
UCC New Church Development

Basic Planting Checklist

Conference Sponsored Church Planter Model

The following Check List is intended to aid church planters and coaches through the church birthing process. This is by no means a comprehensive list of all activities needed to birth a church. Rather, this resource is a starting place to generate ideas and highlight opportunities. While we tried to place these in a general order, much of the church birthing process happens organically – therefore, you may find a need reorder or add to the list.

If you have any questions about this resource, contact Rev. Cameron Trimble at ctrimble@secucc.org.

Checklist for Birthing a New Church

Initial Inquest

- Discern that you are called by God to plant a church in the United Church of Christ
- Talk with those closest to you about this calling and make sure you have their affirmation and support
- Set up meeting with Conference staff overseeing new church development
- Receive and review conference documented strategy for new church Development
- Alert your conference that you are interested in engaging the assessment process

Assessment: Phase One

- Complete Written Interview
- Complete DISC Profile (www.ediscprofile.com/)
- Complete the TEAM Profile (order from ChurchSmart)
- Complete the Conflict Style Profile
- Obtain VHS or DVD of Sermon Delivered in Past 5 years
- Complete National UCC Planter Assessment (Contact National UCC Evangelism Team)
- Current Church Budget (if currently serving)
- Submit Phase One Information to Conference NCD Advisory Team for Review
- Meet with NCD Advisory Team
- Obtain approval to move to Phase Two of Assessment

Assessment: Phase Two

- Obtain Background Check and Credit Check through Updated Ministerial Profile
- Meet with appropriate Association Church and Ministry Committee for Introduction if needed
- Develop Detailed Ministry Plan
 - Define Initial Target Area
 - Initial Demographic Study
 - Obtain Percept Report for Area of Interest
 - Obtain Chamber of Commerce & Other Demographic Information
 - Visit Target Area
 - Provide List of Major Neighborhoods
 - Visit Major Neighborhoods/areas
 - Visit Other Local Churches & New Church Plants
 - Define Congregational Make up Based on Goals and Demographic Information
 - Develop Initial Budget
 - Develop a Fundraising Plan of Action
 - Compile Detailed Budget for First 2 years of Operation
 - Compile General Budget for 3rd year of Operation
- Review Budget with Conference Staff
- Determine if Budget Adjustment Needs Additional Review
- Finalize Working Draft of Budget
- Be in Process for Ministerial Standing if Not Ordained
- Submit Information to Conference Staff for Review
- Meet with Conference NCD Advisory Team
- Attend UCC New Church Leadership Institute in Atlanta, Georgia
- Attend Other New Church Training Events (see Griffith Coaching)
- Schedule Meeting with Conference Board of Directors for Approval
- Appear Before Conference Board of Directors
- Obtain Calling by Conference Board of Directors for New Church Start
- Obtain Letter of Call and Personnel Policies

Initial Start Activities

- Identify and Meet with Launch Team Members
- Develop Promotional Material for Fundraising and Partnership Development
- Select Church Name
- Determine Potential Launch Date Goal

Contact Potential Facilities

- Prepare List of All Possible Meeting Places
- Establish Contact at Each Possible Location
- Introductory Letter to Each Facility Contact - Make Contact
- Attempt to Meet with Each Facility Contact

Final Demographic Study

- Converse With at Least 50 Locals
- Obtain Percept Report
- Develop Soft Demographic Study
- Conduct Soft Demographic Survey with at Least 200 Locals
- Finalize "Average Target Family"
- Review and Update Philosophy of Ministry

Networking with Other New Church Planters

- Develop a Strategic Partnership Plan
- Define Partnership Options
- Develop Partnership Covenant Expectations Documentation
- Identify Potential Partnering Churches and/or Organizations
- Contact Potential Partners
- Formalize Partner Commitments
- Review and Revise NCD Project Plan w/ NCD Advisory Team

Networking Plan for Community Contacts

- Develop List of Potential Community Contacts
- Develop Strategy for Networking with Community Contacts
- Document Initial Network Plan
- Form New Church Development Connection Groups
- Identify and Train Connection Leaders
- Develop Invitation Plan
- Recruit Connection Group Members
- Secure Meeting Times and Locations
- Host Umbrella Event
- Plan Quarterly Umbrella Event
- Develop Invitation Plan
- Secure Locations for Umbrella Events
- Develop Event Activities
- Identify Special Equipment Needs and Purchase/Acquire Timelines
- Identify Participation Accounting Methodology

Branding

- Develop Brand Identity
- Develop Tag Line
- Design Logo
- Develop Initial Marketing Plan
- Review and Understand Marketing Techniques Effort/Cost Levels
- Develop Marketing Philosophy

- Create List of Marketing Ideas
- Determine Initial Marketing Technique
- Determine Initial Marketing Costs and Lead Times
- Finalize and Document Initial Marketing Plan

Website/Technology Development

- Identify Web Development Resource
- Meet with Web Development Resource
- Select and Purchase Domain Name Based on Church Name
- Link New Domain to Web Site
- Set-up Email Accounts with New Domain Name
- Determine Major Content and Functionality for Web Site
- Develop and Publish Professional Web Site
- Link Site to Other Prominent Community Sites
- Get Site Listed High on Major Search Engines
- Set Up Account with Email Marketing Service such as Constant Contact
- Set Up Blog

Budget and Fundraising

- Assign Cost to Project Plan Tasks
- Assign Likely Dates for Each Expenditure
- Lay Ground Work for Partnership and Support

Staffing Plan

- Outline Potential Staff Positions based on Church Strategy
- Determine Likely Number of Staff to be Added
- Identify Positions to Pursue
- Determine Hiring Timelines
- Determine Use of Interns if Any
- Issue Written Staffing Plan
- Adjust Increase in Staffing within Your Budget
- Review with Conference NCD Advisory Team
- Hire New Staff

Initial Equipment List

- Provide Initial Worst Case Equipment List
- Assess List to Determine Purchase Criteria and Dates
- Determine Initial Purchase List

Update Ministry Plan

- Understand What Events are Currently in the Community and Successful
- Determine Best Events to Meet Community Felt Needs
- Determine Which Events To Do
- Update Schedule of Events

- Identify List of Special Equipment for Events
- Determine Which Equipment to Buy
- Update Equipment List

Establish Initial Community Presence

- Obtain Church Office Space
- Initial Ongoing Marketing Presence
- Initiate Other 24/7 Opportunities

General Advertising

- Design and Order Business Cards
- Design and Order Brochures
- Obtain List of All Local Magazines that might fit your demographic with associated advertising costs
- Develop postcards/print material to be handed out in community with a personal invitation (remember, 87% of people who come to church come by personal invitation, not general advertising) – BE STRATEGIC!

Update Marketing Plan

- Determine Area Specific 'Best Marketing' Techniques
- Determine Which Marketing To Do
- Develop a Schedule for Marketing
- Update Project Schedule with Marketing
- Determine Which Ads to Place

Database Systems

- Develop Visitor Information Process
- Select and Purchase Church Database System
- Set-up and Implement Church Database System

Contact with Key Community Leaders

- Identify List of Key Community Leaders & Organizations
- Contact Each Key Community Leader
- Meet with Key Community Leaders
- Send Letter & Marketing Materials to Each Leader
- Identify Area Church Leaders
- Determine Whether Area Ministers Have Regular Meetings
- Meet with Area Church Leaders
- Identify List of Area Civic Associations
- Join Local Civic Associations

Facility Selection

- General List of Promising Meeting Locations
- Rank Facilities Using the Facility Selection Checklist

- Obtain and Assess Demographic Near Top 3 Facilities
- Make Final Facility Selection
- Confirm Number of Worship Services
- Obtain Church Insurance Policy if Not Provided by the Conference
- Develop Strategy for Recruiting the First 30 People
- Develop Written Expectations for Launch Team
- Identify and Recruit First 30 People

Expand Launch Team

- Develop Strategy for Recruiting the Next 50 People
- Identify/Recruit the Next 50 Launch Team Members
- Vision/Values/Beliefs Write-Up
- Develop Basic 101 Level Course
- Conduct Basic 101 Level Course with the Launch Team

Financial Systems

- Set-up Payroll for Staff
- Identify Church Budget Categories for Tracking
- Establish Church Budget in Financial Software
- Develop Reimbursable Accounting Process
- Implement Donor Relationship Management System

Outreach Plan

- Review & Understand Outreach Event Effort/Cost Levels
- Develop Outreach Philosophy
- Establish Standards/Expectations for Number of Types of Events
- Provide List of Possible Outreach/Services Events
- Determine Initial Schedule of Events
- Determine Special Equipment Needs and Purchase Timeline
- Issue Written Outreach Plan

Small Group Plan

- Determine Special Small Group Model to Use
- Establish Goal for Number of Small Group at Launch
- Develop Training Plan for Leaders
- Issue Written Plan for Small Groups
- Identify and Recruit Small Group Members
- Start First Small Group
- Start Second Small Group, etc.

First Touch Materials

- Determine Marketing Giveaways
- Design Marketing Giveaways
- Order Marketing Giveaways

- Determine 'First Touch' Materials
- Design 'First Touch' Materials
- Print 'First Touch' Materials

Newspaper Advertising (if effective in your area)

- Develop List of Major Local Newspapers and Publications
- Develop List of Newspaper Editors and Religious Section Contacts
- Establish Relationship with Each Editor
- Prepare Press Release and Draft Articles
- Design Newspaper Ad
- Place Recurring Ads in Local Newspapers

Home Owners Associations (HOAs)

- Develop List of Local HOAs
- Obtain Contact Information For HOAs
- Establish Contact with Each HOA
- Determine Schedule of Events for Each HOA
- Design HOA Newsletter Ad
- Place Recurring Ads in Each HOA Newsletter
- Sponsor HOA Web Sites

Publicize Event Schedule

- Identify All Possible Publicity Outlets
- Select Publicity Methods
- Implement Publicity Methods

Launch Plan

- Develop Customized Launch Plan Actions
- Determine Spousal/Partner Role in Actions
- Determine Administrative/Volunteer Support of Launch Plan
- Issue Launch Plan Version 1 for feedback
- Conduct Final Planning Meeting
- Issue Integrated Schedule

Outreach Event Preparation

- Provide Event Planning Checklist
- Design Outdoor/Indoor Banner(s)
- Print Outdoor/Indoor Banner(s)
- Develop Strategy for Connecting with People at Events

Community Events

- Community Event #1
- Plan Event
- Market Event

- Conduct Event
- Record what you learn
- Community Event #2
- Plan Event
- Market Event
- Conduct Event
- Record what you learn
- Community Event #3
- Plan Event
- Market Event
- Conduct Event
- Record what you learn
- Community Event #4
- Plan Event
- Market Event
- Conduct Event
- Record what you learn
- Repeat until you have critical mass

Staffing

- Provide Draft Staff Policy Handbook
- Customize Staff Policy Manual
- Provide Hiring and Interviewing Resources
- Add Second Staff Member if needed
- Add Third Staff Member if needed
- Add Fourth Staff Member if needed, etc.

Preparation for Launch

- Provide Launch Sunday Checklist
- Review and Verify Opening Day Document
- Customize Launch Sunday Checklist
- Design and Print Template for Weekly Programs
- Design and Print Newsletter Templates
- Develop Space Utilization Plan
- Update Equipment List
- Develop plan for following Launch Sundays to build critical mass

Outdoor Signage

- Determine Best Location for Signs
- Determine Best Sign Type for Given Locations
- Determine Process for Placing and Removing Signs
- Determine Outdoor Signs to Purchase
- Purchase Outdoor Signs

Ministry Team Processes

- Identify List of Desired Ministries and Ministry Teams
- Identify Basic Processes for Each Ministry/Ministry Team
- Develop Leadership Matrix for Opening Day
- Assign Lead Person for Each Ministry/Ministry Team
- Develop Written Charter for Each Ministry/Ministry Team
- Finalize Basic Processes for Each Ministry/Ministry Team
- Identify Equipment Needs for Each Ministry/Ministry Team
- Initial Worship Choir or Band Formed
- Initial Set-up and Breakdown Team Formed
- Initial Children's Ministry Team Formed
- Initial Frontline Team Formed

Purchase and Assemble Equipment

- Distribute Equipment List to Launch Team and Prayer Team
- Determine Spare Equipment and Supply Lists
- Develop Final Equipment Purchase List
- Approve Final Equipment Purchase List
- Purchase Equipment

Worship Service Planning

- Plan First 6 Months Sermon Topics
- Plan First Sermon Series Services
- Write First Sermon Series Sermons
- Develop Order of Service Form
- Obtain CCLI/BMI/ASCAP License(s) and MPLC/CVLI License

Community Events

- Community Event # 5
- Plan Event
- Market Event
- Conduct Event
- Record what you learn
- Community Event #6
- Plan Event
- Market Event
- Conduct Event
- Record what you learn
- Community Event #7
- Plan Event
- Market Event
- Conduct Event
- Record what you learn

Direct-Mail Campaign (IF USEFUL IN YOUR AREA)

- Create Carrier Route Maps
- Define Target Area
- Determine Number of Homes in Target Area
- Determine Number of Different Cards in Series
- Design Cards
- Print Cards
- Label Cards
- Deliver Cards to Post Office

Final Preparations

- Review Launch Sunday Checklist
- Review Visitor Information Process/Plan Post-Launch Follow-up
- Plan Post-Launch Information Meetings
- Conduct Practice Service(s)
- Prayer Vigil

Launch (over a series of Sundays)

- Host Worship Service
- Collect Visitor Information
- Hand out First Touch Material for people to distribute in community
- Follow up with visitors
- Debrief and determine what can be improved for next week

Post-Launch

- Initial Organization Activities
- Prepare Articles of Incorporation
- File Articles of Incorporation
- Prepare Federal Identification Number Filing
- Obtain Federal Identification Number
- Establish Church Checking Account
- Prepare Bylaws
- Prepare IRS 1023
- Submit and Process IRS 1023
- Obtain Non-Profit Bulk Mail Permit
- Obtain State Sales Tax Exemption