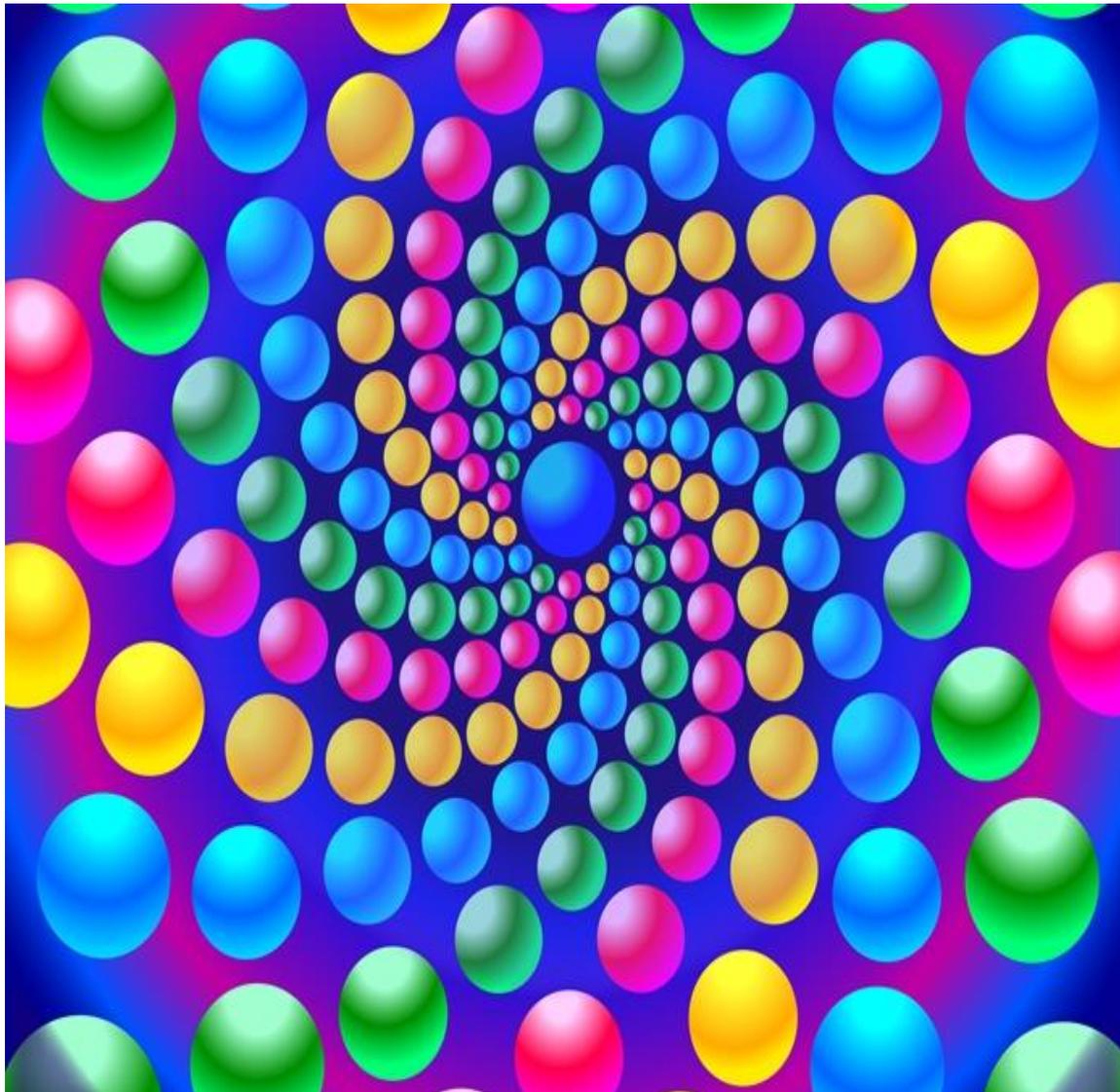


New Church Start Manual

Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations

Ohio Conference

United Church of Christ



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## CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

Church Development is a key to broadening our outreach into communities, constituencies and populations who have not found spiritual nurture in a current church setting. In the Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve (EOA/WRA) Associations, there are several models for the birthing or adoption of new churches or communities of faith. These model include:

- An Association Sponsored Church Plant
- A Congregation Sponsored Church Plant
- A Ministry Connection Faith Community
- The Adoption of a Church or Faith Community from another denomination

This booklet will identify the process and policies followed for each model.

We trust that you will find this a useful tool as you discern your involvement as a church planting minister or a congregation nesting, supporting or birthing a new church start. Church leadership team may find this a useful resource as well.

## Part One ASSOCIATION SPONSORED CHURCH PLANT

The Association is pleased to partner with leaders who want to start churches in partnership with the Association. Support for this model comes through the Church Vitality Team and the Association provides oversight. Standing is granted by the Association Council.

## Part Two CONGREGATION SPONSORED CHURCH PLANT

This model is also called Church Multiplication, as defined and explored by Epicenter and Paul Nixon. This is a model of churches giving birth to churches. In this model the new faith community leader is called by an existing church. The planting pastor will require authorization and support from the Department of Church & Ministry and the Church Vitality Team. When and if the church plant becomes independent, standing is granted by the Association Council.

## Part Three MINISTRY CONNECTIONS

Ministry Connections are innovative alternatives to traditional church planting. They are designed to serve and partner with an identified constituency group. This model has great flexibility in structure, format, and financial support. Most Ministry Connections are not designed to become larger churches. These communities of faith may be led by ministers or community organizers or constituency leaders supported by an authorized minister. Support and oversight for these plants are provided by the Church Vitality Team. Standing is granted by the Association Council.

## Part Four AFFILIATING CONGREGATIONS

Affiliating churches are those who either have no denominational affiliation or are affiliated with another denomination and wish to become affiliated with the UCC. Churches seek affiliation by contacting the Associate Minister for Congregational Vitality and Development. The congregation studies, discerns and prayerfully considers if the UCC is the appropriate denomination for them. Support in this process comes from the Church Vitality Team. Standing is granted by the Association Council.

*PART ONE*  
*ASSOCIATION SPONSORED CHURCH PLANTS*

An Association Sponsored Church Plant is developed and supported by the Association and coordinated through the Association Church Vitality and Development Team.

Planting Minister Initiation

In some cases the church planting minister initiates a plan for a new church start. As they begin to think about this possibility our Church in Exploration Status process should be followed.

In addition to following the Church in Exploration Status process, the Association Church and Development Team may also request a written response to the following questions. This will be especially important when the potential planting minister does not currently hold standing in the association. This written document is not designed to be a psychological assessment, nor will it take the place of a personal interview, but will provide data for the Team as they prepare for their deliberations.

**Written Interview Questions**

**Personal Background**

1. Tell us a little about your personal faith journey.
2. Tell us what values you hold most dear and how they impact your ministry work.
3. What are you passionate about?

**Call**

1. Explain why you feel called to plant a new church.
2. Describe what a successful church plant looks like to you.

**Leadership**

1. Describe your leadership style and practices
2. What additional skills do you need to learn to be successful in a church planting endeavor?
3. How do you bring others to leadership opportunities?
4. Describe a substantial success or failure you had as a leader.

**Faith**

1. Describe a time when you felt most connected to God and how that connection impacted your life.

2. Describe a time when you felt least connected to God and how that lack of connection impacted your life.
3. How do you care for your spirit?

#### Visioning

1. Describe a time when you developed a vision, created a plan, and carried the plan through to complete.
2. Describe your plan for this church plant and how you will engage others in support of it.

#### Ministerial Passions

1. Which of the ministry tasks enliven your heart and spirit?
2. Share your opinion of a successful worship service.
3. What do you believe impacts the spirits of a congregation most during worship?

#### Conflict

1. Describe how you manage conflict with peers, colleagues, or supervisees.
2. Describe an effective method for managing conflict within a church or congregational setting.

#### Commitment

1. Describe a time when your work or success was challenged and how you maintained your commitment to the accomplishment of our goals.
2. What do you see that would prevent this envisioned church plant from being successful?

#### Relational Connections

1. Describe two important relationships in your life and what makes them important to you.
2. Describe mutuality in ministry.
3. What help do you expect from your professional and personal colleagues with regards to this church plant?
4. What resistance do you expect from your professional and personal colleagues and/or from the church community with regards to this church plant?
5. Define and describe Covenant as it relates to the church. Describe the covenantal relationships you hope to form among your leadership team and core members.
6. What support do you anticipate wanting and needing from the Association?

## Church in Exploration Status Process

A Church in Exploration is defined as a community of faith whose purpose and focus constituency is being identified and expanded. A basic ministry plan has been developed but no formal gatherings have yet begun. The steps of acceptance of Church in Exploration Status are:

1. A ministry plan has been developed which outlines:
  - a. The basic mission and vision of the new community of faith
  - b. The constituency or population group who will be partners in the community of faith or ministry connection
  - c. The demographics of the region where the community of faith or ministry connection will be centered
  - d. The community resources available to support the community of faith or ministry connection
  - e. Identified leaders
    - i. Pastoral or community organizer leader
      1. Resume, CV, authorization for ministry or leadership
    - ii. Makeup and skills of leadership team
      1. Brief bios of leadership team members
      2. If not recruited, the skill set needed on the leadership team
  - f. A two-year timeline for development of the leadership team, resource support, participants, and funding.
  - g. A budget for the ministry plan with includes:
    - i. Research costs
    - ii. Pastoral or community organizer salary and benefits
    - iii. Space needs and proposed locations
    - iv. Other estimated costs
2. Approval of the Association Church Vitality Team
  - a. An interview with the Church Vitality Team will include:
    - i. Review of the ministry plan
    - ii. Discussion of goals and vision for the project
    - iii. Review of the timeline
    - iv. Specific request for funding during the exploratory phase
3. Once approved, Church in Exploration Status will be granted.

A team made up of a minimum of two members and the staff will evaluate the proposal. Once Church in Exploration Status has been granted, funding options will be discussed with the Church Plant Minister.

The following Metric Checklist will be used for the evaluation of the Church in Exploration:

### Metrics for Approval of Church in Exploration Status

Date	Process Item	Meets Expectations	Reviewer
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> The basic mission and vision of the new community of faith has been developed</p>		
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> The constituency or population group who will be partners in the community of faith or ministry connection have been identified.</p>		
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> The demographics of the region where the community of faith or ministry connection will be centered have been determined.</p>		
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> The community resources available to support the community of faith or ministry connection have been identified.</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> Leadership meets the expectations, authorization requirements, or professional credentialing requirements</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> Leadership Team skills and gifts are identified and bios are provided <b>OR</b> An outline of the needed leadership skills and qualities are identified</p>		
	<p><b>Timeline</b> A two-year timeline for development of the leadership team, resource support, participants, and funding is provided</p>		
	<p><b>Budget</b> The budget includes research costs; pastoral or community organizer salary and benefits; space needs and proposed locations; other estimated costs</p>		
	<p><b>Interview with Church Vitality Team</b> The interview includes a review of the ministry plan; a discussion of goals and vision for the project; a review of the timeline; and specific requests for funding during the exploratory phase</p>		

Ongoing support and oversight of the progress and financial support of the Association Sponsored Church Plant will be provided by the Church Vitality and Development Team.

### Church Vitality and Development Team Initiation

There may be cases when the Association Church Vitality and Development Team seeks a new church start minister to begin the planting process to serve a particular local area or constituency. In this case, the same process is followed, but the Team may be more proactive in the design of the plant and the identification of a church start minister and their training. The same process for Church in Exploration Status will be followed.

The Team may begin the development of a Ministry Plan and the recruitment of a leadership team. Additionally, the Team can assist with the provision of a demographic report through the use of Mission Insite.

In the case of the Team's recruitment of a potential minister, we recommend:

1. The potential minister complete a current UCC Profile
2. The potential minister complete the UCC Church Planter Assessment through the Center for Progressive Renewal
3. An interview with the Team be held utilizing questions similar to the Written Interview Questions on pages 5 & 6 of this booklet.
4. The potential minister provide a DVD/Video Clip of a sermon delivered in the past year.

At the completion of the interview process, the Team will make a decision about assigning this minister to the church plant and the process will continue.

After the successful conclusion of the Church in Exploration Process the following process for granting standing is followed:

### **GRANTING STANDING FOR NEW CHURCH STARTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THE CHURCH EXPLORATION PROCESS**

1. A Ministry Plan which reflects years 3-5 of the New Church Start's or Faith Community's plans must be approved by the Association Church Vitality Team.
  - a. The plan will include:
    - i. A compelling statement of vision and mission reflecting learning which has occurred throughout the Church Exploration Process,
    - ii. Individuals who will be serving on the leadership and launch teams reflecting the constituencies serving as participants and resources for the Faith Community
    - iii. Identification of gaps in leadership and participation and a recruitment plan

- b. Biographies or resumes of the leadership team,
  - c. A detailed time line of development and implementation of the plan for the next 3 years
  - d. Your church-related goals for years 3, 4, & 5 years from the date of the proposal with attention to a fundraising, recruiting and outreach strategies
  - e. A detailed budget of years 3, 4, & 5
2. Completion of Annual interviews and assessments with the Association Church Vitality Team
    - a. Review of the Church in Exploration Plan at the end of year one
    - b. Review of Church in Exploration Plan and approval of Ongoing Ministry Plan at the end of year two
  3. The Pastor, Teacher or Leader who has standing in the United Church of Christ is part of the leadership team of the New Church Start or Faith Community (in some cases a community organizer or other professional will be the coordinating individual but to have standing as a Community of Faith within the UCC an authorized individual is required)
    - a. Current or transferable ministerial standing in the UCC **OR**
    - b. In the process of being authorized by the Association Committee on Ministry **OR**
    - c. In process of being granted dual Standing by the Association Committee on Ministry **OR**
    - d. In process of receiving privilege of call from the Association Committee on Ministry.
  4. The Pastor, Teacher or Leader has completed the New Church Leadership Institute or Church Planting 101 and 201 training through the Center for Progressive Renewal or Launchpad training through Epicenter.
  5. The governance form and written Way of Work for the New Church Start or Faith Community has been established.
    - a. The governance model and Way of Work has been approved by the Association Church Vitality Team for their recommendation to the Association Council
    - b. Approval of the governance model and Way of Work by the Association Council
  6. The Leadership Team is elected to support the governance model of the New Church Start or Faith Community.
  7. Demonstrate a one year covenantal relationship with one or more local settings within the Association in order to:

- a. Develop a deep understanding of the United Church of Christ history, polity, and practice
  - b. Develop a deep understanding of the covenantal partnerships within the United Church of Christ
  - c. Develop relationships within the Association and the Conference for mutual support
8. Complete an assessment with the Association Church Vitality Team determining progress toward mission accomplishments for years 3, 4, and 5
- a. Demonstrated progress in living into the mission and vision stated in the Ministry Plan or revision to the mission and vision based on experiential learning
  - b. Demonstrated progress in accomplishing the goals defined in the Ministry Plan
  - c. Demonstrated viability
    - i. This may include but is not limited to:
      - 1. Participation numbers
      - 2. Fiscal Viability
      - 3. Missional Impact
        - a. Recognition as making an impact in the area of ministry
        - b. Recognition as having addressed or begun to address the missional issues of the Ministry Plan
        - c. Demonstrated Ministry Connections in worship, discipleship and community service
    - ii. Evaluation of viability is completed by an Assessment Team appointed by the Association Church Vitality Team
9. A documented congregational vote to seek standing in the Association.
10. Acceptance by the Association Council based on the required viability metrics.

The following Metric Checklist will be used for the evaluation of New Church Standing:

### Metrics for Approval of New Church Standing

Date	Process Item	Meets Expectations	Reviewer
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> A compelling statement of vision and mission reflecting learning which has occurred throughout the Church Exploration Process</p>		
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> The demographics of the region where the community of faith or ministry connection will be centered have been determined</p>		
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> The community resources available to support the community of faith or ministry connection have been identified</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> Leadership meets the expectations, authorization requirements, or professional credentialing requirements</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> Leadership has completed the New Church Leadership Institute or Church Planting 101 and 201 training through the Center for Progressive Renewal or Launchpad training through Epicenter.</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> Individuals who will be serving on the leadership and launch teams reflecting the constituencies serving as participants and resources for the Faith Community have been identified and recruited. Identification of gaps in leadership and participation and a recruitment plan have been determined. Biographies or resumes of the leadership team are provided.</p>		
	<p><b>Timeline</b> A detailed time line of development and implementation of the plan for the next 3 years has been developed.</p>		

Date	Process Item	Meets Expectations	Reviewer
	<p><b>Budget</b> A detailed budget of years 3, 4, &amp; 5 with attention to a fundraising, recruiting and outreach strategies has been developed.</p>		
	<p><b>Governance Model</b> The governance form and written Way of Work for the New Church Start or Faith Community has been established.</p>		
	<p><b>Governance Model</b> The governance model and Way of Work has been approved by the Association Church Vitality Team for their recommendation to the Association Council</p>		
	<p><b>Governance Model</b> Approval of the governance model and Way of Work by the Association Council</p>		
	<p><b>Covenantal Partners</b> A one year covenantal relationship with one or more local settings within the Association, an understanding of UCC Polity, and UCC relationships has been demonstrated.</p>		
	<p><b>Viability Metrics</b> Fruitfulness as measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership or active participants number at least 50 individuals</li> <li>• Enthusiasm about the church is evident and can be assessed</li> <li>• Support for the Church planter is evident through a church assessment</li> <li>• Worship history and involvement;</li> </ul>		

Date	Process Item	Meets Expectations	Reviewer
	<p><b>Viability Metrics</b>            Financial Viability as measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are giving faithfully, generously, and even sacrificially</li> <li>• Funding levels have reached the point to have adequate resources to support the pastor and the ministries</li> <li>• The church is moving beyond mere survival and has begun or is continuing to give back to the ministries of the UCC – becoming 5 for 5</li> </ul>		
	<p><b>Viability Metrics</b>            Missional impact is demonstrated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community awareness of the ministries of the church;</li> <li>• Outreach and service to assigned or identified constituencies;</li> <li>• Demonstrated success in serving the community;</li> </ul>		
	<p><b>Viability Metrics</b>            Leadership development is demonstrated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith and Spiritual Discipleship development;</li> <li>• Lay leadership is active in contributing from their gifts, skills and talent</li> <li>• Lay leadership is active in the planning and implementing of the ministries of the church</li> <li>• The Governance Model and Ways of Work are being tweaked through conversation between the leadership and the congregation members</li> </ul>		

Date	Process Item	Meets Expectations	Reviewer
	<p><b>Viability Metrics</b>  A continued call for the Authorized Minister is demonstrated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A belief that God is still calling the minister to this church</li> <li>• The Authorized Minister has a vision and passion for the work of this church</li> <li>• A willingness to learn and grow as the pastor of this church plant and in relationship with ministerial and community colleagues</li> </ul>		
	<p><b>Interview with Church Vitality Team</b>  Annual Interviews and Consultation have been completed in years 3, 4, &amp; 5</p>		
	<p><b>Interview with Church Vitality Team</b>  The final assessment interview with the Church Vitality and Development Team has been completed.</p>		

A team made up of a minimum of two members of the Vitality Team and the staff coordinating Church Development will evaluate the Church Plan on an annual basis and make recommendations for additional funding. Once the process has been completed the Church Vitality and Development Team will make a recommendation for standing to the Association Council.

*PART TWO*  
*CHURCHES BIRTHING CHURCHES*  
*MULTIPLICATION*

It should be no surprise to us that churches have the ability to birth churches. It seems as obvious as cats birthing cats and whales birthing whales. One of the most effective methods for birthing churches is other churches, the multiplication of ministries. This is very different from nesting or hosting a church plant within your building. Rather multiplication results from a church's desire to make disciples, to go beyond the status quo and be church in new ways and new places.

Multiplication is not maintenance. Rather it is a gospel movement exemplified in the Book of Acts. The Spirit of God gave birth to the church in Jerusalem and the movement spread from the twelve out into the world. The original twelve may have grown to be part of a larger community of faith, but the sheer number of communities of faith grew.

If you review the Book of Acts you note the Holy Spirit indwelling the disciples in chapter 2. Then for the rest of the first seven chapters the first church expanded to include the twelve and their followers, newly gathered believers. Their numbers grew exponentially due to their fervent belief, their proclamation of the Good News, and their community-based worship. Their dispersion throughout Judea, Samaria and eventually other nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea was a benefit. They took their beliefs and values, the celebration of their faith, with them.

Once new churches formed there seemed no way to stop the multiplication. Each church made the decision to commission and send out individuals to teach and serve, to preach and lead others to relationships with God and other believers. Wouldn't it be amazing to be a part of a multiplication effort rivalling the first century?

We have been encouraged to think of the church as an existing congregation and to focus our efforts on increasing the numbers within that congregation. Yet, many of our current congregations were a part of a mission from another preexisting congregation who sent disciples out to form new thriving communities of faith. We need to recapture those values – values of multiplication.

Relying on denominations and judicatory staff to birth new churches is often more costly, more complicated, and less effective than when churches are birthing churches. Clearly not all attempts for local churches to birth new congregations will be successful

but the chances of success and thriving are much more easily realized with local congregations doing the birthing with the support of the association acting as midwife and support for the process.

Granted churches interested in birthing other churches need to be prepared to do so. Paul Nixon and Christie Latona have identified “eight concepts needed to create a culture of multiplication.

1. Understand the Multiplication Game.
2. Tend the Soil.
3. Raise the Spiritual Temperature
4. Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing
5. Build Positive Relationships
6. Savor the Gift of Diversity
7. Lead with Your Strengths
8. Be Nimble.”<sup>1</sup>

The Association Church Vitality and Development Team can assist the birthing congregation in gaining access to assessment using the Readiness 360 process and training and support through Epicenter.

### **What shall we birth?**

As human beings we know we give birth to other human beings, but none of us are naïve enough to believe that our offspring will be exact replicas of us. Newly birthed humans have a development cycle and even with common DNA they are as unique as each of their ancestors were.

We know as we look around our 21<sup>st</sup> century cultures and communities, that we are not heading back to the 1950’s. The world is a different place now than it was then and our birthed churches will likely be different from their birthing partners. There are a wide range of options for newly birthed churches. We will explore some of the models here, but churches, once again, know what and how they are capable of birthing. The Association Church Vitality and Development Team will assist the birthing congregation with resource, information, and training support and guidance. The models we have identified as simply to spark ideas and your own visioning process.

### Multi-Site Churches

This century’s mega-churches are often multi-site churches, but a multi-site church may be as simple as having two worshipping locations – one which worships early on Sunday morning and one later in the day. In this case the worship team commutes between the locations to provide a similar service. Often staff and administration is centralized and provides support to both locations (congregations).

The new faith community formed is a part of the original church, rather than a “new” church. In some cases multi-site churches grow to need additional staff or they may birth additional sites and have multiple worship teams.

An alternative is a multi-site church which broadcasts the sermon message and has other live worship components. While broadcasting because of one’s bravado or being ego-driven is not what we are talking about here, it may be possible to birth a multi-site church in this way, providing a portion of the worship live with a worship team who is physically and spiritually present and a transmission of a great preacher’s sermon.

Although some of us in the Baby-Boomer generation may have trouble with this, Generation X, Millennial Generation and Generation Y are used to having screens transmit visuals even at “live” events. This approach may be especially effective in areas where population density is thin and churches are smaller or more difficult to provide with excellent preaching pastors. Truly gifted preachers can be rare and often they have this gift at the expense of other ministerial gifts. If a church is lucky enough to have called an excellent preaching pastor, why not share this gift by multiplying the effectiveness of the preaching and supporting the birthed churches with other pastoral support? There are many pastoral gifts among non-ministerial authorized persons. The use of this model may assist existent and newly birthed churches to increase their spiritual effectiveness.

#### Multi-Service Churches

In this model we are not talking about a church that duplicates its worship service multiple times or even has a contemporary and a traditional service, however the local congregation defines them. Rather this is a model that has created multiple services focused on various populations, cultures, languages or needs. It might be a Spanish, German, or other language service. It may be a Messy Church service in the UK Model of Free Expression Worship offered for families. It may be a service using another location that is drastically different from the Sunday worship services the church celebrates. Usually the multi-service church adds a service that is considerably smaller than its original but that may not remain the case for long.

Once the worship service is established, additional programs and services may begin to be offered. The staff for the provision of these programs actually comes from the birthed church, empowered by the support and leadership of the birthing congregation. The birthed church may, in fact, become an independent congregation, at which point they or the original birthing church begin birthing other churches.

#### House Churches

This is a model straight from the Book of Acts. Many of the congregations met in the homes of faithful believers who had the theological training from the apostle who helped found the community and may have remained with them for several weeks or

months. They were encouraged to remain connected to the founding apostle and to seek the support of other house churches.

To form a house church, a solid core group, either from the birthing congregation or the new community, needs to be developed. A small cell of leaders, 4-8, need to be developed and trained as small group leaders, allowing each group to have a leader and an apprentice. House churches are, by definition, relational. When folks are encouraged to gather in a home to share their faith and spirituality, relationships are key. A group gathers. The leader leads the first small group. As the group develops and grows, it multiplies (never divides) into two small groups. The apprentice leads the second group as the leader and each group recruits a new apprentice, and so on and so on. When a community begins to have 4-6 groups, gathering for a central worship becomes easy. The relationships are already established. The comfort level is already there. The worship leadership team, the core group for teaching, preaching and sharing has already been developed.

This model allows the birthing congregation's leadership to work with and train small group leaders, provide other resources, worship space. Yet, it allows the groups and their leaders to be local, meeting the specific needs of the community, and develop close relationships desired and sometimes missing, from larger church congregations. When small groups are effective, they support one another, learn from one another, perform mission and service projects together and maintain contact, however minimal, to the birthing congregation. There is little that can destroy strong small groups who have a foundation of relationship, learning and prayer.

### Emergent Churches

The Emergent Church movement would not be happy with the characterization of them being a methodology for church multiplication. However, the reality is that some of our churches have the capacity to birth something entirely different from themselves. Some congregations are ready to give birth to something with little or no relation to the institutional church. Emergent churches are more about movement, about grassroots bubbling up worship designed by consensus, about dialogue rather than lecture, about transformation and experiential worship.

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, in their book, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, define emerging in this way:

*Emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within Postmodern cultures. This definition encompasses nine practices. Emerging churches (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities.<sup>ii</sup>*

“Rather than emphasizing doctrine, many churches in the emerging church movement focus on relationships and story. Pastors stress living the way Jesus lived, with love and respect toward others. Life is viewed as a journey, with each person living their own story. Participants try to foster a welcoming, nonjudgmental atmosphere within the local emerging church community.”<sup>iii</sup>

Emergent churches may include groups that meet in a coffee houses, bars, parks, front porches, and a variety of other locations. Still unclear about emerging or emergent churches? So is much of the religious community but if you are seeking or being called to a radically different expression of your faith and life, birthing an emergent church might be a path for your congregation.

### Digital Church

A church or group of churches may want to birth a wholly Digital Church or a hybrid Digital Church. Digital Church communities connect via the internet, utilizing technology which enables participation from various locations. A Digital Church community is one formed as virtual community where the participants of the faith community may or may not ever encounter one another face-to-face. Worship, spiritual formation, plans for mission, and perhaps even pastoral care, are shared via the use of technology. Thus the individual participants do not need to be in the same locale or locations.

Digital Church requires effective use of technology and expertise should be sought before engaging in the formation of this community of faith. To have a bad broadcast may be much worse than delaying long enough to acquire the technology required to assure successful transmission of worship and other resources and communication.

A hybrid Digital Church shares all the characteristics and needs of a digital church but also allows for gathering as community for mission activities, most of which are determined on line before the project is undertaken. A hybrid Digital Church may also link on-line participants with local church congregations for support of the participants during times of life crisis or deep pastoral need, so that in-person pastoral support may be offered.

In all cased methodologies for receiving support from participants, input about community expectations, communication processes, and the assurance of privacy of participant information need to be maintained.

### Satellite Church

A Satellite Church differs from other models in that the participants gather for community-building activities as well as to provide wrap-around activities to internet or digital worship resources. A worship leader is recruited and present whenever the community gathers. This person will be authorized by the association as soon as the Church in Exploration process is undertaken.

Local musicians may contribute to the worship time or the music, as well as the message, may be shared digitally. A place for children is provided so that families are comfortable gathering together.

The Satellite Church is less formal than other church forms. The community building continues after the message is heard through discussions, conversations, and spiritual formation activities. Mission activities and other community-wide activities are determined by the worshipping group.

### Targeted Plant

This is simply defined as a church plant designed to serve an underserved or unserved people. Your congregation may have noticed a population group or constituency who is underserved. The reality is that in our society we discovered that affirmative action was necessary to reach out and give equal access to individuals in historically underrepresented group. In your community this may be the LGBTQ community, the post-incarcerated population, an immigrant group, or a minority population group. We know that without partnership, individuals from these communities may not have the resources to begin ministries in their communities. It is incumbent on the mainline church communities to work proactively to support the development of churches meeting the needs of communities.

A church community that is completely integrated and diverse is a goal, we know that in our society, it is not a likely reality. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., once said "it is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning." <sup>iv</sup> That has not changed much.

### The Multiracial Congregations Project

[http://hrr.hartsem.edu/org/faith\\_congregations\\_research\\_multiracl.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/org/faith_congregations_research_multiracl.html), led by Michael Emerson, a Rice University sociologist, defines a multiracial congregation as one where no one racial group is more than 80% of the congregation. Using that standard, Emerson has found that only 8% of all Christian congregations in the U.S. are racially mixed to a significant degree: 2-3% of mainline Protestant congregations, 8% of other Protestant congregations, and 20% of Catholic parishes.<sup>v</sup>

A targeted plant enables the community to recruit indigenous leadership and to address the particular issues of their constituency. A racial group forced to endure discrimination, whether overt, covert or institutional, needs a place to share their stories, work for justice, acknowledge their struggles, and seek God's guidance in their lives in ways most meaningful to them. Individuals from the LGBTQ community deserve a safe place to be themselves, to articulate their faith and to feel the wholeness of being in a hospitable setting where they are the majority group. In the current days, immigration is a hot button issue. Folks with documentation and especially those without, need a safe place to worship God, to determine for themselves what the

worship experience will be. Spiritual sanctuaries for these and other folks may not be the sanctuaries in our current churches.

Planting a church must be aligned with who the birthing congregation sees themselves to be, how they relate to the populations and constituencies who are underserved and who they are passionate about or already in fledgling relationship with. Some churches will birth multiple church plants, some the same and some of varied types. The work for each birthing congregation will be different. The Holy Spirit will begin to breathe desire and passion for church multiplication into the heart of your congregation. Please heed the Spirit's call.

#### Legacy – Elijah/Elisha – Churches<sup>vi</sup>

For church congregations that haven't borne fruit in their ministries or who may be at the end of their organizational life cycle, leaving a legacy may be the best method of church planting. This process requires a time of study and discernment, as well as the support of the Association staff. The congregation will focus on becoming the Elijah church passing on a legacy to an Elisha church who will carry on the ministry of the Christian faith.

In this model the Elijah church chooses to join another church and give their resources and physical assets to a new group of people or to open their doors to a planter and birth a new church under new leadership. Some congregations may not feel ready to divest themselves of resources or have not yet come to the realization that their ministry has ended. Letting go of the past is challenging and the need for grief must be acknowledged. But for the church who wants to live on after their own ministry is completed, leaving a legacy can be an effective method for continuation of faith formation and celebration.

For further information about *Church Multiplication*, read *Multiply Your Impact: Making the Leap from Maintenance to Gospel Movement* by Paul Nixon and Christie Latona (Readiness 360, LLC, 2013) or go to [www.progressiverenewal.org/multiplication](http://www.progressiverenewal.org/multiplication).

## PART THREE

### MINISTRY CONNECTION GROUPS

*“The current church culture in North America is on life support. It is living off the work, money and energy of previous generations from a previous world order. The plug will either be pulled either when the money runs out (80 percent of money given to congregations comes from people aged 55 and older) or when the remaining three-fourths of a generation who are institutional loyalists die off or both.”<sup>vii</sup>*

#### Our Environment

The mainline denominations in the United States are encountering an unprecedented decline in participation. Approximately 4,000 churches close their doors every year while only 1,000 new churches are opened. 16% of churches received no new members. 13% even reported having no children as members. From 1990-2000 the US population increased 11.4% (24,153,000) yet the combined membership of Protestant denominations decreased by 9.5% (4,498,242). Every mainline Protestant Church is in decline in the past 20 years.<sup>viii</sup>

An overwhelming number of people refer to themselves as spiritual but not religious. They are not finding what they seek in our traditional churches. The decline becomes greatest in our younger generations. Stained glass, central pulpits and stiff pews no longer connect with a majority of younger generation professional, technology savvy, IM-ing, podcasting men and women. There is reason for concern here.

As we understand generational differences more clearly, we now see that the younger the generation, the less likely they are to participate in the life of a church community. The latest statistics show that 52% of builders (those born before 1946) attend church while only 36% of GenXers do. In a George Barna report, published in 2002, he reports that the number of women who do not attend church has risen from 18 to 30%, the number of Hispanics who do not attend church has risen from 19 to 33% and the number of people on the west coast who do not attend church has risen from 29 to 40%. Dawson McAlister, a national youth ministry specialist, says that 90% of kids active in high school youth ministries do not go to church by their sophomore year in college. One-third of those will never return. What does this mean for the future of the church?<sup>ix</sup>

Looking at these trends could lead you to believe the church is dying. We do not believe that to be true. The Good News of the Gospel, the focus on justice, mercy, peace, and love that Jesus had, the community relationships and connections within the church are as valuable to the 21<sup>st</sup> century as they were in the 1<sup>st</sup>. The question is not “will the church live?” but rather “how will the church thrive?”

The church as our grandparents or even as our parents experienced it will likely continue to decline. But that is not the only way to be church. A 2003 Gallup Poll indicates that a vast majority of Americans say that religion has an impact on every aspect of their lives.<sup>x</sup> People may be turned off on church, may not be attending church and may not feel church is relevant, but they are still excited about following Jesus. The reality is that for people outside the church, church has very little to do with Jesus. Rather church is full of traditions, a social group made up of people who share the same opinions and perspectives.

Robert Webber, in his book *The Younger Evangelicals*, suggests three paradigms of the church. First, the “Traditional Evangelicals” characterized by modern with a rational worldview, pastor or program-centered, spirituality determined by attendance, obeying rules and church position – these folks seek the big steeple, stained glass window church. Second, the “Pragmatic Evangelicals” which includes church growth and seeker-church movements, primarily Baby Boomers, using media, technology and innovation, market driven and success oriented, ahistorical and minimize religious symbols and architecture. Third is the “Younger Evangelicals” which are not truly age dependent, but have a post-modern worldview, are prone to deconstruct and reconstruct ministry to meet their needs. They avoid performance and programs and rather seek authentic Christian community, love mixing ancient and contemporary, prefer authentic spirituality where the leader journeys with them, and see themselves as a small part of a larger work that God is doing in the world.<sup>xi</sup>

In *Unchristian* David Kinnaman shared information about the results of national surveys on the public’s perception of Christianity. “The three most common perceptions of present-day Christianity are “antihomosexual” (an image held by 91% of young outsiders), “judgmental” (87%), and “hypocritical” (85%). These ‘big three’ are followed by the following negative perceptions, embraced by a majority of adults: old fashioned, too involved in politics, out of touch with reality, insensitive to others, boring, not accepting of other faiths, and confusing.”<sup>xii</sup>

This is not the perception we have of the church but it may be the perception of many people who we encounter who are not participants in church. People do not see the church as the fulfillment of the mission of Jesus to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free (Luke 4). Rather they see the church as an institution of traditions who are focused on their own needs. No wonder people are not flocking to our doors, our sanctuaries and our churches.

Changing the way we do church may be the answer to this dilemma. We, in the United Church of Christ, offer a message of inclusivity and radical hospitality. We seek to offer a progressive theological perspective and work at the forefront of social issues impacting our world. However, the way we offer our message may need to change so that we can reach the disenfranchised and disillusioned, as well as those who simply have a post-modern worldview.

### Overview of Ministry Connections

There are a few questions which we need to ask as we explore what it means to be engaged in a Ministry Connection. I want to give credit to Cameron Trimble of the Center for Progressive Renewal for her insight in this regard. These questions come from her.

What would happen if we stopped trying to create “churches” and instead tried to create “community?”

What would happen if we stopped trying to create “church members” and instead tried to create “disciples?”

What would happen if we stopped trying to “build buildings” and instead tried to “build relationships?”

The concept of Ministry Connections steps toward that direction addressing the need for spiritual formation and connections with a progressive theological foundation for those who are not seeking traditional church. We know that Jesus was not about building churches, but was about connecting individuals with their spiritual life and with God. We are called to make disciples, not to build churches.

Ministry Connections are alternatives to church, alternative spiritual communities, focused on creating opportunities for true relationship in community, for authentic and meaningful connections to God and to fellow faith journeyers through the practice of worship, discipleship, and service.

Ministry Connections are people based, relationship focused and engage together in Worship, Discipleship, and Community Service. Missing any of these components creates an incomplete connection.

Each Ministry Connection group may number between 12 and 50 individuals. The purpose of gathering is to develop an intimate spiritual community guided by progressive theology and our UCC goals of radical hospitality and inclusiveness expressed through the foci of the national setting: “Extravagant Welcome, Changing Lives, and Continuing Testament.”

The interesting thing about Ministry Connections is they may not resemble a church at all. They may designate an authorized minister, a member in discernment, a community leader to lead them. They will gather regularly and focus on their relationships, building connections within the group and within the community. They will be places where people can be themselves while they explore and grapple with theological and spiritual questions and realities.

Development and leadership of Ministry Connection can happen in a variety of ways. They can designate who will lead them: authorized minister, in-care student, lay person, community organizer. They designate where and how often they will meet – homes, coffee houses, community centers, restaurants, pubs. Each Ministry Connection determines the make-up of their meetings with flexibility purposely built in which allows for the creativity of the group members and facilitators. However, the concepts of Worship, Discipleship and Service remain at the core of the Ministry Connection. Each of these elements is present at each gathering, experienced in any way that meets the needs of the group.

Ministry Connections are often sponsored by local churches but may also be sponsored by the Association. Ministry Connections are low cost, having little overhead, and so may be supported by even small UCC churches. They are then supervised by either the local congregation or the Association and are simply identified as a Ministry Connection Group.

Ideally the Ministry Connection Group will fund itself and structure a budget that covers its own expenses. As the group forms, it is advisable that the Ministry Connection Group identify with the United Church of Christ in covenant through participation and tithing to OCWM to support other new church development.

The purpose of Ministry Connections is simple. They reach the people who would never cross the threshold of traditional church. At some point the group might want to become a “church” in the more official sense of the word. In this case the Ministry Connection Group can become a Church in Exploration or a New Church Start following the process and metrics outlined in Part One of this document.

Ministry Connections are about building community in new and creative ways, planting and nurturing seeds of faith and seeing what God can do in the lives of individuals and groups who work on relationships as much as theology. Ministry Connections honor the people, as individual sojourners, and as a community united to walk into faith together.

### Developing a Ministry Connection Group

The first step in starting a Ministry Connection Group is to contact either the Association Church Vitality Team or the Associations Associate Minister for Congregational Vitality

and Development. If you are willing to lead this team, the Church Vitality Team will provide you with training and coaching as you work to develop your model. If you already have a sponsoring church or congregation, we will engage them in our conversations. If a sponsoring church or congregation needs to be identified, the Church Vitality Team will work with you to identify one.

While this is occurring, contact individuals who may be willing to engage in this connection with you. Talk with them and assure they are committed to the process. Ask their preferences for location, format, group size, etc. and work their ideas in to your planning model. The most important topic for these discussions is to find out what basic needs they have as they engage in this community.

Once you have identified ten to twelve people, begin outlining your plan. The plan should include:

- Identify the purpose and focus of the group
- Determine meeting times, locations and frequency of gathering
- Design a format for the gatherings
- Determine the leadership, letting the Church Vitality Team know if you need assistance in this regard
- Determine your community service focus. Will it be serving a single population, a single social issue or will it shift and change over time?
- Develop a budget for gatherings and community service activities

The Church Vitality Team will work with you to determine a sponsoring church who is passionate about your Ministry Connection efforts. The staff of the sponsoring church may be used as resources or you may grow indigenous leadership from within the group or seek community constituency leadership. The formal relationship between the Ministry Connection Group and the sponsoring church is worked out mutually.

### Beginning Your Ministry Connection Group

With your plan in place, you are ready to begin meeting. Reaffirm the purpose and the radical hospitality of your group. Encourage your group members to invite others. Remember the focus on Ministry Connection Groups is worship, discipleship and community service. The idea is to create opportunities for authentic community building, meaningful spiritual connections, and a living out of the Good News through service to one another and the world. Remember to reaffirm each of the components over time. This is maintain your connection and strengthen your group.

### Maturing and Multiplying

Maturing: Over time the group may grow too large for strong interpersonal community and even meeting in a single place or at a single time. You have the option, at this

point, to determine the group will become a “church” and develop an official relationship with the UCC. If this is the case, the Ministry Connection Group may want to seek Church in Exploration Status, as defined in Part One of this resource.

**Multiplying:** Perhaps you want to multiply and split the group into one or more Ministry Connection Groups in your area. If you have two leaders, one can remain with the original group and one can lead the multiplication group. If you do not have additional leadership, perhaps a core of the current group would like to meet at a different time and place, developing leadership.

If you need help as you mature and multiply, please be in touch with the Church Vitality Team.

## PART FOUR CHURCH AFFILIATION

### Introduction

The Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations of the Ohio Conference of the United Church of Christ welcome your interest and inquiry about joining in our covenant and affiliating with our denomination. A time of discernment, reflection, study, and exploration is advisable when this decision is being contemplated.

The purpose of this document is to provide information and resources to aid in your decision-making. We want to assure you that entering into the process does not require the church to make a decision to become affiliated with the United Church of Christ. You may make an alternative decision but we would like to aid and support you in your discernment process.

Please review pertinent information about the United Church of Christ at the national setting's website, [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org); information about the Ohio Conference at the conference's website, [www.ocucc.org](http://www.ocucc.org); and the Association websites, Eastern Ohio Association at [www.eoaucc.org](http://www.eoaucc.org) or Western Reserve Association at [www.wraucc.org](http://www.wraucc.org).

### **Chronology of Steps**

#### Discernment

Discernment is the process by which God's will is sought through prayer, reflection, conversation, and silence. "To discern is to see through to the essence of the matter."<sup>xiii</sup> Discernment requires vision and commitment.

Any process for congregational discernment may be used, but it is essential that the congregation as a whole is a part of the discernment process, whether in small or large groups.

As discernment begins you will need to be clear about the arena for the discernment process. This is a discernment about joining with the United Church of Christ, not about buildings or pastors or financial resources, although those may all impact the discussions. You will have likely had some informal discussions about affiliating with the UCC but discernment takes those discussions further.

Ask yourselves the question, "What is the guiding principle involved in this decision?" Your guiding principle can be guided by scripture or from your mission or vision statement and should be agreed upon by the discernment group.

The discernment process will likely include a time of laying aside personal thoughts, biases, and opinions as the group seeks God's will for the congregation, rather than a personal will. This is challenging and may take some time. Many groups are uncomfortable with talking about feelings, but this is necessary if the individuals are going to be able to lay aside their own personal opinions and focus on the will of God. Individuals, and the group as a whole, needs to get to the point that they can say, "I am indifferent to everything except the will of God."

Rooting the discernment process in scripture will also move the group to seek God's will. What scriptural basis or interpretation leads you toward affiliation with the United Church of Christ? Are there foundation scriptures or theological interpretations that move you toward alignment? What congregational history moves you to an affinity for the United Church of Christ? Asking these types of questions and moving the conversation into scripture will root the discernment process in its Christian context.

### Reflection

A brief time of reflection, moments of silence, openness to listen for God's voice should be built into the discernment process. If the leadership team has reached this point in the discernment process, and has not engaged the entire congregation in the process, this is an important next step.

Find moments of quiet to reflect. Hold a retreat only focused on spiritual centering activities. This is not a leadership discussion time, but rather a time to experience the spiritual gifts you each have and the presence of God in this work.

### Exploration

This is the process by which information is gathered and research is done. Once we have determined that we are truly listening for the will of God, we need access to more information before our process can continue.

You may want to follow these steps so that appropriate and helpful connections with the UCC association leadership can be made.

The Pastor of a local church contacts the Associations Associate Minister for Congregational Vitality and Development for an appointment, the purpose of which is to be introduced to the process of affiliation, and to determine whether to take next steps, and what those steps might be. The ACM will share information with the Associations General Minister and the Association Church Vitality Team.

An informal meeting is held with the Pastor, the ACM and appropriate leaders of the congregation to begin framing the questions that might arise from the congregation and the Association, and then determine a mutual process by which those questions can be addressed. At this meeting general and specific information about the denomination,

the polity of the UCC, and the structure of the association may be shared. Questions can be answered and resources for further study can be provided.

If the congregation is currently affiliated with another denomination, the Association's General Minister, the ACM, and the leadership of the congregation determine how and when the denomination should be informed about the conversation.

As the time line of exploration is developed, the association staff in consultation with the congregation determines when they will meet with representatives of the Association Church Vitality and Development Committee. In preparation for that meeting, the leadership of the congregation will want to compile the following information:

- Current mission and vision statement
- Current governance structure and shifts that would be required for realigning with the UCC
- Biographies of current Pastor and elected leadership
- A statement indicating the reason the transition is sought
- A timeline for the education of the congregation, faith community and leadership team
- The appointment of a transition team – their names, contact information and biographies

The members of the Church Vitality Team will want to interview the leadership, pastor and chair of the governance board, and review a transition plan. At that point members of the Church Vitality Team and/or the ACM for Congregational Vitality and Development and/or the Association General Minister will want to hold meetings with leaders and members of the congregation in both formal and informal settings, including involvement in worship. The association representatives will also want to arrange a visit for the local church leadership to the national headquarters of the UCC in Cleveland as well as visits with the Conference and/or association staff to become familiar with the staff and the programs available.

A UCC History and Polity Class appropriate to the needs of the congregation will be established. The pastoral leadership will be expected to complete this class during the exploration period.

A date will be set to evaluate the process to this point and determine whether or not to proceed to the next step. If the decision is not to proceed, the congregation may simply choose to remain in ecumenical relationship with the United Church of Christ.

#### Developing Covenant

If the congregation has made the decision to proceed with their transition plan for affiliating with the United Church of Christ there are specific requirements for pastoral leadership and the congregation.

The pastor will need to seek Privilege of Call or Dual Standing with the UCC. A checklist will be provided to the Pastor from the Associations Registrar. The materials will be forwarded by the Pastor to the Registrar who will compile the material for the Committee on Ministry. A time will be arranged for the pastor to meet with the working group or whole Department for discussion and approval of Privilege of Call or Dual Standing.

As the congregation is developing their covenant within the UCC, we ask that the pastor meet with the Church Vitality Team and guidance in the development of a Covenant Plan. In the case of a congregation making a decision to affiliate with the UCC, it is especially important to learn about the covenant relationships among and between the various settings of the church.

Therefore, we ask the congregation to develop Covenant Plan which will include a relationship with at least one UCC Congregation near them. The UCC pastor and congregation can help develop an understanding about the formal and informal practices within the denomination. This church is not so much a sponsor as they are a companion in the process of building covenant within the association. Additionally, included in the Covenant Plan will be attendance, *with voice but no vote*, at the Association and Conference meetings.

#### Affirming Covenant

As the congregation approaches the completion of their transition plan, they will submit a request to meet with the Church Vitality Team. The Church Vitality Team will help the congregation determine their success in the completion of the transition plan and make any recommends for further development.

The Church Vitality Team will complete its assessment by reviewing the following:

1. Demonstrated progress in the revision of the mission and vision based on experiential learning
2. Demonstrated progress in accomplishing the goals defined in the Transition Plan

The Church seeking affiliation submits a formal request to the Association to be received as a congregation with standing in the United Church of Christ. The documents to be attached to this request are to include:

1. The Constitution and Bylaws of the church revised to reflect membership in the United Church of Christ.
2. Minutes of the Congregational Meeting at which the congregation voted to join the United Church of Christ
3. Roster of membership
4. The most recent Annual Report of the congregation
5. The most recent Treasurer's Report
6. A letter requesting membership in the United Church of Christ

7. A letter outlining the progress the minister(s) has made in seeking ministerial standing in the UCC

The Association Council will make a decision as to the acceptance of the recommendation of the Church Vitality Team to grant standing to the church seeking affiliation. Once granted, a celebratory worship service may be held with the Local Church, conference staff and Association representatives present.

The policy outlining this process follows.

### **GRANTING STANDING FOR NEW CHURCH STARTS OR CHURCH ADOPTIONS FROM ANOTHER DENOMINATION**

1. Approval of a Ministry Plan approved by the Association Church Vitality Team – Planting a church takes a significant amount of planning and preparation. We want to see that you are preparing for this undertaking with thoughtful reflection on practical issues that you might face.
  - a. We are looking for:
    - i. A compelling statement of vision and mission,
    - ii. Location and demographic research,
    - iii. General summation of your launch team,
    - iv. If you do not have specific people committed to your launch team, simply provide a description of the types of people you would be looking for and what role you hope they would play
  - b. A biographical statement about the pastor and leadership team,
  - c. A detailed, “best-guess” time line of development and implementation,
  - d. Your church-related goals for 1, 2, and 5 years from the date of the proposal with attention to a fundraising, recruiting and outreach strategy
  - e. A detailed budget of years 1, 2 and 3.

### **OR**

In the case of a church transitioning from another denomination we would require:

- Current mission and vision statement
- Current governance structure and shifts that would be required for realigning with the UCC
- Biographies of current Pastor and elected leadership
- A statement indicating the reason the transition is sought
- A timeline for the education of the congregation, faith community and leadership team
- The appointment of a transition team – their names, contact information and biographies

2. Completion of an Interview with the Association Church Vitality Team
  - a. Responding in writing to the Church Planter Personal Interview Questions  
OR
  - b. Review of transition plan
  
3. Pastor, Teacher or Leader has standing in the United Church of Christ
  - a. Current or transferable ministerial standing in the UCC **OR**
  - b. In the process of being authorized by the Association Committee on Ministry **OR**
  - c. In process of being granted dual Standing by the Association Committee on Ministry **OR**
  - d. In process of receiving privilege of call from the Association Committee on Ministry.
  
4. Pastor, Teacher or Leader has completed the New Church Leadership Institute or Church Planting 101 and 201 training through the Center for Progressive Renewal or Launchpad training through Epicenter  
**OR**  
 In the case of a transition from another denomination, UCC History and Polity and **then skip to Step 7.**
  
5. Determine the governance form and written Way of Work for the New Church Start
  - a. Submission of the governance model and Way of Work to the Association Church Vitality Team for their recommendation to the Association Council
  - b. Approval of the governance model and Way of Work by the Association Council
  
6. Elect a leadership team to support the governance model of the New Church Start.
  
7. Demonstrate a one year covenantal relationship with one or more local settings within the Association in order to:
  - a. Develop a deep understanding of the United Church of Christ history, polity, and practice
  - b. Develop a deep understanding of the covenantal partnerships within the United Church of Christ
  - c. Develop relationships within the Association and the Conference
  - d. If a church in transition from another denomination, these covenantal relationships can assist in the educational development of the congregation, faith community, and leadership team.

8. Complete an assessment with the Association Church Vitality Team determining progress toward mission accomplishments **OR** accomplishment of transition plans
  - a. Demonstrated progress in living into the mission and vision stated in the Ministry Plan or revision to the mission and vision based on experiential learning
  - b. Demonstrated progress in accomplishing the goals defined in the Ministry Plan
  - c. Demonstrated viability
    - i. This may include but is not limited to:
      1. Participation numbers
      2. Fiscal Viability
      3. Missional Impact
        - a. Recognition as making an impact in the area of ministry
        - b. Recognition as having addressed or begun to address the missional issues of the Ministry Plan
        - c. Demonstrated Ministry Connections in worship, discipleship and community service
    - ii. Evaluation of viability is completed by an Assessment Team appointed by the Association Church Vitality Team
9. A documented congregational vote to seek standing in the Association.
10. Acceptance by the Association Council based on the required viability and/or transition plan metrics.

The following Metric Checklist will be used for the evaluation of Church Adoptions.

### Metrics for Church Adoption

Date	Process Item	Meets Expectations	Reviewer
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> A review of the church’s current vision and mission statements and/or drafts of the initial vision and mission statements as a UCC affiliated church.</p>		
	<p><b>Ministry Plan</b> A statement indicating the reason the transition into the UCC is sought</p>		
	<p><b>Governance</b> A current constitution and bylaws with notations regarding the revisions required to be affiliated with the UCC</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> Resumes or biographies of the current pastor and elected leadership</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> The appointment of a transition team – their names, contact information and biographies</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> Pastor, Teacher or Leader has standing in the United Church of Christ OR in the process of being authorized by the Association Committee on Ministry OR in process of being granted dual Standing by the Association Committee on Ministry OR in process of receiving privilege of call from the Association Committee on Ministry.</p>		
	<p><b>Identified Leaders</b> The Pastor, Teacher or Leader has completed UCC History and Polity.</p>		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Process Item</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Reviewer</b>
	<p><b>Transition Planning</b> A timeline for the education of the congregation, faith community and leadership team</p>		
	<p><b>Transition Planning</b> Completion of an interview with the Church Vitality Team to review the transition plan</p>		
	<p><b>Governance Model</b> The governance form, Bylaws, and written Way of Work has been established and aligns with the UCC and Association Constitution.</p>		
	<p><b>Governance Model</b> The governance model, Bylaws, and Way of Work has been approved by the Association Church Vitality Team for their recommendation to the Association Council</p>		
	<p><b>Governance Model</b> Approval of the governance model, Bylaws, and Way of Work by the Association Council</p>		
	<p><b>Covenantal Partners</b> A one year covenantal relationship with one or more local settings within the Association, an understanding of UCC Polity, and UCC relationships has been demonstrated.</p>		
	<p><b>Covenantal Partners</b> Documentation providing evidence of the congregation's approval of affiliation with the UCC has been provided.</p>		
	<p><b>Interview with Church Vitality Team</b> The final assessment interview with the Church Vitality and Development Team has been completed.</p>		

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- <sup>i</sup> Multiply Your Impact: Making the Leap from Church Maintenance to Gospel Movement. Paul Nixon and Christie Latona. Readiness 360, LLC, (2013).
- <sup>ii</sup> Emerging Churches: creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger. Baker Academic (2005).
- <sup>iii</sup> <http://christianity.about.com/od/Emerging-Church/a/JZ-Emerging-Church.htm>; accessed April 17, 2014
- <sup>iv</sup> <http://www.phil.vt.edu/JKlagge/ConductorChurch.htm>; accessed on April 17, 2014
- <sup>v</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>vi</sup> Church Development Strategies. General Board of Discipleship, Nashville, TN. [www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org)
- <sup>vii</sup> McNeal, Reggie. The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 2003, pg. 1
- <sup>viii</sup> <http://theridgeblog.com/2011/05/16/church-decline-statistics-us/> accessed May7, 2014
- <sup>ix</sup> SWC New Church Start Up Kit, pg. 8
- <sup>x</sup> McNeal, Reggie. The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 2003, pg. 11
- <sup>xi</sup> The Young Evangelicals by Robert Webber as quoted in Transformissional Coaching. Steve Ogne & Tim Roehl B&H Publishing (2008) pp. 10-12
- <sup>xii</sup> Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity and Why It Matters. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons. Baker Books (2007) pg.27
- <sup>xiii</sup> Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church. Danny E. Morris & Charles M. Olsen. Alba Institute (1997).