

# An Introduction: New Church Starts

New Church Leadership Institute



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*Equipping leaders with both knowledge and skills to move toward successful church starts.*



## INTRODUCTION

by *Bob Crossman*  
*Arkansas Conference*

*Minister of New Church Starts and Congregational Advancement*

In November of 2005 The United Methodist Council of Bishops referred "Six Vision Pathways" to the Connectional Table. The Council of Bishops document is entitled, "Focus on Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World."

On May 22-23 of 2006, the United Methodist Church held a Summit on Church Development at the Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center in Norcross, Georgia. Co-sponsored by the Council of Bishops, the General Boards of Global Ministry and Discipleship and the National Network of Congregational Developers. The summit focused on the first of these six pathways: developing a plan for planting new United Methodist churches in the United States. **The summit agreed to propose to the Council of Bishops the development and implementation of a system to launch 350 new churches per year in the United States that will each have an average attendance of 250 within five years of launch date and whose members will live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.**

The Summit leaders also agreed to organize a National Strategy Team for Congregational Development to be led by Bishop Lindsey Davis, resident bishop of the Atlanta Area. This National Strategy Team met on September 14-16, 2006 in Nashville, Tennessee. Within sixty days, this National Strategy Team found welcome support from the Connectional Table, GBOD, GBGM, the National Plans, and the Network of Congregational Developers.

In the fall of 2006 and winter of 2007, the "National Strategy Team" was reorganized and renamed "Path One Team." Working out of the General Board of Discipleship, the Path One Team has 21 members including three bishops, 5 Conference Congregational Development Staff, one representative from General Board of Discipleship, General Board of Global Ministries, and one from each of the National Plans. *{Bob Crossman is a member of the Path One Team, representing the New Congregational Developers of the South Central Jurisdiction.}*



In the winter of 2007, Dr. Tom Butcher of the Desert Southwest Conference was selected to serve as the Executive Officer of Path One's national new church initiative. Tom Butcher will be an Executive Officer of the General Board of Discipleship and a member of its Leadership Team. The Executive Officer will report regularly to the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table. The Path 1 Team will fulfill the role of the Joint Committee on Congregational Development with regard to new congregational starts.

### Where does all this bring us now?

At the national level, the United Methodist Church has a new strategic initiative to launch 650 new churches between 2008 and 2012 in the United States. The GBGM has a strategic initiative to launch an additional 400 new churches internationally. The National Hispanic Plan has a goal to launch 500 new faith communities, and to have 75 of its existing and new starts to charter by 2012.

### Path One's Mission

"We seek to align significant resources to annual conferences for the evangelization of the United States through a national United Methodist strategy of new congregational development. We will serve all people, inviting them to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

### Path One's Goal For The 2008-2012 Quadrennium

- 1,000 church planters equipped
- 650 new congregations started
- 63,000 new disciples added

Exponentially more planters, more new congregations, and more new disciples in subsequent quadrennia.

#### Necessary Components:

- Orientation and training of bishops and district superintendents
- Providing user-friendly resources based upon solid research and best practices
- Creating and supporting a pool of potential planters

### Path One's "Operational Definition of a New Church"

A new United Methodist congregation is a newly organized faith community that is committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ and

- includes regular community worship
- is theologically Wesleyan
- is willing to plant a new congregation in its first decade
- has an effective-discipling system
- demonstrates faithful stewardship
- does community outreach
- receives new members; and
- it is more than a mission project, a new worship service, or the construction of a new building.

This definition includes newly chartered congregations, mission congregations, multi-site congregations (if geographically distinct), shared facilities (if not tied administratively to the host church), major restarts, and major relocations to reach a new population.

### Connectional Table Affirms Four 'Provocative Proposals'

Nov. 1, 2006

The Connectional Table, a 60-member group responsible for coordinating the mission, ministries and resources of the United Methodist Church, has proposed four goals for the 10 million-member denomination. The group selected the four from 54 "provocative proposals" that were considered during an Oct. 22-24 meeting. The four proposals will be further developed and presented to the 2008 General Conference, the church's top legislative body. Proposals selected for further development:

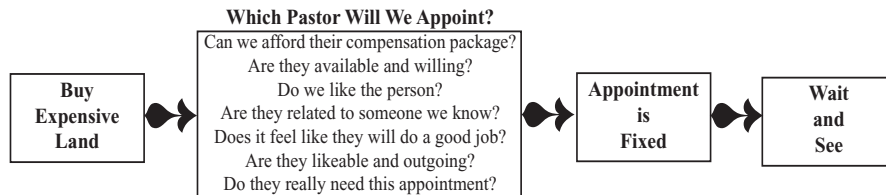
- Create a strategy to develop new congregations.
- Address the leadership crisis in the church in the United States.
- Partner with the poor.
- Implement a global health initiative.

### How will we start these new churches?

A stereotype of the old model that has been in place for the past thirty years may look something like this:



### A Stereotype of The "Old" Model



The first step was to purchase expensive land – 10 to 20 acres preferred. This was our starting point, and primary focus because we apparently believed that THE key ingredient for the successful launch of a new church was "Location - Location - Location." Or, better than just an empty field, purchase a building.

The second step was to appoint a pastor. Rick Morris says that the Christian Church made the pastoral assignment using the "Kit Carson" method of "shooting the slowest buffalo." In other words, the primary question for this step was: which pastor is readily available? Other key questions in this stereotype of how we appointed pastors to start new churches might include: .....

- Can we afford this pastor's compensation package?
- Is this pastor available and willing?
- Do we like this pastor?
- Is this pastor related to someone we know?
- Does it feel like this pastor will do a good job?
- Is this pastor likable and outgoing?
- Does this pastor really need this appointment?

Using these guidelines, the appointment was fixed.

The third step was to "wait and see" what happened.

Across the nation, most of our Annual Conferences had a simple goal: within five years to have an average worship attendance of 250, and to be financially self-supporting. Across the nation, what was our typical result? In far too many new church starts, within five years we had an average worship attendance of 50 adults, 25 children, and additional request for continued financial support from the Annual Conference.

In a 2007 survey by Path One of 48 Annual Conferences, about 32 of them report attempting 561 new church starts between 2001 - 2006. *{including parachute, parenting & multi-site models}* { 47%, or 262 are in non-anglo contexts} The typical average worship attendance by the 4th year is about 150 with about \$230,000 in total Conference and Districts funds spent.

In an August 2005, Craig Miller (GBDiscipleship) conducted a study of the South Central Jurisdiction new church starts.

He found that 193 new churches were started in the 15 years prior to 2005. At the time the study was conducted:

- 29% had a worship attendance at 50 or less
- 56% had worship attendance of 119 or less
- only 30% had worship attendance over 200

### There has to be a better way to start new churches!

In most of our communities, to reach a sustaining level of viability these new churches will have to reach 150 to 200 adults every Sunday within the first four years. In a new church setting it generally takes 150 to 200 adults to provide adequate ministry and financial resources to buy land and pay for the construction of a new facility. The critical point is not just financial, it is gifted volunteer resources too. In a new church setting it generally takes

150 to 200 adults to offer a level of excellence across the broad spectrum of discipleship ministries that most mission fields expect from a healthy church: music, nursery, children, youth, young adult, women, men, singles, and a strong variety of mission projects (local, state, national, and international).

While some of these new churches will be "mission congregations," we must improve on our old church start strategies, so that this new initiative will develop churches that are stronger, more effective in making new disciples of Jesus Christ, and move toward financial independence faster. The financial strength of these new congregations will provide the resources to start even more new churches and to increase our support of missions through the General Board of Global Ministries.

## How can we improve the strength & vitality of this next generation of new church starts?

### We Began To Discover a Better Way to Start New Churches!

When the Arkansas Conference voted in 2003 to begin a new initiative of starting 55 new faith communities by 2013 (30 new churches, and 25 new multi-site churches), the Bishop assigned me the task of putting together a system to accomplish this new strategic initiative.

From **Clay Jacobs** in the North Georgia Conference, we learned: New church pastoral leadership is THE critical factor. **"We have discovered in North Georgia that the most important piece in church planting is leadership. If the pastor is called by God to this new work, has a passion for reaching unchurched people, has a commitment to unconditional excellence, and possesses the unique set of church planting gifts and graces - this pastor will draw people to Christ, even in the desert."**

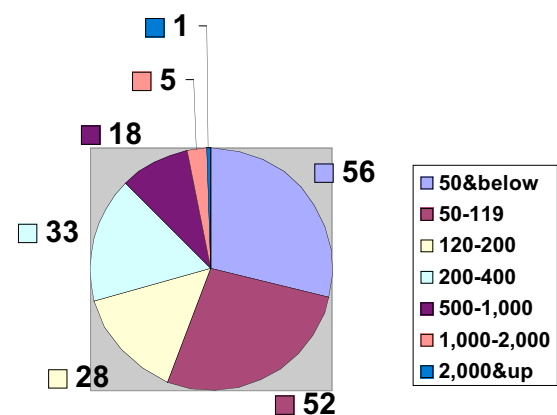


George Howard

From **George Howard** in the West Ohio Conference, and **Dirk Elliott** in the East Ohio Conference, we learned that we could increase the 'success rate' by training a pool of pastors for the cabinet to appoint from.

- Take the pastors 'nominated' by the cabinet and involve them in a New Church Leadership Institute
- Equip them with knowledge and skills for church planting
- Connect them with successful church planters
- Give these pastors time to discern if they are called to this ministry
- Give the Cabinet time to assess if they have the characteristics of a successful church planter.

**Total # of Churches by Worship Size**  
193 New Churches started from 1990 to 2004 in SCJ



Clay Jacobs



Craig Miller

**From Craig Miller**, in the General Board of Discipleship we learned...

If you want to change the DNA of the Annual Conference (*the atmosphere, level of emotional / financial support*)... don't just have 3 pastors in the New Church Leadership Institute, instead involve 20 pastors. Over time, a few of these will actually be appointed to start new churches, but others graduates will:

- Become District Superintendents who take the initiative to start new churches in their district;
- Chairs of the Board of Ordained Ministry who can recognize potential church planting pastors entering the system;
- Chairs of CFA, who will support new church funding requests; or
- Pastors of large churches who will be more supportive of sponsoring a new church on the edge of town, starting a multi-site church, or daughtering a new church.
- So, that in ten years, most of the younger elders and local pastors in the Conference will be graduates of the Institute & more likely to be supportive of this new church initiative.



Jim Griffith

**From Jim Griffith**, consultant to 48 Annual Conferences and trainer of more than 7,000 new church pastors, we learned:

- The two new church start models working best right now are: Parent Church & Extension Campus
- "The process through which new church pastors are recruited, assessed, trained, deployed, and supported by a coach after appointment determines the success or failure of any church planting system."
- The goal of an effective church planting system is to attract high quality candidates; clearly identify their strengths and patterns of behavior; and develop their skill sets and assign them to a context in which they have an affinity for the target population. Taken together, these are the components for the foundation for starting strong, vital faith communities.

**PATH1** The Path One survey of 2007 found that in the 15 Annual Conferences with "best practices" {pre-appointment training like NCLI, formal assessment, coaching, and a support system} they started 336 new churches {169 of them in non-anglo contexts} between 2001 & 2006. The average worship attendance in these 336 new churches is now 332. These Conferences also have an 85% survival rate of their new church starts. These Conferences only spent an average of \$203,945 in Conference and District funds for each church. {2001 to 2003 new starts, with support spread over the first 4 years}

**From the wisdom of these consultants, and others, we designed "A Proposed New Model for Discerning, Equipping, Appointing and Supporting New Church Pastors."**



**Lyle Schaller** (author and highly respected national authority on United Methodist church demographics) **proposes that an Annual Conference needs to start new churches each year (1%) to offset those churches that disband or "move into the terminally ill stage of their institutional life."** (If an Annual Conference has 500 churches, they should start at least 5 new churches.)

**He also proposes that if our goal was for "substantial growth," our conference should be starting between 2% and 3% new churches each year.** (If an Annual Conference has 500 churches, they should start between 10 and 15 new churches if their goal is for "substantial growth".)

**\*In the spring of 2007, the Path One Team of the General Board of Discipleship completed a survey of 48 Annual Conferences in the USA. Thirty-two of those conferences reported that between 2001 and 2006 they attempted to start 561 new UM Churches. (including parachute drop, parenting, and multi-site strategies) (47% or 262 of these starts are in a non-anglo contexts) Total Conference & District funds spent in the first 4 years: \$230,000 for each of these 561 new church starts. What did they spend this \$230,000 for: 48% salaries of the new church pastors; 4% to train the new church pastors; 2% to provide coaches for new church pastors; 2% obtaining demographic research; 25% to purchase land; 9% building construction grants; and 9% other - totaling 100%.**

• for pastors starting new churches • for churches starting new churches • for resourcing our newest churches •