are often starting with very little. These splits are a frustration to new church committees. We want to praise them for remaining faithful, yet these congregations want to focus on institutional issues, rather than trying to build themselves up as vital mission stations. We are forced with being sensitive to their pain, yet we have to find a way to encourage them to look outward in their focus.

It is like dealing with someone who has gone through a major accident and has some injuries that have changed their lives dramatically. Those who focus on their losses instead of their potential find their lives a dead end. Those who focus on new opportunities, however, can find fulfilling new lives. The task of the New Church Committee is to help the faithful group find themselves as a new creation while acknowledging their losses. We have dealt with three faithful groups in the past few months. One congregation has focused their energy on getting a charter by the Region. This became a consuming act for them, rather than seeking a good temporary setting, or even focusing on their mission potential. The result was a congregation that is stagnant in size, and limited with their resources.

Another congregation focused on getting into a building. They were in a rural area that is poised for rapid growth. One of their first acts was to purchase property, and they are frustrated by the fact that they don't have the resources to build a building. If they had focused energy on outreach into the community and built their congregation, however, they would not be forced to continue worship in the Funeral home at this time with worship that emulates the early 60's instead of today.

A third congregation, however, met at a school, slowly building the congregation and focusing on their mission and vision as a new congregation. They buried their past and welcomed the freedom of being out of a hurtful and oppressive situation. The result today is a vibrant, positive worship experience and a growing congregation that is moving into an attractive new facility. The faithful remnant in this case is much larger than the congregation they left.

The NCMT will work with your region on these projects too. Again, quality leadership is essential and the region may wish to make grants to initially supplement the congregation. If the region has opportunity to intervene in the process while a congregation undergoes a split, it would be helpful to gain some financial support from the congregation that is going in another direction. (This has worked in a couple of cases without animosity. It is a recognition of differing ways, and today's people understand a need to part ways and

support the group that is leaving.)

Splits often bring up an element of scandal and even shame. We often don't lift up these hard working groups of people because they remind us of how fractured the church can become. As Disciples who embrace diversity, however, we need to find ways to acknowledge the perseverance of people. These congregational splits do not ask us to choose sides, they only ask us to acknowledge their legitimacy

1. INTERVENTION

The first element falls to Regional staff. If it becomes apparent that a split is going to occur, intervention can facilitate a peaceful split, much like a divorce where the couple agrees that they are going different directions and need to end the relationship. Mature couples realize there is no need to punish the other partner and they find ways to separate with little court action.

A church in Texas recently experienced the same thing. It became apparent that the older congregation could not find compatibility with a growing group of younger families who brought contemporary worship into their church. After some years of increasing tension, the older element that felt threatened encouraged the younger families to initiate a separate church. One year into this split, both congregations are growing and Disciple. The younger families refer to the older church as their "mother" church. The older congregation sees the new church as "their" congregation.

2. VISIONING

Regional staff can plant the seeds for this vision during their intervention. If this becomes the desire of that congregation, leaders from both factions can form a committee for the visioning process of a new congregation. This visioning group can look at ways in which the older congregation can help with financial support of the new group. Serving on that committee should be the Regional Staff Liaison.

3. LEADERSHIP AFFIRMATION

Once the vision is completed, leadership is affirmed. This can be a credentialed lay person as well as ordained clergy. In some cases, it may even be the pastor of the current congregation. Once leadership is secured and in the field, the new congregation begins in a rented facility.

At this point, the accountability triangle goes into effect and a Regional New Church Committee person becomes the sponsor representative for the project. There is no church board for the new work and the congregation needs to refrain from writing bylaws or electing officers for two years. This is to allow new leadership to emerge from the gathering group and to keep a flexible approach that facilitates rapid growth. In addition, a core team can emerge. Their purpose is to focus on program development and monitor finances. (The Congregation is also granted "Congregation in Formation Status" at this time, and needs to incorporate as well as get its EIN and checking account).

4. TRAINING

As soon as possible, the Pastor should attend NCP training. Unlike other new church projects, however, they will be coached by a seasoned “split” pastor. We will not be able to place them in a cluster as their dynamics are significantly different from other New Church Starts. The Split pastor will be invited to attend the annual renewal event.

TARGET SELECTION

The following are some suggestions for selecting targets. In reality, you can plant a new church anywhere. However, some targets are better than others. Currently, we have a tremendous resource with PERCEPT. Our church pays a lot of money to keep current demographics at the fingertips of every congregation through www.link2lead.com and regional Percept data. We also have access to national studies.

Link2lead.com provides demographics for individual zip codes. These are very small geographic areas, and you will often need a collection of several zip codes to accurately reflect a geographic target area. (Most existing congregations have members from 5-7 zip codes in metropolitan congregations).

The regional Percept data (Vista), can give you a 7 mile radius (or 5 in some more compact regions) of a population circle. There are not population circles everywhere, these circles are only present where population density is high enough to note a concentration. If you are considering a new church start outside of a circle, it should be because you know someone is going to plant a city there soon.

Finally, our office can provide a 15 mile radius study at your request. These studies are helpful for us in national strategic work, but may be of limited help to a specific target area.

See Appendix A for the Regional Demographics Worksheet.

GEOGRAPHIC TARGETS

A geographic target is an area that is selected for the development of a new congregation. The motivating factor for selecting a geographic target is to establish congregations where there is little or no Disciple witness. That means you will have to take into account the location of current Disciple congregations when reviewing the data.

The best place to start in determining geographic targets is the map entitled "Presence". On the left column of the Vista page hit the "people area" button, then select "maps" and download the "M-1" map.

When you review this map, it has circles and colors. There are also little crosses that represent existing congregations. You are looking for the red circles with the lowest number. (Can we make it any easier?) What that circles says is that you have located the area with the largest density of population in which there is no Disciple congregation.

For that target to be a "hot" target, you will want a number in the top 10% of your total geographic circles. For example, if your region has 120 population circles, you will want a red circle numbered 12 or less. The higher the number, the colder the site.

Another reason for selecting a geographic target is rapid growth. Map P-2 will be helpful in

this process. Again the red circles on this map indicate areas with the highest growth rate. If you have a red circle on M-1 that matches red on P-2 and has a number in the lower 10%, there is little to think about. You should definitely have a church there.

There are other reasons to select certain rapid growth areas that even have an existing congregation in the circle. That existing congregation may not match the demographic of the people moving into the area. For example, you may have a target area in which 50% of the congregation is 50 years of age or higher. Yet the demographics indicate the growth is coming from young families that are in their late 20's - mid 30's. It will be difficult for that existing congregation to have an effective witness to that new population.

As you can tell, demographics are tricky and require local knowledge to confirm the data. That is why the NCMT provides Target Site evaluations once targets are selected. These evaluations require a visual inspection.

You are looking for two things basically in selecting a geographic target. 1) Population density, and 2) Population growth (or change). A basic rule of thumb in developing a congregation with an Anglo NCP in a metropolitan or suburban setting seems to be about .1% of the total population can be expected in the worshipping community in 5 years. For rural and small town settings the ratio is higher. If that number can exceed 130, then you have a chance at developing a sustaining ministry in that area provided there is high population change.

Once the site is selected, the demographics will give you a clue as to the type of congregation that is most appropriate to establish. Insight into worship style, ministry opportunities, and the type of NCP is apparent from those figures. (Remember, NCP's have affinities with population that are 10 years younger or older). It will also give you a glimpse of the kind of budget you will need to launch a congregation there.

AFFINITY TARGETS

Affinity targets are those that relate to specific interest groups. These targets are almost solely in large metropolitan areas and often focus on a specific generation. The popular church of this style is known as the Gen-X church (age 25-35). An emerging group today is the Millennialists. (Age 18-25).

Affinity targets begin with the premise that these generational groups have some specific ministry needs, and are used to taking in information in significantly different ways than the rest of the world. The results are usually worship services that have unique music, rapid fire, multimedia messages, and an energy level that is impressive.

There are additional affinity groups as well. These include churches for people who are stimulated by visual arts. Churches that are seriously focused on a specific ministry or need (i.e. a congregation for people with recovery issues).

In many cases, demographics can lead you to the best targets for these ministries, depending on the affinity you are seeking.

ETHNIC TARGETS

Anyone who has studied demographics will tell you that the most dramatic change our country is experiencing is the changing ethnicity of our nation. The last decade has had unprecedented growth in many groups and the addition of many new significant populations.

The most impressive demographic has been with Hispanic populations. Some regions have experienced nearly 400% growth in Hispanic population in the past 10 years. (There are a number of reasons for this, but we won't bore you with that here).

Those of us who have a heart for reaching the unchurched cannot turn our backs on these rapidly growing groups. However, we must recognize several factors in selecting targets that are helpful.

First of all, demographics will show us where we have the most diversity in our regional populations. This is indicated on map D-2. Unfortunately, the categories are pretty broad. For example, you may show an Asian population of 9% in a specific area which would indicate the need for an Asian congregation, however there are at least 48 distinctive Asian groups. Few share the same language, customs or culture. There are at least 33 distinctive Hispanic groups as well.

The new census data which will be out by 2004 will give us more of a breakdown on ethnic populations so we can make better target decisions in the future. For now however the data only helps us find the areas to explore.

To explore an area in more detail you will want to go to the potential target areas, and go to the many stores that new people are starting. Talking to shop owners will tell you quickly which populations are living in certain areas. Again, just noting that there is a Spanish sign on a business is really not helpful. Additionally, while in those stores, you can see if the population is large enough to have its own newspaper.

Many regions are making assumptions about ethnic populations that are not helpful. For example, not all Mexican-Americans are Roman Catholic. Not all existing "Presbyterian Korean" congregations are affiliated with the Presbyterian church (or any denominational body).

FINAL NOTE

Once a Region has selected a goal, targeting becomes more important. At any time, a Regional committee should have a list of it's top 10 targets, and the targets need to be made public on a regular basis. By informing participating congregations of the targets, you may instill some interest in a congregation that has a desire to start a certain kind of congregation.

The Regional New Church committee should also have a discussion about the ethnic distribution of their churches. We have a number of Regions where congregations are

placed in nearly every geographic target imaginable, yet they have little diversity. This indicates a need for focus of that committee on starting more ethnic communities of faith, rather than spending resources on trying to launch congregations in areas with a high Disciples presence.

Regions should also reflect on the age profile of their congregations too. It may be time to plant new churches to be sure there is a Disciple presence in some communities when the eventual death of an existing congregation is nearing.

In the words of a wise person: "Pick targets...even if they are wrong". It is better to have a vision that can be refined, than no vision at all.

RECOMMENDED PHASES OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

STAGE 1	Inspiration & Commitment (Climate creation) 3 months to 1 year
STAGE 2	Visioning (Vision, Mission & Values) Strategic Planning 1 - 6 months
STAGE 3	Affirming Leadership (Selection, Assesment, Training) 3 - 6 months
STAGE 4	Gathering 6 - 18 months
STAGE 5	Launching 6 months
STAGE 6	Program Development 2 - 3 years
STAGE 7	Site Acquisition 1 year
STAGE 8	Building Planning & Fund Raising 1 - 2 years
STAGE 9	Construction 6 - 12 months
TOTAL TIME TO CONSTRUCTION	6 to 11 years

The goal of the new church movement is to start 1,000 new congregations, 1,000 different ways. We recognize from the beginning that no two situations are the same, and that different circumstances require different approaches. However, we have observed some basic patterns in the ways in which a congregation develops. These phases vary greatly from project to project, but they are basic categories of work that take place in the formation of a new church.

1. INSPIRATION & COMMITMENT (3-5 MONTHS)

New churches start because of leadership, not management. These congregations start because a leader somewhere in the church has been inspired to consider starting a new church. When someone has a passion for starting a new church, and shares that passion with others, the new congregation process begins. At this point people start praying.

2. VISIONING (1-6 MONTHS)

A group needs to gather to plan the strategy for starting a new congregation. This group develops the mission statement for the new work. This statement names the target (see section of targets), the needs of those people, and what a church can do to fulfill those needs. This group should utilize the demographic resources that are available in selecting a target. This group also commits to continuing in prayer with the new church through its early stages.

The group also determines resources, and the kind of leadership that is needed for the new work. It may also work as securing the initial funding.

3. AFFIRMING LEADERSHIP (3 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR)

The visioning group secures leadership for the new work. It utilizes a cross between the call process used by your region and the resources of the NCMT. The success of the project can lie with a good selection of NCP. Assessment and training are essentials in the early stages of affirming leadership. The right "match" is dependent on the Mission statement from the Visioning group.

Once leadership is affirmed, training is completed, and the NCP is in the field, the accountability triangle goes into effect, and the Visioning Committee is thanked for its service (it then becomes a source of prayer support).

4. GATHERING: (6-18 MONTHS)
(see C->C manual)

5. LAUNCHING: (3-6 MONTHS)

For most new church starts, launching should occur once you are certain you can draw at least 100 people for the initial worship service. Please note: when people make exceptions here, they increase the amount of time it takes to develop a sustainable new congregation. A major exception however is with ethnic church starts for a variety of reasons.

Launching is when the worship service is “open” to the general public. The pressure to begin public worship early in the process is enormous. It is also important that these public services be done in the very finest fashion with excellent music, hospitality services, and even a nursery up and running.

6. DEVELOPING PROGRAM (2-3 YEARS)
(see C-C manual)

7. SITE ACQUISITION (1 YEAR)

Not all new congregations will purchase land or build a building. Some may be in nesting or temporary locations for a very long time due to the cost of property in some metropolitan areas. For example, in Southern California, few city councils are allowing property exemptions for churches thus creating an impossible situation for new congregations.

For those that do however, a site search can be one of the most important decisions of the new congregation. The NCMT in partnership with Church Extension can help you with the initial stages of that process clear through financing and closing.

8. BUILDING PLANNING AND FUND RAISING (1-2 YEARS)

This process is more complex. In order to construct a first unit there is a need for funding to pay for initial engineering needs. Here again our partnership with Church Extension will be helpful from start to finish in both raising the funds, and developing the building plan.

9. CONSTRUCTION (6-12 MONTHS)

What a wonderful day when construction begins on the first unit.

Total time for developing a congregation from Visioning to the Completion of a first unit is about 6-11 years. (There have been some exceptions when congregations grow at a dramatic rate or a facility becomes available).

THE IDEAL NEW CHURCH PLANTER

Much has been written on selection of New Church Planters, and the importance of that decision for success in a new congregation. We commend to you the work of Charles Ridley and of Bob Logan on this subject and will spend little time on their work here.

Ridley did an exceptional amount of behavioral analysis on successful NCP's in the early 80's that stands as the definitive work on the topic today. He concluded that there were 13 demonstrable behaviors inherent in successful NCP's.

Those qualities are:

1. Visionizing capacity
2. Personal motivation
3. Creating ownership in ministry
4. Reaching the unchurched
5. Spousal cooperation
6. Relationship building
7. Commitment to church growth
8. Responsiveness to community
9. Utilizes giftedness of others
10. Flexibility and adaptability
11. Building group cohesiveness
12. Resilience
13. Exercising faith

The NCMT has yet to find any experts in the field who would challenge this list, even though the times have changed dramatically. There have been, however, some refinements in some research that has recently been received.

Initial findings from a very recent Lilly study on Founding Pastors indicates some interesting data. Much of the study confirms Ridley's work...but some of it makes additional points of interest.

First, NCP's that were invited to become NCP's by their denomination had a much higher success rate than NCP's that were self selected. That means when a Regional staff person sees a pastor in the field that possesses great skills for New Church, they should invite them to consider that ministry! Much of our recruitment at the NCMT comes from persons who initiate conversations with us. Regional staff, however, is in the field with Pastors, and may be able to plant seeds in effective pastors. Something to think about!

Ridley suggests visioning capacity as an important behavior. The Lilly Study and our experience however shows that the person must be able to articulate that vision in a way that is compelling.

Another surprise was that we thought that NCP's that did individual evangelism would be the most effective in this ministry. The study indicates that it was NCP's that were able to establish systems that were most successful in bringing people into faith. These systems included small groups, lay-lead Bible Studies that lead to a decision, etc. Successful NCP's focused their energy on training and empowering key people for those systems. Finally, the successful NCP's not only had responsiveness to their communities, but they had an uncanny way of reading their community and knew what was going on there. They were not a "single approach" pastor, but one who was willing to adapt to the community needs in creating their ministry.

When asked, most Regional executives will state that they believe the most successful NCP is one who is an entrepreneur. This is true to some extent, however the NCMT has noted some very entrepreneurial people, who have celebrated very little success. The key, as we see it (and the Lilly data supports), is that successful NCP's are calculated risk takers. That means they are willing to depart on a risky venture and have the faith to understand that God will support them.

Secondly, these successful NCP's hate to fail. They are willing to try new things that don't work, but they will not accept failure for the start of the congregation. It is an interesting combination of behaviors. One very successful Pastor-developer from the 80's said he was willing to "fail forward".

When we reviewed NCP's from the past 20 years, we saw that this understanding holds true. The interesting thing is that we used to guarantee funding, and employment to our early Pastor-developers. This runs slightly against the grain. If we offer guaranteed support for NCP's then we will attract people who may not be the most effective.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONDUCTING A SEARCH FOR A NCP

The data supports Regional committees observing these behaviors in the people that are a part of our church and recruiting them for this ministry. The data also shows that these people are in the field today (both lay and clergy). They comprise about 12-14% of the population. But we cannot wait for them to mail in an application. We must trouble them with the vision and our observations of their skills.

In some cases these potential NCP's are serving congregations and doing a miserable job. Successful NCP's will have a difficult time serving existing congregations where there is no desire for innovation. A successful NCP may be the pastor that has lost a number of positions in rapid succession. One such person was just dismissed from his 2nd congregation in December, only to start a congregation averaging 300 in worship three months later.

Every congregation has an outstanding person, possibly an Elder, who has strong leadership skills and a high ability to draw people to Christ.

The New Church Movement will fail if we only rely on those who apply. The NCMT does assessments on persons who want to be a part of our recommended pool. We have discovered that of those we actually assess, there are many just looking for an escape from

mundane ministries. These are not the people to build new congregations around.

That brings us to another source of NCP's. The NCMT keeps a pool of names of people we believe are capable and willing to serve as a successful NCP. We are always willing to add more names, or even help in the ask if you identify person's who may be good for this kind of ministry.

PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS

One thing we try to impress on our NCP's in their training is the importance of partnership in the New Church movement. No single pastor, Regional minister, or Team will start 1000 new congregations. Starting a new congregation is a "God thing" that requires faith, maturity, and all of us working together to meet the needs of the thousands who have no relationship with a community of faith.

When all of the partners (NCMT, Regional Committee & Staff, NCP, coach, etc) on a project are at the same table, it is a wonderful thing. All of us want to see the success of these congregations, the wholeness of the NCP. Mostly we want to reach others.

There are inherently some things that a National Team can do better than a Regional Committee. There are some things that Regional Committees do better than a National team can do. In partnership, we make our best decisions.

The NCMT has been given the gift of working across regional lines with numerous new church projects. (Currently our portfolio includes 191 congregations in their first 5 years of existence). We also work with institutions of higher education and the General Units, as well as every Regional committee that will invite us. We are dedicated to providing whatever services are needed for success in the New Church movement. We have the benefit of learning from the numerous mistakes and successes in the field today and are willing to support your region's success.

Below is a list of services that we offer. This list is not exhaustive. If you have a need, please do not hesitate to call.

FOR REGIONS AND AREAS

- Demographic consultation
- Target site consultations
- New Church Planting committee training
- Listing of screened New Church Planters (available later)
- General consultation (offered in conjunction with CE)
- Regional Capital Campaigns (offered in conjunction with CE)
- Training and resources for New Church Planters

FOR NEW CHURCH PLANTERS

- Discernment Guide
- Assessment services
- Demographic Consultation
- Training
- Consultation for projects in process (first 5 years)
- Coaching Network
- Peer clusters for projects
- Revival for Renewal during years 3-5

FOR CHURCHES STARTING CHURCHES

- Information Packets (including Churches Starting Churches Manual)
- Consultation services with key leaders
- Training for Project Committee

FOR NEW CONGREGATIONS

- General consultation services
- Program Grants
- Site Acquisition consultations (in conjunction with BCE)
- Capital Campaign consultations and guidance (in conjunction with BCE)
- Building planning (in consultation with BCE)
- Construction consultation (in conjunction with BCE)
- Construction Loans (in conjunction with BCE)
- Interest-Free Loans (in conjunction with BCE)

There are things that the NCMT cannot do, yet are essential for success in this movement. Because Regions are “closer to the grassroots” they know more about their local situation, culture, and abilities than anyone could know at the General level. We not only recognize that fact, we depend on it. Below is a list of just some of the things Regions can do more effectively.

- Regional Strategies
- Distribute funds to projects
- Call out NCPs
- Assimilate Affiliations
- Assimilate New Congregations
- Provide local “Institutes” for lay NCPs
- Challenge local congregations to start new churches

We hope that this manual is helpful to your Region in the New Church process. We will keep this manual updated as time goes on. To check for updates, visit our website at www.newchurchministry.org.

APPENDICES

Regional Demographic Worksheet - pg. 2

Five Areas with Fastest African-American growth (table sort by African American)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Five Areas with Fastest Hispanic growth (Table sort by Hispanic)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Five Areas with Fastest Asian growth (Table sort by Asian)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Five Most Densely Populated areas without a Disciple Congregation (Presence Map—M-1)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Appendix B

Regional Potential Data

4. In 3-5 years, what kind of congregation would you hope to have in that community?

5. Identify what you believe would be your success indicators for this new congregation.

Section III: New Church Planter

1. Does this project lend itself towards utilizing the gifts of a licensed minister?

2. Are there any specific factors that should be considered in selecting the NCP for this project?

3. Do you know of potential candidates for this position or would you rely on the Regional or NCMT pool of applicants?

4. Could the applicant be bi-vocational?

Section IV: Financial Prospects

1. What is the general fund income of the sponsoring congregation? (Or in the case of several congregations the combined GF income for the past year)

2. Please list other potential sources of income that could support this project during its first 3 years.

3. (Put budget worksheet here).

Please send this worksheet to the NCMT for comment. Please expect a reply within the next 30 days.

New Church Ministry Team, P.O. Box 7030, Indianapolis, IN 46207

CONGREGATION IN FORMATION COVENANT

Having been led by God into the communion of churches known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we the leaders of _____ (name of church) _____ agree to live in covenant with all the congregations and manifestations of the Disciples of Christ. We will exercise the responsibilities and privileges of a Disciples congregation, including the following:

- Support the mission of the entire church through contributions to Disciples Mission Fund and Special Day Offerings
- Participate in district, area, regional workshops, retreats, and assemblies
- When possible, participate in events of the General Church, such as the General Assembly and the Quadrennial Assembly for Women
- Send the youth of our church to the summer camps offered by the Area/Region
- Continue to learn about Disciples of Christ and help all new church members learn about the Disciples
- Pray for the Disciples and other Disciples congregations
- Fill out annual reports for the Yearbook of the Christian Church and submit them to the Regional Office
- Help start new Disciples congregations

Signed by the ministerial staff and lay leaders of the congregation

Appendix E

SHARED FACILITIES

The material in this chapter was taken from an earlier manual, *Catch the Vision*, written by Rene Rodgers Jensen.

Why should we start a new congregation? We would welcome the participation of anyone, regardless of race, in our congregation.

We celebrate the diversity of the body of Christ, racially, ethnically, culturally, theologically, in age, gender, and socio-economic status. Congregations should constantly reach out to include all persons within their midst. At the same time, it is important to be realistic about what racially ethnic minorities need from their church, and whether or not Anglo/English speaking congregations can effectively meet those needs.

There are often significant language barriers, particularly for recent immigrant populations. Even for persons who are fluent in English, worship in their native language may be an infinitely more meaningful experience. There may be notable differences in worship styles, music, and understandings of what it means to be church. All of this means that sometimes the most effective way to proclaim the gospel to racially ethnic persons is in the language and style that is most meaningful for them.

Who initiates a ministry of shared facilities?

An established congregation in a changing demographic neighborhood may decide to start a new community of faith to reach racial or ethnic minorities in the surrounding area. This should be done in consultation with the region/area, as well as with the appropriate racially ethnic ministry office of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the New Church office.

Director of New Church Ministry
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
(317) 635-6500

National Convocation
(317) 713-2407

National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries
(317) 713-2583

American Asian Ministries
(317) 713-2685

2. The region/area may decide to start a new congregation and ask an established congregation to house that new congregation in its building. Again, consultation should be made with the appropriate racially ethnic ministry offices (see above).
3. An existing or new racially ethnic congregation may ask an established church if it may share the church's facilities. In this instance the nesting congregation may be a non-Disciples congregation. Consideration should be given to whether or not a Disciples congregation could be started instead. Wherever possible, priority should be given to the use of the facility for Disciples ministry.

What are some examples of shared facilities?

There are at least three different examples of how congregations can share a building and a ministry together.

1. **Autonomous congregations** - Both congregations remain independent, separately chartered congregations who share the same building. The host church retains ownership of the property. This is probably the most common expression of shared facilities.
2. **Multi-Congregation Church** - Two or more worshiping communities that are organizationally one church. They have separate worship and program, but are members of one church. An example of this model is the Church at the Valley of Van Nuys, California, which is one church with three separate worshiping communities: Anglo, Korean, and Hispanic.
3. **Joint Ownership of Property** - Two congregations retain their separate and independent status, but eventually reach an agreement for joint ownership of the property. This is the case with Faith United Christian Church (African-American) and University Park Christian Church (Anglo) of Indianapolis, Indiana.

What are the factors we should consider if we are thinking of nesting another congregation in our facilities?

1. **Demographics** - It is vital to have a thorough knowledge of the community in which your congregation is located.

Possible sources for demographics are Link2lead.com (type in the zip code you wish to explore), the public library, public school census, city planning departments, public utility or telephone companies, state and highway planning departments, colleges or universities. A growing amount of this information is easily available on the Internet.

Good demographic information from a Christian company called "Percept" is available through your Regional offices.

From the demographic data, consider the following questions:

- a. What is the population trend in the neighborhood around your church for each racial group and/or ethnic constituency? Has there been an influx of any new immigrant group, or is one anticipated?
- b. From the demographic data identify the following for both your community and congregation:

Age and gender of population

Marital and family characteristics

Racial and ethnic makeup

Social-economic characteristics (occupations, education, income, housing patterns)

- c. What important changes will occur in the area around your church in the next 5-10 years?

2. Trends in congregation

- a. Prepare a map of your community on which you can pinpoint the residences of current members of the congregation. Using different color coded pins, identify the following:

Members who joined within the last three years

Members who joined 4-10 years ago

Members who joined 11-20 years ago

Members who joined more than 20 years ago

- b. Is there any noticeable movement of members to greater distances from the church location within the last 5-10 years? If so, what are the implications for the church and its ministry in the future?
- c. Important trends can be identified by comparing the age and gender of the church's membership with that of the community. Does the congregation reflect the demographics of the community? Are there obvious differences?
- d. How does the racially ethnic makeup of the congregation compare to the current population? With future population trends?

3. **Stewardship of building** - How does the congregation understand the stewardship of its building? Is there a commitment on the part of the congregation to utilize the building as fully as possible? Is the building understood as a resource for mission and ministry?

(A congregation that is considering hosting another congregation in its building needs to be clear about its own mission and concept of building stewardship.)

4. **Pastoral Leadership** - The pastor of both the host and nesting churches must be fully committed to a ministry of shared facilities. Successful ministries of shared facilities are almost always based on a solid working relationship between the pastors of the host and nesting congregations.

5. **Lay Leadership** - Key lay leaders in the congregation must be supportive of the possibility of hosting a new congregation. Don't expect everyone in the congregation to

support the idea fully, but don't proceed without a critical mass of support within the congregation.

- 6. Careful education** - Prepare the host congregation to share its building. Emphasize that this is a shared ministry, not simply a matter of sharing real estate. Bible study, sermon series, small group meetings, and newsletter articles are all important to helping the host congregation understand the nature of this ministry. If possible, have a Bible Study or other informative meetings with persons from the nesting congregation. When the nesting group is of a different race than the host congregation, some intentional study of the culture is essential.

We would like to host a racially ethnic congregation. What should we do now?

After consulting with appropriate persons at the regional and general offices, establish a partnership committee made up of members of both the host and nesting congregations. Representation from the region/area is also desirable on this committee, at least in the initial stages. The effective functioning of this partnership committee is *absolutely* vital to a successful experience with shared facilities ministry. This committee should meet to work out the framework for the initial relationship, and continue meeting on a regular basis to handle any problems or concerns that may arise. The partnership committee will need to give consideration to the following issues:

- 1. Covenant for Ministry** - In order to avoid a landlord/tenant mentality, it is recommended that the partnership committee work out a "Covenant for Ministry" rather than a lease agreement. The covenant should use clear direct language rather than legal terminology. A preamble to the covenant should reflect a theological understanding of shared ministry. The covenant should be translated into the language of both congregations. (For additional information, see Appendix E and Appendix F.)
- 2. Space Allocation** - Remembering that a church building does not belong to anyone group, but to God, the partnership committee should work out an equitable arrangement for space allocation.
- 3. Schedule** - Scheduling of building use should be mutually agreeable. A master calendar should be established and used by both congregations.
- 4. Signs and Decor** - Both host and nesting congregations have the right to an outside sign in their own language. Placement, size, style, and wording of the signs should be mutually agreed upon. Internal signage indicating the location of offices, sanctuary, nursery, restrooms and so on may also need to be bi-lingual. Each congregation should be able to use symbols of worship such as banners, crosses, and candles that are appropriate to its particular worship.
- 5. Building Expenses** - The host congregation can reasonably expect the nesting congregation to contribute its share of building costs. This contribution is not rent and should be mutually agreed upon depending on the relative size and financial strengths of the two congregations.

6. **Legal Arrangements** - Both host and nesting congregations should carry adequate liability insurance. Issues such as tax-exempt status, workmen's compensation insurance, and incorporation should also be considered.
7. **Security** - Each congregation should have access to a private locked storage area where it may keep material for its own use. It is usually assumed that each congregation is responsible for cleaning and locking the building after each use. The partnership committee should agree upon which persons in each congregation will be entrusted with keys. No keys are to be duplicated.
8. **Supervision of children and youth** - Each congregation will provide adequate adult supervision of children and youth while they are in the building.
9. **Celebrating the Relationship** - The shared ministry of the host and nesting congregations needs to be affirmed and celebrated. It is recommended that there be a service of worship in which the gifts of each congregation are lifted up and the Covenant for Ministry is formally signed. If appropriate, the service should be bi-lingual and reflect the unique traditions of both congregations. The service could be repeated annually to reaffirm the covenant.

Both host and nesting congregations should be intentional in seeking out opportunities to engage in ministry together. Such opportunities might include shared children and youth programming, Vacation Bible School, fellowship dinners, fund raising, work days, and community outreach.

10. Communication - The partnership committee should establish an ongoing process for clear and honest communication. The following should be addressed:

- a. A process for regular evaluation.
- b. A process for dealing with adjustments or changes desired by either host or nesting congregation.
- c. A process for third-party intervention in the event of a disagreement that cannot be resolved by the host and nesting congregations.
- d. A process for renewal or termination.

What are some problems that are common when two congregations share the same facility?

The problems usually arise out of the clash of two cultures, that of the host congregation and that of the nesting congregation. The host congregation is often an older congregation that has been declining in membership for some time, with few young families and children. The nesting congregation often is full of young families with children. This influx of young people upsets the quiet, stately, comfortable life of the host church. The host congregation may resent, even fear, the presence of the nesting church. This climate of fear and

resentment provides a fertile ground for the expression of racism in either overt or subtle ways.

There are other cultural differences, as well. Racially ethnic minority congregations may be much more active, desiring to use the building very often. There are differences in culture and language that can lead to misunderstanding and resentment. All of these can be overcome if congregations are dedicated to a shared ministry, rather than simply in a landlord/ tenant relationship, and keep the lines of communication open.

What factors create a strong, healthy relationship?

The best relationships are when both congregations are committed to a shared ministry, respecting and affirming one another's gifts and strengths for ministry. Clear, honest, and open communication is vital. Small problems must be addressed before they become big problems. Compromise is necessary on the part of both host and nesting congregations. And the two congregations should seek out opportunities to share in ministry together.

Appendix F

Sensitivity Issues for Host Churches Nesting Ethnic Congregations

LANGUAGE

The majority of our new church planters as well as the people they tend to reach are not English speakers. In many cases, many of these people are first generation immigrants. Some may be able to communicate with great difficulty, but the vast majority have no English language skills. This is a great barrier and many times the planter or church leaders will not admit to not understanding the words of the English speaking sponsors out of embarrassment or out of fear of offending the person. Many misunderstandings and noncompliance of requests made by the sponsoring bodies are the result of this language barrier. The sponsoring body needs to be aware of this reality and seek assurance that effective communication has been established with the nesting group.

Within the Hispanic context, over 22 cultural groups have been identified. This also presents a challenge in that words mean different things in different cultural contexts. The knowledge of rudimentary Spanish is not always a guarantee of effective communication. Care needs to be taken to ensure that there is a proper understanding of the language in the cultural context of the Hispanic group, or, in the case of a group with cultural diversity within the same language, inclusive and generalized terminology should be used.

EDUCATION

The leaders of ethnic congregations tend to be Bible institute trained. These institutes tend to be very intense in their training. In Hispanic and Asian church contexts, the laity is trained as part of the regular church program in a focus that goes beyond the Sunday School experience to afford the church member a deeper and more intense Bible study experience that in many cases considers not only exegesis of the biblical text, but also invites people to do their own hermeneutics. This is an experience that brings greater depth to the manner in which the Word is studied. In many of these institutes, the lay pastor is intentionally trained, in a very practical manner, to assume pastoral leadership. Although some of this training may lack the academic depth of a seminary training, the practical aspects of the ministry are well taught.

Seminary is not an option for many of the men and women who do not have bachelors degrees from an accredited U.S. institution. In situations where the

church planters do have college degrees from their countries of origin, state-side schools tend not to recognize these degrees or impose requirements of additional courses in order to accept these degrees for further academic training.

The lack of financial resources effectively shuts out those who could overcome the language barrier to study in institutions of higher education. Many times this financial need is exacerbated by the fact that these new church planters are having to work one or more jobs to support their families. We must also consider that the legal status of many of our church planters, which many times is not clear, shuts out access to federal funding available to U.S. citizens.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

The church culture within the context of ethnic groups is somewhat different from that of the typical North American church. The church is seen as an extension of the family. The church members and the pastor are seen as part of the extended family of the individual members. For this reason, many significant events and celebrations take place within the church facilities and involve the entire congregation. This implies more usage of the church buildings or facilities.

The church is also the hub or gathering place for the congregation outside of the liturgical celebrations. This means that many times events that in other cultural contexts would be celebrated in other places or sites are normally held at church (i.e., wedding receptions, birthday parties, bridal or baby showers, pot luck dinners, etc.).

The table is an essential element in the life of the people and of the church. To end every Sunday service with a sit down dinner is fairly common. While part of the church is involved in worship, some members of the church are busy cooking in whatever limited facilities the church may have. The aromas and strange odors of these exotic plates, many of which are unfamiliar and even strong to many other cultures, may leave lingering odors that can be present for days.

WORSHIP STYLES

Ethnic congregations tend to be more theologically conservative than their

North American brothers and sisters. This is not only true in their theology, but also in their dress styles and their position on recreational drinking, smoking, and dancing.

The worship style tends to be loud and joyful. The use of musical instruments, including instruments from their native countries, is present in all worship services. Worship services tend to be longer than the usual 60 or 90 minute service many churches are used to. A typical service will last at least two hours with a lot of singing and prayer. The sermon is considered, along with communion, as the highlight of the service and there is no time constraint on the preacher. The church expects altar calls to be issued after every sermon and there will be personal ministrations for those who come forward for salvation, as well as for those who respond to the second altar call for rededication of their lives or for healing.

Prayer services are celebrated separate from Bible studies and the congregation will normally respond to these services with attendance tending to be very high. Sunday school is an integral part of spiritual formation and an extremely high percentage of the church members attend Sunday school. (In a situation of shared facilities, this is something that needs to be worked out carefully as the need for Christian education space in the ethnic congregations is very real).

Church attendance fluctuates, especially in the case of congregations where people need to work two jobs or work rotating shifts. Many of these congregations have a significant number of members whose legal status is unclear and this affects their job situation and, therefore, their financial reality. This affects the stewardship of giving of these members. Within the ethnic churches, tithing is taught as a discipline. Although the members do tend to be faithful stewards, the economic reality of many does not allow the church to attain financial stability.

Just as the church is the social hub of the community of faith, the church also tends to have a full program that could offer something every day of the week. There are even congregations that may offer different services and programs at the same time.

Appendix G

TEMPORARY WORSHIP SITES

Location, location, location. Your first worship site is very important. Below is a list of areas that have been used as temporary worship sites by congregations in formation. The best temporary sites are those that are widely known in the community, and considered "neutral" by the unchurched AND VISIBLE in the community.

SCHOOLS: By far the most popular and effective site, schools offer excellent space for new congregations. High Schools have higher appeal than Junior High or Grade Schools. These schools are usually widely known in the community, and in some cases are expensive to use, however they appear to be worth it. Many school Districts have policies that forbid churches meeting in them, however the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that they cannot discriminate on church usage unless all outside groups are not allowed access.

NESTING IN CHURCHES: The second most popular route. A new congregation rents from an existing congregation. See the nesting portion of these Appendices for more information.

FUNERAL HOMES: Funeral home chapels can be attractive locations for worship, depending on the worship style of the forming congregation. These spaces can have some psychological barriers for people in the community you are trying to reach. They are often very inexpensive (in some cases free).

COMMUNITY CENTERS: Often these sites are pricey, and off the beaten track. However in some cases they are worth using as they are considered "neutral" by the unchurched. They do require banners and other things to look like a worship center. (One church is meeting at a community center in a Zoo! This is a site everyone in the city knows about, and has a nifty cockroach exhibit in the Sunday School rooms)

FRATERNAL ORDERS: Elks, Moose, Masonic temples all are usually open to new congregations for a nominal fee. While these are inexpensive, there are many psychological boundaries that a visitor has to cross to attend worship there.

STORE FRONTS: The most expensive, there is usually places in strip malls and retail areas. Be sure to check on zoning before signing a lease. Also, be sure to check the price of other fees attached to the space, they can often raise the rate another 40%! In addition, most retail spots will require a long term lease. There will be pressure to sign a 3 year agreement, and you should fight it with resolve. Usually the host organization will have to sign the lease, and the landlord will collect all they are entitled to, if the church fails.

Appendix H

BUDGET WORKSHEET

1. **How much funding will we need? Estimate the amount needed in each category for the first 18 months.**

	6 months	12 months	18 months
Planter Salary Package 50%			
Salary			
Insurance			
Benefits			
Education			

Start-up Costs 30%			
Equipment/supplies			
Printing/advertising			
Facility deposits			

Monthly Operation 20%			
Rent/insurance			
Phone/utilities			
Printing/advertising			
Program/materials			
Other salaries			

2. **Which sources of funding will we use? List the amount or percentage expected from each of the following sources in the first 18 months.**

	6 months	12 months	18 months
Host church support			
Planter raised funds			
Region/Area			
Grants/gifts			
Tithes/offerings			
Monthly donor support			
Bi-vocational income			

Adapted from Empowering Leaders Through Coaching by Steven L. Ogne & Thomas P. Nebel.

Appendix J

ENGAGING THE REGION IN PRAYER

How do leaders of the new church movement generate the passion for fulfilling the Great Commission that will motivate Disciples to start new congregations in the Region? In the truest sense, leaders cannot generate the passion. The Holy Spirit generates the passion as individuals are led deeper into relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The passion flows out of experiencing the love and grace of God in such a powerful way that it must be shared. The passion flows from hearing a call from God to be intentionally involved in evangelistic mission. Individuals who are actively sharing the Gospel experience a meaning and a joy that is contagious. Even a few Disciples passionately committed to the Great Commission can get others in the congregation excited about reaching new people. This is a climate in which the vision for reaching new people through starting new congregations can grow.

However, leaders of the new church movement in the Region can invite and encourage people to grow in their relationship with God through prayer and to “listen” for God’s communication. One of the best means for this prayerful listening is a small group experience where people share faith stories and prayerfully reflect on scripture. Judy Turner (Homeland Ministries staff) and Greg Alexander (Associate Regional Minister of Kentucky) developed a process called ***Growing Disciples***, which has been used by congregations in the Kentucky Region. Growth in faith and deeper commitment to mission have been the results in congregation after congregation. A guide to the entire ***Growing Disciples*** process is available from Homeland Ministries. Here we offer the design for the small group meetings, “Ten Weeks of Listening to God” as a way to engage the Region in prayer through prayer groups in the congregations.

TEN WEEKS OF LISTENING TO GOD

The process requires asking people in the congregation to make a commitment to meet with a small group of 4-10 people for 90 minutes once a week for 10 weeks. It is an invitation to grow deeper in faith, closer in relationship with God and with others in the small group, and greater in capacity to experience the ways God communicates with us.

The weekly meetings involve a different person each week sharing his or her “Spiritual Autobiography”. There may be the feeling in many small congregations that “we already know each other”. But, in many cases, the members have not shared what is most important: their experience with God. A spiritual autobiography is not so much a chronological account of where one lived and what one was doing at each stage of life so much as it is identifying the people, events, and experiences God has used in shaping one’s life. The first 30 minutes of each weekly meeting is devoted to this sharing of faith stories.

The next hour of each weekly meeting is devoted to listening for God’s communication through praying with scripture passages. The passages were selected by asking pastors of growing Disciples congregations which passages were key to their understanding of the Gospel and to the mission of their congregations. The method used for praying with the

scripture is "lectio divina", a form of prayer that has been used by Christians through the ages. The method involves the group coming into God's presence, calling on the Holy Spirit, then reading a passage of scripture several times. Each group member listens for God as he/she is drawn to a particular word, phrase, or image. The next step is savoring that word from God, letting associated images, scripture passages, or memories come to mind. With the second and third reading of the passage, members pray silently with the questions, "What is the Lord saying to me?" and "What is the Lord saying to us?"

What people hear is recorded each week in a journal, and at the end of the 10 weeks, the journal is reviewed to discern the consistent and compelling messages. The more small groups that are working with the process, the more material there will be for discernment. The experience of the congregations that have used the "Growing Disciples" process is that there are three or four common themes that run through the journals of all the groups in the congregation. Once these themes or compelling messages are discerned, the leaders of the congregation seek God's guidance in moving in those directions.

What this process will do for people in the Region is help them open themselves to the Holy Spirit, who can ignite their passion for sharing the Gospel and give them motivation for starting new congregations to reach new people.

FORMAT FOR WEEKLY MEETINGS

The leader for the week opens the meeting with prayer.

One person shares his or her spiritual autobiography

The group prays with the scripture passage for the week:

The leader prays for the help of the Holy Spirit to hear God speaking

Reading: One person reads the passage aloud, and after a pause, reads it the second time. All listen attentively to God's word.

Silence: Each reflects on a chosen word or phrase

Sharing: Each one shares the word or phrase, without elaboration

Reading: Another member of the group reads the same passage.

Silence: Each one now reflects for a couple of minutes asking, "What is the Lord saying to me with regard to my life today?"

Sharing: Each may share briefly: "I hear the Lord calling me to..."

Reading: Another member of the group reads the passage again.

Silence: Now each reflects for a couple of minutes on, "What is the Lord saying to us, with regard to the life of our congregation at this time?"

Sharing: Each may share briefly, "I hear the Lord calling us to..."

This process for group lectio divina is adapted from Lectio Divina, Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures, by Basil Pennington

At the end of the sharing there is a time of silent prayer.

The leader then asks the group, "What do we want to record in the Group Journal about how God has spoken with us?" A group member records the responses in the Group Journal.

The leader invites all to rise and pray together the Lord's Prayer.

SELECTED SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

First Week: II Corinthians 5:16-21

Second Week: Philippians 2:5-11

Third Week: Luke 15:11-32

Fourth Week: Acts 2:38-47

Fifth Week: John 3:16-17 and Romans 3:21-26

Sixth Week: Colossians 3:1-17

Seventh Week: Matthew 28:19-20

Eighth Week: Jeremiah 29:7-13

Ninth Week: Matthew 25:31-46

Tenth Week: Review the Group Journal, taking turns reading the entries for each week. Listen prayerfully and record your final reflections in the journal. Offer prayers of Thanksgiving for how God has led you during these weeks.

Helps in Writing a Spiritual Autobiography

Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to help you see God's work in your life. Then, reflect on questions like the following:

- When did God become more than just a word for you?
- At what times in your life have you felt very close to God?
- What have been some of the major turning points in your life and how was God working in you through those times?
- Who or what has most influenced you in your Christian life?
- Who is Jesus Christ to you?
- How does knowing Jesus affect your daily life?
- Who is the Holy Spirit to you?
- How do you seek God's presence and guidance in your daily life?
- How do you pray?
- Are there other spiritual disciplines you practice?
- Why are you involved with the church?
- How do you seek to serve Christ in your daily life?