

DEVELOPING NEW CHURCHES IN MISSION PRESBYTERY

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Mission Presbytery encourages and supports and development of new churches in a variety of ways, including the initiation and participation in new church probes, fellowships, and new church developments. The following guidelines summarize the steps usually taken by those seeking to form a new church in Mission Presbytery under the guidance of the Church Development and Evangelism Committee.

Although each church development effort has a unique context and mission, every phase of new church development should reflect the Reformed Tradition and be consistent with the Presbyterian form of government and the policies of Mission Presbytery, including those regarding background checks and sexual harassment. For example, all pastoral leadership and volunteers working with minors must have background checks conducted and financed by Mission Presbytery or the sponsoring Session. Resources, guidance, and support are available at the congregational, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly levels of PC (USA).

In celebration and commitment to our partnership in mission within PC (USA), all fellowships and new church developments are encouraged to model the giving of a tithe by designating a minimum of 10% of their operating budget as “benevolences.” These monies may be divided between a pledge to Mission Presbytery for the on-going mission efforts of the entire PC (USA) and the support of local mission efforts.

Normally, groups remain in one of the stages listed below from six months to three years. Most new church initiatives move toward charter within five years. Some initiatives, however, may move quickly to the new church development phase but remain there for five years. Others efforts may linger in the probe or fellowship phases for up to three years. Some church initiatives do not progress toward charter but become a ministry of an existing congregation. New church development is a risk-taking venture with Christ. Ultimately, success is measured by our faithfulness, not whether we grow a new church in a particular location. The CDEC is charged with stewardship of resources to develop self-sustaining congregations, usually within five years.

At some point every church initiative will work with Mission Presbytery to identify pastoral leadership. A local sponsoring congregation may choose to provide pastoral leadership or the leadership team, in cooperation with a sponsoring congregation, CDEC and COM may contract with a PC (USA) pastor to provide temporary ministry. In some cases the CDEC will work with the local leadership team and COM to call a Mission Presbytery Evangelist, which is an installed position. A written terms of call and a contract will be negotiated and signed by the pastoral leader, as well as by representatives of CDEC, COM, the sponsoring session(s), and the leadership team. Any pastors serving fellowships or new church developments are required to complete an

appropriate gifts assessment and background check. When a new church development charters and elects a session, the session and congregation will work with COM to call their first pastor, which may or may not be the pastors serving prior to charter.

Fellowships and New Church Developments will always have sponsorship by existing churches, but the involvement/commitment of sponsors will range from serving as a “parent” church to sponsorship defined more narrowly. Normally each fellowship and NCD will have a sponsoring session that agrees to receive members in trust and pay their per capita, as well as approve/record baptisms. If there is no sponsoring Session, Mission Presbytery must assume responsibility and find a Session sponsor as soon as possible. The terms of sponsorship should be included in Session and fellowship/NCD steering committee minutes and be reviewed annually. The following guidelines provide an overview, but each venture must chart a particular path in cooperation with other churches, the Presbytery, and the PC (USA) acting through its various ministries.

Each phase of development must be approved by Mission Presbytery, acting through the Church Development and Evangelism Committee. Funding requires separate application and approval. Approval of the establishment of a probe, fellowship, or new church development does not assure funding.

I. The Probe: Laying a foundation

The probe involves research and the completion of a feasibility study to determine the possibilities and direction of new church development in a particular area. The probe will include:

Gathering and analyzing demographic information

Completion of community survey to assess needs/interests

Thorough exploration of Mission Insight for census demographic information (Contact presbytery office for access password).

Assessment of possible support from existing congregations and leaders

Exploration of ecumenical opportunities

Consider possibilities of pastoral leadership

Those leading the probe may request funding from PC(USA), Mission Presbytery, or congregational sources. There are resources available for demographic and analytical research, as well as for other expenses. The 1001 “Seed” grants are given by General Assembly, but require support of the Presbytery.

Documents:

1. Application to Conduct a Probe for New Church Development (Attachment 2)

2. Application for New Church Development Funds (Attachment 3)
3. Application for 1001 Worshiping Communities Seed Grant (pcusa.org)
4. Sponsors of New Church Development (Attachment 4)

II. The Fellowship: Developing a Team

A community of believers forms and grows during the fellowship phase. Believers begin to meet regularly for worship, mission, bible study, and/or theological reflection as they discern God's mission in forming a new church for Jesus Christ. Activities are advertised to the community.

A fellowship might be initiated by an existing church or the presbytery, but presbytery approval, as well as the sponsorship of an existing congregation/Session, eventually is required of all fellowships. Connections with both the presbytery and other congregations is important.

Sponsoring churches will be asked to: 1) hold membership in trust for the fellowship and pay associated per capita fees; 2) approve and/or administer baptism and communion as appropriate; 3) receive and distribute funds from Mission Presbytery/PC (USA); and 4) appoint a liaison to work with the fellowship as appropriate. Note that more than one congregation may serve as a sponsor, and sponsorship may or may not include the provision of space, ministry support, and funds.

During the fellowship phase, a Task Force or Leadership Team should be formed which includes a liaison from the presbytery, approved by the Church Development and Evangelism Committee, a liaison from the sponsoring session, as well as a chair and secretary. The leadership team will develop and execute annual plans for the growth and development of the faith community, take minutes, report to the CDE Committee, and work toward approval as a Mission Presbytery Fellowship and funding as appropriate. Both the leadership team and the pastor will report to the CDE.

A fellowship may have a particular ethnic or cultural identity. It may address a need not met by an existing Presbyterian congregation. It may form in a geographical area which has no other Presbyterian witness. A fellowship may be small in numbers.

Over time, a fellowship may discern a call other than forming a new church. Their witness might be more appropriate as a mission of an existing congregation. Discernment takes time and effort. Moving toward church development requires focus.

A fellowship may or may not have ordained clergy leadership. The presbytery may or may not call an evangelist to lead a fellowship. The presbytery requires appropriate new church development gift assessment for any clergy to be called to lead new church development.

Funding may be available through the presbytery and PC(USA) ministries, but grants vary depending upon the mission articulated and the progress made toward fulfilling that mission.

Once the Fellowship has 35-50 believers committed to forming a new church, a petition may be made to CDE/Mission Presbytery for NCD designation.

Documents:

1. Application for New Church Development Funds (Attachment 3)
2. Application for 1001 Worshiping Communities Seed Grant (pcusa.org)
3. Petition to Become a Mission Presbytery Fellowship (Attachment 5)
4. Sponsors for New Church Development (Attachment 4)
5. Petition to Become a Mission Presbytery New Church Development (Attachment 7)
6. Contract for Temporary Pastor of Fellowship (Attachment 8)

III. The New Church Development: Moving Toward Charter

After approval of NCD status at Presbytery, the New Church Development will elect a Steering Committee/Leadership Team, which will include at least one Ruling Elder, as well as liaisons from CD, COM, and sponsoring sessions. The Steering Committee will work with the Presbytery (CDE, Committee on Ministry, and local session sponsors) to call a Presbyterian Evangelist, who has completed assessment affirming gifts for new church development. The Presbytery will provide for pastor coaching, training, and support.

The Steering Committee will develop a three to five year plan to charter and develop as a new church and complete Mission Presbytery and PC (USA) funding requests.

The Steering Committee will conduct its business consistent with the Presbyterian form of government. Although it is not a Session, the Steering Committee should familiarize itself with the Book of Order and Session guidelines. The Presbytery (COM and CDE) will provide training and other assistance.

Ideally, liaisons from the sponsoring church (es) and from Mission Presbytery will attend Steering Committee meetings and special events. Liaisons will provide communication and promote collaboration with the session/presbytery. The pastor or Steering Committee Secretary is asked to provide progress reports prior to each of three CDE meetings each year and a funding request/budget once a year. Additional information may be required with funding requests of the presbytery and PC (USA).

When the NCD moves closer to 100 regular participants, the Steering Committee should petition to charter. Once approved by presbytery, a charter service will be planned to include worship and the celebration of communion, the establishment of the congregation and receiving of members, the election, ordination, and installation of officers, and the call and installation of a pastor. The NCD pastor and Steering Committee is encouraged to recommend members to serve on the Charter Commission. CDE and COM will provide support for charter preparation as provided in G 1-0201.

Documents:

1. Application for New Church Development Funds (Attachment 3)
2. Application for 1001 Grant (pcusa.org)
3. Application for PC(USA) NCD Grant (pcusa.org)
4. Responsibilities of New Church Development Liaisons (Attachment 6)
5. Request to Charter (See G1-0201)