

What is PATH 1?



A Strategy for Starting New UM Churches in the USA

ABOUT PATH 1 The Path 1 team is a most extraordinary collaborative that represents the Council of Bishops; Connectional Table; the boards of Global Ministries, Communications, Discipleship and Higher Education and Ministry; racial ethnic national plans; the Network for Congregational Developers and congregational church planters.

PATH 1 VISION To identify and support 1000 new church pastors and plant 650 new churches between 2009-2012 with an average attendance of 250 attendees.

**IN ORDER TO
ACCOMPLISH
THIS VISION
WE MUST**

- create a national assessment tool for use with church planters
- support those churches through regional training, internships, mentoring and Web material
- build a system for orienting and training bishops and district superintendents to support new congregational starts
- develop modular curriculum for starting congregations that is biblically based and helps congregations prepare for their role in new church starts

**WHY DOES
PATH 1
EXIST?**

- The evidence clearly demonstrates that starting strong new churches wins people to Christ more effectively because:
- A higher percentage of people who don't currently attend church are more willing to try a new church than to visit an established church.
 - A higher percentage of believers who attend new churches invite friends to church than do believers from established churches.
 - The number of churches in America is not keeping up with population growth. That means there aren't enough entry points for the unchurched to find – or be found by – a community of believers.
 - The established churches that help start new churches experience the miracle of replenishment. When a church shares its most valuable resources, it almost always grows to where it started – and sometimes beyond.



Tom Butcher
Path One
Executive Director

PATH ONE

About Path 1

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

It's time to reach more people, more younger people, more diverse people.

Kingdom building, not institution building. The Path One movement was inspired in equal parts by our bishops, our network of congregational developers, and a group of people who have never set foot in our churches. It's based on the achievable ideal that our congregations reflect the kingdom of God, embracing all people. It's mission is to lead a movement that starts new churches that re-evangelize the United States.

In 2005, the bishops identified seven "paths" for The United Methodist Church's mission of outreach. They urged that establishing new churches should be our first priority (thus the name "Path One").

Path One seeks to lead a movement that equips 1,000 church planters
to enable Annual Conferences to start 650 churches
that collectively average 300 in worship within 5 years of launch and
commit to start a new congregation within their first 10 years
thereby, beginning a process that forms
millions of new disciples of Jesus Christ within 30 years.

The National Strategy for New Church Starts, lead by the Path One movement, is focused on a few core strategies:

- **Investment in leadership.** Recruiting, assessing, equipping, coaching, mentoring and networking a planter pool of deployable leaders who can shepherd the new church starts.
- **Multiplication of Healthy Congregations.**
- **Networking** information, approaches and models among field, national plans, and agency efforts and, ultimately, among jurisdictions. Gleaning "best practices," including but not limited to planter preparation, technology, demographics, and launch logistics.

The Path 1 Team represents an historic, collaborative effort to lead the movement to re-evangelize the United States through new church start. This group now consists of about 20 persons representing the Council of Bishops (3), the Network of Developers (5-one from each jurisdiction) General Agencies (4- GBOD, GBGM, GBHEM, UCom), the National Plans (5-Asian, Hispanic, Korean, Native American, Strengthening the Black Church) and 1 each of the following; Executive Officer, Connectional Table, Church Planter, Member-at-Large and Facilitator.

Path 1 wholeheartedly believes that while individually each group has done many good things, together, with God's help, even greater things! We are committed to building relationships and inviting people to join us in keeping the movement of starting new churches moving forward. If you are interested in joining this movement to reach more people, more diverse people and more younger people for Jesus through identifying and equipping leaders that start new faith communities, call us!

Contact us at tbutcher@gbod.org



Organizers break ground in August 2006 for Lighthouse: A United Methodist Faith Community in Ooltewah, Tenn. The United Methodist Church wants to start 650 new congregations by 2012. A UMNS photo by Barry Dilgard.

United Methodist plan emphasizes new church starts

By Linda Green* (June 22, 2007 | NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS))

Since the most effective evangelism is through new churches, The United Methodist Church wants to start 650 new congregations with 63,000 members by 2012 as part of a new emphasis on church growth in the United States.

Eventually, the shrinking denomination wants to return to its evangelistic heyday of planting a new U.S. church every day. It also wants to reach untapped frontiers such as western states where the church historically has not followed population growth.

The strategy is all part of the aggressive vision of "Path One," the newly organized strategy team on new congregational development coordinated by the United Methodist Board of Discipleship.

"We believe it's one of the most needed and time-sensitive national efforts in the denomination's recent history," said the Rev. Karen Greenwaldt, top executive of the Board of Discipleship. "This is a new and bold vision of church planting that has been formed out of the work of many partners."

The initiative will be headed by the Rev. Thomas G. Butcher, who on July 1 becomes executive secretary of the newly created office of new congregational development for the United States.

Butcher will work to foster a new wave of United Methodist evangelism by developing and coordinating training for 1,000 new church "planters." He will collaborate with representatives from church wide boards, agencies, networks and racial and ethnic plans to align resources to help and encourage annual conferences in their common goal of serving people and inviting them to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This is also the mission of The United Methodist Church.

A clear priority

"Path One" is named for the first of the "seven vision pathways" for church growth from the Council of Bishops. As part of the strategy, Path One will:

- Create a national assessment tool for use with church planters;
- Support new church pastors through regional training, internships, mentoring and Web material;
- Build a system for orienting and training bishops and district superintendents to support new congregational starts;



The Rev.
Karen Greenwaldt

- Create a database and decision-making calculators that allow conference leaders to make effective decisions for church plantings and closures; and
- Develop modular curriculum for starting congregations that is biblically based and helps congregations prepare for their role in new church starts.

The Path One team comprises members of the Council of Bishops; Connectional Table; the boards of Global Ministries, Communications, Discipleship and Higher Education and Ministry; racial ethnic national plans; the Network for Congregational Developers and congregational church planters.

“Path One is the formalized commitment ... to collaborate in meaningful and faithful ways,” Greenwaldt said.

“We believe it’s one of the most needed and time-sensitive national efforts in the denomination’s recent history.”—The Rev. Karen Greenwaldt

Butcher, who leaves his job as a district superintendent in the Desert Southwest Annual Conference, says the time has come for a new United Methodist approach to evangelism.

Currently in the United States, the denomination averages one church start every 7.6 days, according to statistics from the United Methodist Council on Finance and Administration. That compares with the 50-year period beginning in 1870 when Butcher says Methodists “were at our best” and started one new church a day.

“I think we want to try to get back to that,” he said. “It is going to take a couple quadrennia to do that, (but) the goal is to eventually start 350 new churches a year across the country in our denomination.”

Initial strategies call for the new “planters pool” to begin approximately 137 new churches a year during 2009-2012. Within the same period, the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries will help plant 400 new churches outside the United States.

A new faith community

The Path One team defines a new congregation as a faith community that:

- Is committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ;
- Includes regular community worship;
- Is Wesleyan in theology;
- Is willing to plant a new congregation in its first decade;
- Has an effective discipling system;
- Does community outreach; and
- Receives new members



Tom Butcher
Path One
Executive Director

“It is important that we plant within the DNA of a new congregation that it needs to start another congregation in 10 years,” Butcher said. “It is more than a mission project or a new worship service or the construction of a new building.”

Statistics suggests that while the population has grown, at least 35 percent of people in the United States do not attend church.

“The most effective evangelism we have is starting new churches,” Butcher said. “Planting new churches means that we attract new people, younger people and more diverse people. There is a lot of excitement created around a new church start.”

Greenwaldt agrees. “The creation of new churches gives us the best opportunity we have to connect with new people,” she said.

Regional growth

According to Butcher, the church in the United States has started too few congregations in the last 50 years, particularly in areas of population growth such as the western states.

In the Western Jurisdiction, there is one United Methodist church for every 37,000 people, while there is one for

every 6,337 people in the South Central Jurisdiction, one per 5,400 in the Southeast, one per 8,400 in the Northeast, and one for every 7,600 in the North Central Jurisdiction.

“The population has shifted and it has been estimated that about 60 percent of our United Methodist churches are in the wrong locations. And, so trying to get a church to move is very difficult,” Butcher said.

“We can no longer rely on people coming to us. That might have been good in the ‘50s and ‘60s, but now we have to go where the people are. That is what John Wesley did.” –The Rev. Thomas G. Butcher

At the same time, as many as 47 percent of people in the western United States “have no faith involvement and do not care about church,” he said.

“We have population areas where there is no Methodist presence,” he added. “We think that by putting a church in a new population area, they will come. New churches tend to attract new people, younger people and also more diverse people.”

Since 1964, The United Methodist Church has experienced a 27 percent membership decline in U.S. membership despite a 54 percent population explosion. The percentage of youth declined from one in seven in 1964 to one in 21 in 2005, and 41 percent of the country’s United Methodist churches did not receive a member by profession of faith in 2005.

The Great Commission

Greenwaldt reminds that the ultimate goal of planting new churches is not to stem United Methodist membership loss or decline. “The goal is to reach more people, more younger people and more diverse people for Jesus Christ. We seek to do that by focusing on identifying, training and equipping 1,000 new church planters by 2012.”

Those planters must follow population trends so that United Methodists can go out to where the people are and create churches in a variety of areas and compositions, including multicultural, ethnic and multi ethnic congregations, Butcher said.

Population growth by 2030 is projected to be greatest in the South Central and West jurisdictions, at 27 percent, followed by the Southeast Jurisdiction at 26 percent. The North Central and Northeast jurisdictions are projected to grow at 8 percent.

“We can no longer rely on people coming to us,” Butcher said. “That might have been good in the ‘50s and ‘60s, but now we have to go where the people are. That is what John Wesley did. He followed the people and we have to get back to our roots.”

Leadership is an important aspect of Path One, Butcher said, adding that the ability to identify, recruit, assess and train church planters is critical.

This August, at the [School of Congregational Development](#), one of the ministry tracks (entitled “New Church 101: How to Start A New Church”) may help pastors discern if they might have the right gifts for the unique ministry of church planting. The Aug. 2-7 event at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., is jointly sponsored by the United Methodist Board of Discipleship and the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries. The mission of the annual event is to help annual conferences and congregations “grow the church” through new congregational starts and the strengthening of existing congregations.

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Grueene (Texas) United Methodist Church holds worship services at nearby Hoffman Elementary School. A UMNS photo courtesy of the Rev. Karen Horan.



Native American Plan to Focus on New Church Starts

A UMNS Report By Linda Green* Oct. 4, 2007

Promoting evangelism, assisting in new church starts and revitalizing existing congregations are the plans of the task force charged with encouraging Native American participation in the life of The United Methodist Church.

The evangelistic focus for the Native American Comprehensive Plan parallels the denomination's aggressive vision of "Path One," the newly organized strategy team on new congregational development under the United Methodist Board of Discipleship.

Meeting Sept. 27 in Reno, Nev., the task force visualized ways over the next four years to be part of the renewed emphasis on church growth in The United Methodist Church. The plan also seeks new ways to address poverty in Native America and provide native resources for the church and world.

In the United States, there are more than 100 United Methodist Native American churches, ministries and organizations, and an estimated 18,000 Native Americans among the denomination's 8 million U.S. members. The plan seeks to work with at least two annual (regional) conferences a year to begin new Native American churches or faith communities. The plan also seeks to help revitalize urban, rural and reservation churches.

"Our ultimate goal is to increase the number of faith communities and congregations across the United States and make new Native American disciples of Jesus Christ," according to the Rev. Anita Phillips, the plan's executive director.

Aligning with Path One

Phillips calls Path One an exciting venture because the denomination "is no longer hiding from the reality of declining numbers, but rather we are claiming a future and an identity in Jesus Christ." Path One, she said, "approaches the decline in the U.S. church by believing that Creator God has great work for the U.S church to accomplish in building the kingdom."



The Rev. Anita Phillips

Since 1964, the denomination has experienced a 27 percent U.S. membership decline despite a 54 percent population explosion. The Path One team, organized earlier this year, seeks to help the church start 650 new United Methodist congregations by 2012. The new emphasis on church growth aims to return the denomination to its evangelistic heritage of starting a new congregation every day.

The Native American Comprehensive Plan and its 19-member task force were created under a mandate by the 1992 General Conference, the denomination's top legislative body, to help United Methodists view Native Americans as partners in ministry rather than as a mission of the church. It seeks to make disciples for Jesus Christ within the Native American community while recognizing the unique cultures and languages of native people.

Specifically, the plan's mandate is to develop and strengthen native congregations, ministries and fellowships; train and develop native leaders; and encourage their contributions to the life of the church. Key to each area are contributions that Native American cultures and spiritual expression bring to the mission of the whole church.

The focus on new church starts and revitalization of Native American congregations is the genesis behind the plan's request to the 2008 General Conference to move from the umbrella of the church's Board of Global Ministries to its Board of Discipleship, according to the Rev. David Wilson, chairman of the plan.

"We are shifting from being a mission to reminding the church of what we contribute to its life and our wanting to be a resource for the denomination. We are more than a mission. We are viable and have contributions to make to the church," Wilson said.



The Rev. David Wilson

Studying evangelism

Beginning next Feb. 14-15 in Fort Worth, Texas, the plan begins a series of one-day "listening posts" among clergy and laity in regions where native churches and communities exist. Native Americans are invited to share information and testimony on presenting the Gospel within Native America.

"We will be trying to get feedback from local churches on how we can better talk about evangelism and new church starts," Wilson said.

Native American ministries exist throughout the United States. The Bureau of Indian Affairs recognizes 561 tribal governments in the country, and the 2003 U.S. census estimates there are more than 2.7 million Native Americans.

The plan wants to hear particularly from native people who have separated themselves from the Christian church but participate in traditional religions. "We want them to come speak to us about what might it take for you to consider taking part in some of our activities," said Phillips. "We are hoping to learn how to set the Gospel in the context of Native America in the 21st century."

The regional meetings will set the tone for a proposed Native American School of Evangelism to be held within the next four years. Phillips said the school and other proposed endeavors are the plan's way of helping the church become more aware about native identity and native Christian identity.

A writers gathering, to be held Oct. 26-28 in Tulsa, Okla., aims to nurture and encourage Native Americans "experiencing a call to write" to produce work that contributes both to the native community and the entire church. "This is an important part of the work and future of the church," Phillips said.

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