

A GUIDEBOOK FOR
**PLANTING NEW CONGREGATIONS IN
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**



**Church Development and Renewal
Evangelism Ministry Team
Local Church Ministries
A Covenanted Ministry
of the United Church of Christ**



“God is Still Speaking”
*“Never place a period where
God has placed a comma”*

| Gracie Allen |

This guidebook is dedicated to all of the United Church of Christ Covenantal Partners who share in the ministry of starting new congregations:

- Planters
- Members of New Churches
- Associations
- Conferences
- Staff in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ

These pages are dedicated to you for continuing to dream dreams, cast the vision, and witness God-transforming lives.

*Never place a period where God has placed a comma.—Gracie Allen
God is Still Speaking*

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FOREWORD

God is Still Speaking

through new

churches in the

United Church of

Christ today.

Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of Christ shall see, and those who have never heard of Christ shall understand."

Romans 15:20–21 NRSV paraphrased

Paul's mission statement for starting new churches

AS PAUL DID IN THE FIRST CENTURY, today new congregations in the United Church of Christ are reaching out to the large population of people outside of church. They reach out to the unchurched (“not where Christ has already been named”), and also to those who have been alienated, disaffected, hurt, rejected and disillusioned by the church. They reach out to those who are looking for a faith that connects justice and Jesus. They reach out to new immigrants looking for a welcome in a new world. They reach out to new generations seeking authenticity, meaning and community.

**God is Still Speaking, still reaching out, still welcoming,
and still creating new hope and community.**

New church development is critical to the life of our denomination, for the Risen Christ who spoke the Great Commission, to “go and make disciples,” speaks the same mandate to us. God is Still Speaking a word of evangelism, inviting us to reach out to form new communities of faith. The formation and nurture of new congregations is critical for expressing the United Church of Christ’s voice of radical embrace, witness to justice, and engaging faith for a world that is waiting to hear.

**God is Still Speaking, calling the United Church of Christ and its
congregations to start new congregations.**

Perhaps the most exciting way that God is Still Speaking in the United Church of Christ is in calling congregations to start new congregations. The wider church and vital congregations, like Paul and the apostles, are excited about reaching out to the world by starting new congregations. Today it is the work of local congregations to start new congregations, in partnership with conferences and national structures.

It is my hope that this new guidebook on new church development, the first since 1986, will inspire and inform the process of starting new churches in the United Church of Christ.

I thank the Ministers of Church Development and Renewal, the new church pastors and conference staff who have worked to compile this vital resource for the future of the United Church of Christ's witness and outreach in the 21st Century.

I pray that through this guidebook the Still Speaking God will be pleased and praised by the multiplication of new congregations throughout the United Church of Christ.

David Schoen
Minister and Team Leader,
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The United Church of Christ
Evangelism Ministry Team





INTRODUCTION

For surely I know
the plans I have
for you, says the
Lord, plans for
your welfare and
not for harm, to
give you a future
with hope.

—Jeremiah 29:11

NRSV

DO YOU HEAR GOD’S VOICE speaking to you about new church development? Chances are that if you have picked up this resource, you have heard at least a whisper. Maybe you sense a burning desire to start a new church but don’t know if the United Church of Christ would trust you with such a responsibility. Maybe you hope your Conference will reach out to immigrant populations. Perhaps you have started meeting as the core team for a new church but are bewildered by the nuts and bolts of how to proceed. Whatever reason brought you to this guidebook, it’s likely you’ve been listening to the stirrings of the Still Speaking God.

The Church Development and Renewal Team of the United Church of Christ hopes you find within these pages inspiration, encouragement, and insight so you will keep listening *and keep working* toward the spread of the gospel and the support of new churches. Use this resource to discern *if* you are called to ministry with new congregations, then use it to guide *how* to proceed.

This guidebook cannot claim to tell you everything you need to know about new church development, so keep listening to God (and check out the bibliography). The Church Development and Renewal Team is that part of the United Church of Christ’s national setting with expertise in advising Conferences, new churches and their pastors about the planting, formation and nurture of new congregations. This guidebook serves as an introduction to their work. If you listen carefully you will hear how they set priorities, how they embody encouragement, and how they may keep you from making “rookie mistakes.” Think of them as your advisory board, your sage advisor, or your favorite coach. Don’t stop with the printed page. If you are active in the work of new church development, they are your ministers at the national setting. Feel free to seek their input.

The Church Development and Renewal Team is often asked what the procedure is for starting new congregations in the United Church of Christ, as if there were only one correct way. Actually, there are many ways. In the United Church of Christ it is the Association, or Conference acting as an Association (hereafter designated by the term “Association/Conference”), that oversees the chartering of new churches, so methods may differ from one area of the nation to another. As the United Church of Christ has become more multi-racial and multi-cultural, it has also become more sensitive to the ways in which the cultural environment of a new church may shape its procedures and decisions. Because of such considerations, this guidebook will offer only general guidelines. It is the hope of the Church Development and Renewal Team that these guidelines can, over time, shape a common method among

Conferences. Our advice to you at this point in time is to read these general guidelines, but rely upon your Conference staff and Conference Church Development Committee (or its equivalent) to advise you of their specific procedures for becoming recognized as a new church within the United Church of Christ.

The first chapter of this guidebook discusses the discernment of a “call” to new church development. Without a deep sense of God’s call for this work, the rigors of establishing a new faith community can become overwhelming. The chapters that follow will take you from the first days of contemplation through

the steps of how to affiliate with the United Church of Christ, to more detailed advice on how to fund your ministry and how to navigate the legal requirements of becoming an organization and an employer.

At the beginning of each chapter there are suggested Bible studies. We encourage you individually, or as a core team, to have an encounter with these devotions before turning to the subject matter that follows. The pattern of seeking God’s input, thinking about your situation, and only then seeking the advice of others helps to keep you true to the vision that the Still Speaking God is prompting within you.





part one

GOD IS STILL SPEAKING

Seeking Leaders

We need leaders
who seek to be
empowered by
the Holy Spirit

The Challenge of Starting a Church

THROUGH THE AGES, Christianity has expanded through the multiplication of churches. The book of Acts records how the boundaries of the Christian faith were pushed to the outermost parts of the world by developing new churches. We are Christians today because those who preceded us faithfully reproduced their churches through church planting.

Church planting is not new to the United Church of Christ. Starting new congregations can be traced back to the seventeenth century for the faith communities that became known as the United Church of Christ. Today Evangelism has been identified as one of the highest priorities of the United Church of Christ.

Now it is our turn. We can touch generations and new communities with the transforming and life-giving power of Jesus Christ.

Church planting is not to be entered into lightly. A new church development strategy will require focused time, prayer, energy and hard work. Starting a new church or renewing the ministry of an existing church, to reflect a changed population, is always an exercise in faith. It may be the result of years of planning, or a blaze of the Spirit so strong that a church virtually forms itself. The real challenge for new churches is to take root and grow. And the key is the pastor.

Faithful Leaders

Who are going to be the leaders of new churches? Who has the spiritual gifts and passion, the temperament and leadership ability to plant diverse new communities of faith? Finding solid leaders is key to establishing new churches. Most important in the task of seeking leaders is to know that *we* don't start churches: God does.

God leads and sustains the church through the Holy Spirit. That's an obvious lesson in the book of Acts, and it still holds true today. Acts 1:8 can be read as a summary of the whole book. Here Jesus tells his disciples and the church that follows: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (NRSV)

We need leaders who seek to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. We look for new church planters who place emphasis on their authentic, daily walk with God in the manner of Jesus of Nazareth, discerning the movement and leading of the Holy Spirit. Such leaders show a commitment to spiritual discipline, a growing relationship of loving God, self and others. Administration and management may be important skills these leaders hone, but the core of their ministry focuses on leadership as spiritual quest. Leaders who

develop a new church must accept challenge and risk. They must trust God to sustain them with energy, unflinching confidence, and hope.

Becoming a Multiracial and Multicultural Church

The United Church of Christ embraces a diversity of culture, ethnicity, and language and seeks to become “a radically inclusive, extravagantly welcoming church.”¹ This desire to live the prophetic welcome of Christ is most celebrative and open to new promptings of the Holy Spirit in the area of new church development.

There is no single correct way of becoming a welcoming church. Some new church starts intentionally reach out to multiple racial or ethnic groups in their community, choosing to create a mosaic of the whole. Other new church starts aim specifically at one target culture: for example a mission to a new immigrant population or generational group. Each, in its own way, affirms the value of becoming a multiracial, multicultural church. Each builds toward the overarching effort of the United Church of Christ as it “embodies these diversities as gifts to the human family and rejoices in the variety of God’s grace.”²

Welcoming diversity affects the ways in which Associations/Conferences view ethnic church starts. Much sensitivity is needed in order to welcome to Christ’s table leaders and core teams whose cultural traditions and styles of leadership differ from the dominant culture. We cannot simply say we want to become multiracial and multicultural and then expect all comers to conform to one culture’s expectations. We must welcome the opportunity to change our traditions and processes as we seek to embody the variety of languages, cultures and ethnicities God brings. To this end, it is well for the Association/ Conference or the local church wishing to birth a new congregation to engage in a time of self-reflection to discern what practices and presumptions may block the ability of ethnic new churches to experience Christ’s welcome in our midst.

Everything from methods of financial support, optimal church size, what activities a pastor undertakes, planning and decision-making styles vary greatly from one culture to another. Insure that people knowledgeable about such cultural nuances have direct linkage to the Association/ Conference staff and Church Development Committee.

Seek advice on these matters from the Church Development and Renewal Team, the Minister for Multiracial and Multicultural Transformation, or members of the Multiracial and Multicultural Implementation Team of the national setting of the United Church of Christ.

Hispanic New Church Start Pastors

The most important element to consider when starting a new Hispanic church is the pastor developer. Key skills this leader should bring to the church include openness to the diversity of the Hispanic community, the ability to promote social justice, and the ability to develop and empower leaders. Hispanic pastoral ministry should also exhibit:

- *Encuentro*, or collaborative pastoral style
- Evangelization and spirituality which build inclusive community
- Marriage and family: New ways to be a family based not on *machismo* but on partnership and equality
- Renewed hope for Hispanic youth and young adults

It is very important to consider the values of the Hispanic community: family, religious background, celebration/traditions, facility of language, spirituality, cultural sensitivity, and pride.

The pastor should not ignore or try to sever the strong connection Hispanics have with the dominant religion of their culture (Roman Catholicism). Rather, United Church of Christ pastors can modify or transform the rituals of faith by understanding their roots or purpose. Generally speaking, Hispanics value and seek a connection with the sacred through personal piety. Hispanics sense a very strong connecting point between their own history of sorrow and the history of Jesus of Nazareth.

New immigrant pastors and church members may feel closer ties to their homeland than to the United States. Financial plans, facility use agreements or ministry plans may have a tentative feel to them because the leaders may be uncertain whether they can adapt and thrive in the United States or whether circumstances will lead to their return to their country of origin. Mentors and Church Development Committees should discuss how this dynamic affects the ministry plans of the new congregation.

Hispanic new church developers see God's people on a faith journey and lift prophetic voices. They are motivated by compassion to seek social justice for the community. Such leaders should focus this concern into a well developed and articulated pastoral plan of action that offers a holistic and strategic response to the needs of the Hispanic community.

It is very important to promote a church model grounded in the community with emphasis on evangelism, mission, and spirituality, embodied in their own cultural reality. New church developers need to understand and promote a discipleship plan for the new community of faith. This includes promoting vocation and call in the laity to empower the young people. New church leaders must develop culturally relevant stewardship models. Hispanics always respond with great generosity to the efforts the church makes to reach out to Hispanics in the community.

Hispanic new church pastors are encouraged to connect with the vision of the Council of Hispanic Ministries' Plan of Action. Hispanic new church starts should promote United Church of Christ ministries.

PIAA New Church Starts and Leadership Development

The Pacific Islander and Asian American (PIAA) populations are among the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States. There are 14 nationalities of Pacific Islander and Asian American descendants that are members of the United Church of Christ with at least 30 languages or dialects. New Testament apostles communicated the Gospel to diverse cultures, making it relevant to people in their settings. This is the pattern used by Pacific Islanders and Asian American peoples when they immigrate to the United States.

It is natural for people in the Islands to fellowship and worship within their sociological groupings. Ethnic churches can understand, believe, and incorporate the Gospel into their lifestyles and values. The United Church of Christ does not try to convert ethnic congregations to the dominant culture, but rather recognizes, respects and appreciates the diversity of people from various cultures, traditions and linguistic settings.

Pacific Islander and Asian American churches respond more readily to the Christian witness of someone they know and respect—preferably a person from their own culture. Congregations grow healthier under

their own leadership and their own forms of organization. Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans have a strong sense of family loyalty and unity. They work hard to witness to family members and to be united in their new church and service to God.

In Samoan new church starts, for example, three or four families (average 10 to 12 in a family) come together and form a group to become a church. Nurturing Christian faith is a primary concern, not financial support of a new church. A man respected by the families is asked to be the lay leader and start a Bible study. After time, the congregation begins a regular service of worship in a home or a rented facility, preferably a church building. This lay leader eventually leads the families through the chartering and In-Care process toward becoming a full member church in the United Church of Christ. Doubling or tripling the number of worshippers and members from the original 3 or 4 families happens quickly because of the loyalty of extended families.

Samoans perpetuate their cultural way: when the high chiefs talk, the community listens. He announces before the congregation to support the church financially. Individuals are respected and have their opinions listened to if they are officially recognized as supporting and contributing to the church. The moderator of the church sets the tone as to how to raise money. They don't have a set method of stewardship, and don't believe in systematic tithing.

The Micronesian community is similar to the Samoans. The four Island groups coming from Micronesia are the Marshallese, the Chuukese, the Kosraean and the Pohnpeians. Because they speak separate languages, they congregate with people from their own island community. In some nesting missions, the four Micronesian groups worship and organize themselves for governance as distinct communities of faith. Micronesians form a group soon after immigrating to worship God and nurture their religious spiritual life. If they can't worship in a house or building, that doesn't prevent them worshipping in parks or under the trees.

There is a denomination in Micronesia named the United Church of Christ. Although similar in name, it is not like the United Church of Christ USA in matters of church governance. Many Micronesian immigrants join the United Church of Christ USA out of a mistaken belief that they are linking up with the familiar denomination from their homeland.

There is no presence of United Church of Christ in Korea, where United Methodist and Presbyterian churches dominate. Korean United Church of Christ new church starts appeal to second and third generation Korean Americans who are looking for an alternative to the strict authoritarianism of first generation of Korean American church leaders.

Hawaiians are very spiritual people who perceive the divine is in all creation present everywhere. Christians of Hawaiian descent value the church as a visible sign of God's presence in their midst. The Kahu, or Pastor, emerges from the community as a spiritual leader. In Hawaii every new enterprise receives a public blessing. People in the community call on the Pastor to bless houses, business, boats, and the birth of children.

The Chinese and Japanese United Church of Christ churches are all older established congregations. There has not been a new church start for the last decade or so. As Chinese and Japanese communities formed in the United States, they organized churches as well as civic associations, which remain very strong even in the 21st century.

Filipino-Americans started organizing United Church of Christ new churches in the 1980s. Filipino clergy were recruited in their homeland and trained in the United States to organize new congregations in the United Church of Christ. From these congregations came one successful model of new churches starting other new churches. In areas where there were several Filipino-American congregations, pastors of recently chartered churches rotated leadership in a newly organized congregation until a permanent pastor became available.



African American New Church Start Pastors

There is no one complete list that will give the benchmarks that define an African American new church start pastor. Likewise, those characteristics that are most important to African Americans may also apply to other ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the following characteristics are common among most pastors of African American new churches.

African American pastors know that starting a church is not a job but a calling by God, and their ministry is ordained and anointed by God. They have spiritual and scriptural grounding and are anchored in the Lord. Their love of God is manifest in the devotion, attention and time that is needed to start and sustain a new church. African American pastors, having accepted the call, allow nothing to discourage them. Some pastors receive no salary or compensation for the first few years. Even if the church does not grow rapidly in numbers, there is never a question as to whether the church doors will remain open to those seeking Christ. What is important is the spiritual growth of the congregation. The church will grow numerically in God's time, not human time. So there is no advance planning about how fast the church should expand, or goals for the number of new members per year. If the church grows beyond all expectations, if space becomes an issue, or if the pastor's workload triples, there is little worry that the pastor is overworked, only joy that God's will is being done and new persons are being introduced to the saving grace of Christ.

African American leaders take seriously the power of prayer. Scripture tells us to pray without ceasing. Pastors stay in prayer for discernment of the will of God for the people of God. It is the power of prayer that gives them the courage, stamina and motivation to continue the journey of planting a new church. They are not alone in praying. Their families, friends and church members pray for God to build the church and for God's will to be done in the lives of those who gather together as one body in Christ.

African American pastors praise God. There is never a situation that does not warrant praise for the many blessings taking place in the life of the pastor and congregation. There is praise when things are going well and during difficult times. Praise and thanksgiving are part of all prayers. Praise is included in all worship services. Praise is an acknowledgment of the presence of

the Holy Spirit in all that is done in the name of the church.

Scripture tells us that without a vision the people will perish. African American pastors are visionaries. They articulate the various missions and ministries that the church is being called to do. The pastor knows the community and sees needs that can only be met by the church and the love of Christ. The vision is not one-dimensional. It includes components that center around the needs of the people who are in the church, those who are seeking a spiritual renewal and those who have never before accepted Christ. The vision does not come from the pastor, but from God to the pastor as the under shepherd of the community of faith. The pastor shares the vision with the congregation and together they develop ministry plans that will live into the vision.

Pastoral leaders are called to preach prophetically and creatively. People attend worship to hear a word from God as preached by the pastor. Prophetic preaching grants access to the truth of the gospel to all that hear it. Creative preaching reaches every person in the audience whether they know Jesus or are being introduced to Jesus for the first time. The preacher gives words of comfort, words of hope, words of encouragement and words of peace. The preached word is one of the most powerful aspects of the African American Church.

The pastor of an African-American new church understands that good music is essential for the life and growth of the church. Spirituals, hymns and gospel songs of our ancestors and of modern musicians speak to the culture, the desires, the hurts and the needs of the people. The music reaches into the souls of the members and soothes the aches and gives hope for the future. Music breaks the bonds of pain and suffering and reassures the people of salvation that comes from the grace and love of God. Music frees people and

opens them up to the Holy Spirit that is present in the rhythm and words of the songs. Singing brings comfort, reassurance and hope. The pastor uses the music to prepare the people for the preached word.

Pastors are called to teach the word of God. Everyone is encouraged to study so that they will be aware of what God is calling them to do in their lives, in the life of the church and the community. Through teaching members are made aware of their spiritual gifts. An essential part of the teaching is empowering people to use the gifts that were given them to glorify God. The pastor, through teaching, enables people to understand more clearly their responsibilities as Christians, church members and disciples. Teaching includes the youngest child and reaches to the oldest member. Children are taught in all settings of the church, such as Sunday School, youth Sundays, youth choir, youth groups, vacation Bible school and holiday skits or programs. Adult study is accomplished during Bible Study, Sunday School and ministry team meetings.

African American new church pastors are good stewards who lead by example. Tithing of one's time talent and treasure is taught and modeled by the pastor. Tithing is as important as prayer, praise and mission. The pastor preaches and teaches tithing and uses every opportunity to encourage the congregation to tithe. A tithing church is a church that has the funds to make an impact in the lives of the community through various outreach ministries. Likewise, a tithing church is available to assist members when they are in need. The pastor never stops teaching and preaching tithing.

African American pastors listen for the still small voice of the still speaking God, and press on toward the mark of the high calling. They live a life worthy of the calling to which they have been called and strive to walk the talk and teach.

Notes

1. Becoming a Multiracial and Multicultural Church: A Pronouncement and Proposal for Action. Synod 19.

2. Becoming a Multiracial and Multicultural Church: A Pronouncement and Proposal for Action. Synod 19.

Bible Study on Passion

(see page 15)

Romans 12:11–12 (NRSV) Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.



Paul speaks in this passage of what we call “passion,” or “passionate faith.” What kinds of images does the word “passion” bring to mind for you?

Name the factors that limit or block passion in your church.

Why do you think Paul linked together the various attributes in this text?
Can they each be said to involve passion?



part two

GOD IS STILL SPEAKING

Stirring

Are you utterly
convinced the
Holy Spirit has
called you to
develop a new
church?

EARLY IN THE LIFE OF A NEW CHURCH, the primary activity of a pastor and core team will focus on discipleship, worship, evangelism, and the discernment of core values, vision and mission that will set the direction for ministry in this new setting. But first and foremost, comes the stirring of the Holy Spirit.

(start bible study on page 14)

Passion

In the pages of this guidebook you will find many “how to” suggestions for organizing a new community of faith. You will find recommendations for the kinds of leadership skills that are important for church planters to exhibit. You can follow them carefully, but they will not be productive unless you undergird them with an urgent desire to build a community of faith. Do you want to have a vibrant new church? Then fuel it with passionate faith.

Passion is one of the first elements to take into consideration as you call a new church pastor and as you build a core group of leaders. Take time to explore your own passionate call from God. Are you utterly convinced the Holy Spirit has called you to develop a new church? When your work is fueled by a sense of call, you cannot help but become passionate in pursuit of that calling. Contemplate what things feed your desire to reach others for Christ, and what things diminish that passion. Pray and plan about how to develop a sense of passion in your leaders and members. Part of a church planter’s work is to help people increase and fill their lives with joy, and to help them discover their spiritual gifts and find a ministry in which to become involved.



Bible Study on Discipleship

(see page 17)

1 Peter 2:5 (NRSV) Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.



Would you describe your core group “like living stones” that are built into an altar?

What other images come to mind to describe your core leaders?

Use those images and think about how to strengthen the collective power and strength of the group. In 1 Peter, the church leaders are individual “stones” who gain strength and purpose as they allow themselves to be “built together”. What will it look like in the future when you have reached a maturity of purpose and unity in the group?

What are the things that block a group’s ability to go deeper into discipleship?

Making Disciples

The primary role of a new church developer is to build a cohesive group of persons ready to commit their spiritual gifts and financial stewardship to the planting of a new church. It is very important to make discipleship a top priority. Concentrate your energy on this from the beginning. Discipleship involves encouraging people to grow deeper in faith. New church starts are quite demanding on laity as well as clergy. To succeed, all leaders need to maintain high motivation. Receiving training for ministry, and having time together to bond as a team will lead to sustainable commitment. A wide variety of activities can engender discipleship, including Bible study, times of prayer, the discernment of spiritual gifts, and sharing the vision of the new church.

Peter said the church was made of living stones fitted together into a spiritual building (1Peter 2:5). Your new church may look, at first, like a loose pile of rocks. Your core team must connect them together into a spiritual

home. Discipleship is that work of building together. The goal of discipleship is to equip or prepare Christians to work together in mission. It is very important in the beginning of a new church to turn workers into disciple makers. Teach the people on your core team that they are to make disciples within the new church as soon as it is born. This means they should try to replace themselves in their ministry positions within the next six to nine months. They are to find and train, or mentor, someone to become active in a specific ministry. Having freed themselves from those early ministries, the core leaders can then reach out into new ministry opportunities. This pattern of training up and moving out creates an expectation that everyone has a responsibility to disciple others. Such a pattern of multiplying productive workers allows the church to keep growing.



Bible Study on Worship

(see page 19)

John 12: 1–8: “Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

Read the full text, verses 1–8.

What moved Mary to do what she did? How is that worship?

What causes us to enter into worship?

What did Mary bring to the house?

If you used this passage to prepare a service of worship, what would that worship look like?

What was the reaction of the people in the house when Mary interrupted their conversation?

What are the elements of worship found in this passage? What are the elements we bring to worship?



Celebrating worship

Worship is more than the service of worship. Worship is the whole life of the church. It is the liturgy, the Bible study, the ministries, the celebration of the faith community. Worship in a new church will reflect the values, vision and mission of the new church start. It will be shaped by the neighborhood and its cultures. It will energize a whole people, giving free expression to the reality of their joy and commitment.

The service of worship of a new church is both a time for deep enjoyment of God's glory and a time for establishing connections among the faith community. Working at those twin goals is important. As we celebrate God's greatness we acknowledge that this greatness includes God's love and commitment to all humans. To

the extent that the service of worship connects with the real needs of people, we show forth God's radical love, and we develop a deeper, more meaningful spiritual life.

**As we celebrate God's greatness we
acknowledge that this greatness
includes God's love and commitment
to all humans.**

What kind of worship is needed to motivate a core group to sustain high commitment to the development of a new church? How can worship express a comprehensive sensitivity to target

group culture(s)?

Most people determine whether or not they want to be a part of the church based on the service of worship—even before considering the church's programs and events. If worship is not done well, then in most minds, this is a reflection on the other ministries of the church. They don't come back for a second look.



Bible Study on Evangelism

(see page 21)

The Three Priorities of Evangelism

John 13–16, especially 15:4–5, 12, 16.

When you start talking to a new contact about your church it is important to keep it simple. Begin by talking about why you are doing what you are doing. For evangelism to be effective, you have to keep your priorities in order.

Priorities are important. Priorities help guide decisions that we make about the use of our time and our money. Where can we go to find those priorities?

Read *John 13–16*.

The Upper Room discourse was Jesus' last in-depth communication with His disciples before going to the cross. On the evening of the Last Supper, in an upstairs room in Jerusalem, gathered for Passover Feast, the twelve disciples listened as Jesus laid out three priorities for them:

Priority # 1: Abide in Jesus

Priority # 2: Love one another

Priority # 3: Reach the world

Don't forget: Evangelism is a natural expression of our relationship with Jesus Christ, but also is a natural expression of everything that is happening to us in the body of Jesus Christ.

What is the meaning of *abide in Jesus*?

What is the first priority in your life?

How can we *build one another up in love*?

How will you live out the concept *to give yourself to the brothers and sisters in Christ*?

The New Testament makes it clear that the church is to take the Gospel to the world. What is the implication of this assertion to you as a church planter?

How these three priorities related?

All three priorities need to be a fundamental part of our lives all the time.



Evangelism

Most people don't think of the United Church of Christ as focusing on evangelism. Peace, justice, and mission come to mind, but *evangelism*? Well, isn't that exactly how evangelism is lived out daily—through peace, justice and mission? Evangelism is our primary response to the God who has called us “to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives” (Isaiah 61:1c NRSV). Yet when the *word* evangelism is used we may be slow to respond. Let's work to overcome our reaction to what others have made of this word, and get on with the task of sharing our love of Christ through the living of our daily lives.

Evangelism means gospel or good news and has its roots in the New Testament Christian community. D. T. Niles has popularized the saying that evangelism is “one beggar telling another beggar where to find food.” Another definition says, “Evangelism, making Christ known, is and needs to be the church's primary response to the life we receive in and through Jesus Christ.”³ Whatever we say evangelism is, know that it is indicative of how we respond as the Body of Christ to all of God's people.

The Evangelism Ministry Team has as its theme “It's ALL about Evangelism.” Without evangelism we would not have received the faith ourselves, so we would not be able to “do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly” with God (Micah 6:8 NRSV). We would not be a people of social witness, compassionate fellowship, or thankful worship.

As we discover or rediscover the joy of having received faith, we see our calling and purpose as people of God. Then we are able to share that personal story, or perspective, just as we share who we are within our particular family. Our everyday living is spent in improving the lives of our faith community and the community in which we live, as we use the skills and talents that have been given to us. We are to share the story that transformed our lives, and in so doing, we will transform the lives of others.

Demographics

Census data from government resources or Percept⁴ give a snapshot of the people in your neighborhood and surrounding communities. From demographic statistics on age, race, gender, education, household income,

lifestyles, religious preferences and growth patterns new church planters and core teams can discern ideas concerning what the community is seeking from a church. It is important for the vision, mission and core values to fit the community's demographic make up.

Reaching out to the community

How does a new church get its message out when it probably has no permanent building? How would a community/area hear of this new church start? Consider using a variety of the following ideas.

God is Still Speaking Identity Initiative

The Still Speaking Initiative is a comprehensive United Church of Christ campaign to “get the word out” about the United Church of Christ. It is an invitation to those who have been alienated from church to be welcomed home. “No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here . . . the United Church of Christ,” is the StillSpeaking theme.

Television advertisements, print ads, billboards, banners, and many more resources are available on www.stillspeaking.com to help congregations be places of hospitality and welcome.

Personal Invitations

Core team members personally invite neighbors, friends, co-workers, family members to be a part of this exciting new church. Evangelism is about relationship, and asking people with whom you are in relationship to attend church with you is the most effective evangelism tool.

Mass mailings to zip codes

An oversized post card with clear, concise, and catchy statements about the new church can be mailed to surrounding zip codes. This can be done in the look of the StillSpeaking Initiative (red, black, comma).

Telephone Solicitation

“The Phone's For You” is a nine-week process whereby volunteers make thousands of phone calls to find the un-churched and de-churched people in the area who may be interested in becoming a part of a brand new church.

Door to Door Calling

Teams walk neighborhoods, talking with people at their homes, leaving door hangers, brochures, small gifts.

Public Displays

Billboards, websites, signage: use any public display that gets the attention of seekers. Display who you are and why they might want to sample your ministry. Always include your telephone and/or website contact information

Newspaper Articles and Advertisements

Submit newsworthy articles as a means of getting the newspaper and its religion writer to know your ministry. They are looking for stories and a good article can get the new church “free” advertising. Publish information about your upcoming events.

Advertise on a page other than the religion page, which is mostly read by churching persons.

The evangelistic life begins with prayer and study that helps to identify and understand the needs of the community. From there, it finds ways to guide others into an authentic relationship with God and the whole Body of Christ.

Just as an individual can have an evangelistic lifestyle, so can a congregation. It is important for new churches to shape and encourage an appreciation of receiving faith, to share the stories of the Bible and of the Church, and to connect believers with the needs of the community.

Bible Study on Core Values

1 Corinthians 3:10–15 (NRSV) According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

As you discover your values, how do you know if they are the right ones to cultivate?

How does I Corinthians 3:10–15 help us to evaluate our current values?



Core Values

Core values are those qualities or beliefs you hold most dear. They are the things that make up your church's character. Values reflect how you view the world, and how you encounter scriptures. They speak about what you stand for and determine the distinctiveness of your ministry.

Core values provide the foundation for formulating goals and setting the direction of the congregation's ministry. Both principles and behaviors can be determined from a core value. You will help people understand and clarify expectations if you can articulate the church's core values, the principles on which your ministry will be based, and the behavioral expectations that follow from those values. For example, if your church acknowledged a core value of "intimacy with God," it might state as a principle for setting goals, "intimacy with God empowers God's people for effective ministry." An expected behavior to follow from that value might be "We will make sure our worship is understandable to both church and un-church people so they may find intimacy with God."

Consider these examples: The cable television shopping network QVC is named for its three core values:

Quality, Value, Convenience; and a similarly named drug store chain is CVS, short for "Convenience, Value, Service." The French Revolution proclaimed its core values in their battle cry: "Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood." Core values differ from a mission or vision statement. For example, the E. F. Hutton slogan, "We make our money the old fashioned way, we *earn* it," is a brief mission statement. What are they in business to do? Earn money. What values stand behind such an approach to making money? You might infer E. F. Hutton's core values to be: hard work, no short cuts, integrity, and fairness. Nike inspires with its vision: "Just do it." What are the values behind that call to don running shoes? Self-discipline. Self-worth. Entitlement. Health.

Now you look in the mirror. The Church Development and Renewal Team recommends that before you determine the dream God has for your church, and before you start planning how your life together will be organized and directed you should take a good look at your core team. Determine your core values before moving on to discern your vision and mission.

*Values reflect
how you view
the world*

Worksheet on Core Values



If you do this as a group exercise, work individually on the first question, then come to agreement on the core values and flesh out behaviors and beliefs together as a group. Post the lists and live with them for a while. Revisit this exercise to see if you have consensus on the core values of the developing church.

List your values, that is, the characteristics you desire to embody in your faith.

With a check mark, narrow that list to seven. Cut it again to the most important three or four. Circle those core values.

List what *behaviors* would show evidence of each value. For example, if honesty is my core value, truthfully reporting financial income might be an evidence of honest behavior.

Write a belief, or principle that underlies each value. For example, if honesty is my value, a belief might be “the truth shall set you free,” or “children deserve to hear the truth.”



Bible Study on Vision

(see page 26)

1. Use various translations of the Bible to read *Proverbs 29:18*. Rewrite the verse in your own words. What does this verse say about why you and your church need God's vision for your ministry?

2. What can be learned from the people in the following passages about how the vision of God affected their lives? How did God's vision for them change the way these prophets lived and ministered?

Isaiah 1:1, 6:1–10

Jeremiah 1:4–19

Jonah 1:4

Ezekiel 1:1–28, 2:1–10, 3:4–11

3. Read *Genesis 12:1–3*, *Genesis 15:1–7*, *Genesis 17:1–15*. Why did God state the vision three different times to Abraham? What circumstances in Abraham's life were affected or changed by God's vision for him on each occasion?

4. What specific vision had God given his people that began to be implemented on Pentecost in Acts 2:14–22? How was this event related to the vision that Jesus gave the church in Acts 1:4–8?

Vision

Vision is the ability to dream and envision something that is not yet created. In the beginning of the beginning, God had a vision. As people involved in new church development, you need a compelling vision. Coming to clarity about the specific vision is one of the most important activities to accomplish as the new church begins.

Core values focus on the common beliefs or understandings of the new church core team. They speak to “who you are,” how you choose to behave, and what you have in common, here and now. A vision explores not the present but the future. It doesn’t look to the qualities of the human participants; instead it looks to God. Jim Griffith has said, “Vision is something you catch from God before you cast it before others.”⁵ What

is God calling you to do? What kind of church is God calling you to start in your particular situation? Vision is your unique, ideal picture of the future. George Barna defines vision as “a positive picture held in your mind’s eye of the way things could or should be in the days ahead. Vision connotes a visual reality, a portrait of conditions that do not exist currently.”⁶

Articulate your vision in a statement that is specific, detailed, and distinctive. Make sure it portrays vibrancy and vitality. Your congregation’s vision should be challenging, something to be accomplished in decades, not days. Your vision should uniquely express your church’s purpose. It should be tailor-made to fit you, not any church on any corner.



Worksheet on Vision



Explore vision individually in your devotional time, but create a vision statement together as the consensus of a core group.

What do you think God sees when looking at your mission field?

What scriptures come to mind as you listen for God's call and clarity for your church?

God may be speaking a vision to you through others outside your church. What have you heard people say that might be God's nudge of vision for your new church?

Can you write the vision in clear, brief terms? Does it paint a picture or capture the emotions? Play around with different ways to conceptualize the ideas or words. Try to make your vision statement fit on a business card.

Will the vision make sense ten years from now? Will it still be clear and compelling?

Bible Study on Mission

(see page 29)

Acts 9:15(NRSV) But the Lord said to Paul, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel."

Read *Acts 26:15–23* to see how Paul built the mission of his life on the foundation of that God given vision. See also *II Corinthians 11:23–28*.



Discuss how the vision God gave Paul affected his mission, that is, the way he lived and ministered.

What vision for ministry do you feel God may be giving you and your church? Can you articulate what you could be doing to accomplish that vision?

Study the mission statements God gave to Moses and to the church: read *Exodus 3:10* and *Matthew 28:19–20*. Does your church's mission put it in alignment with the missional concerns of God?

Mission Statement

First you discover the core values that are indigenous to the new faith community. Then you identify the overarching vision of what God calls you to create. The next step is to establish a mission statement that will delineate in more detail how you will accomplish the vision based upon your core values.

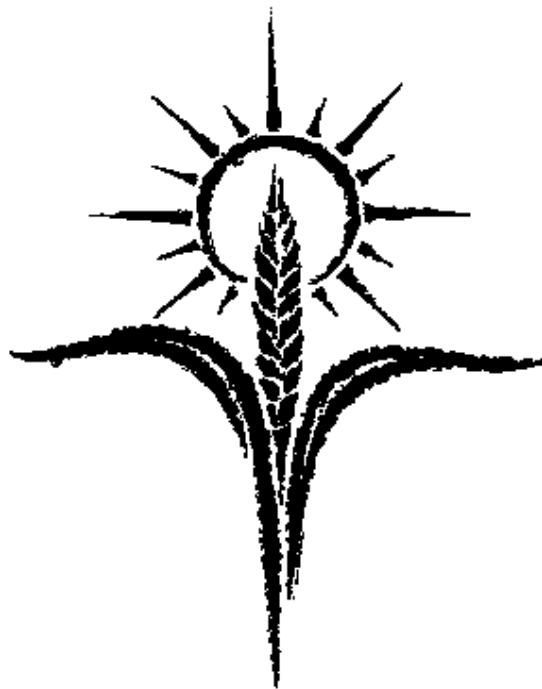
Think of the vision as responding to the question, “Where are we going?” Think of the mission statement as answering different question, “What are we supposed to be doing?”

A mission statement provides a guide to simplify decision-making. It can aid in determining which of the many possible programs or ministries the congregation should or should not undertake. When you begin, align

the ministries with the mission. When you evaluate, use the mission statement as your standard. In this way you work your way into your preferred future.

A mission statement also gives the new church a common understanding. It can give the diverse ministries and programs the ability to work interdependently. It can inspire unity by giving church members a means to rally around a common purpose.

Begin by discerning from what you read in the Bible what you are supposed to do as a church. Write the mission with clarity and brevity. You may use a form such as: your church name, what you seek to do—with whom, by what means, and a biblical image or reference that guides your path.



Worksheet on Mission Statement

Who are we? List our church's core values:



Where are we headed? Write our vision statement:

How are we going to get there? Brainstorm all the possible ministries or programs that our new church might do. As a group, narrow the list to the ten most important. We will need to spend some time defining “important”. Prioritize that list. Now, find clues in that list that will help us articulate an answer to the following:

What do we seek to do?

With whom?

By what means?

Why? (Or, so what?)

Try to put a biblical image or reference into at least that last answer.

Ministry Plans

A ministry plan is a plan of action that details how a particular focus, or a set of objectives, will be accomplished. It is more detailed and specific than a vision or mission statement. Writing a ministry plan usually happens later in the development process of a new church, as you seek funding from the denomination or from outside sources. We mention it here so that you become aware of it, and can see how it builds on the formational tasks of discerning core values, vision and mission.

A ministry plan, like other strategic planning methods, lists the opportunities that arise out of your core values, basic beliefs, strengths and weaknesses, and most importantly your vision and mission statement. It will help you transition from dream to reality as you gain clarity by setting measurable goals, and prioritize the steps needed to make sure all people and ministries work together toward a common end.

This plan will outline key steps or turning points on your journey as a congregation in formation, where you are at present, and where God is calling you to go. Your ministry plan will include not only goals and objectives but also implementation steps, resources needed, a time line, and persons or teams that will be responsible for meeting each objective. It should also include an evaluative process. Evaluation will ensure that the needs of the congregation are being met and that all ministries are operating and providing the highest-level service possible. The evaluation process is a step that monitors the progress made and identifies stumbling blocks. It empowers the congregation to make changes or adjustments before minor glitches become major problems.

The ministry plan will become the vehicle to help you achieve the mission to which God is calling you and will help you navigate through the twists and turns in making the realm of God a reality now and for future generations.



Notes

3. Poling-Goldeen, David. "Evangelism: A Congregational Priority," Schieber and Olson, eds., *Making Christ Known: A Guide to Evangelism for Congregations*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1996, p.4.

4. Contact the Evangelism Ministry for information about Percept resources.

5. Jim Griffith of Griffith Coaching quoted at a How to Start a New Church training in De Forest WI, December 2003.

6. Barna, George. *The Power of Vision*, Venture, CA: Regal Books, 1997, p.28.

7. Shelbe, Donald J., Meeting the Messiah, Upper Room, January 1980.

Bible Study on Equipping

(see page 33)



The church is still comprised of very human mortals who are inconsistent, who make exaggerated claims and play their little games. But paradox of paradoxes: Christ summons us with those limitations—and more—to be agents of his resurrection power and hope. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (John 15:16); “Greater works than these will . . . [you] do” (John 14:12); “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19); “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons” (Matt. 10:8). Or, in the words of Paul: “As God’s chosen ones, put on compassion, kindness, lowliness, forbearing one another, forgiving one another. Above all, put on love . . . and let Christ’s Word dwell richly in you” (Col. 3:12ff., my paraphrase). We are called to be saints, who in our humanness are always saints without halos. Christ asks us to be his Easter people, to do for others what we ourselves need. He summons us to be for others what we have not yet become and to give to others what we have not yet completely received ourselves.

We are asked to be what we are not. We who follow Christ are called to offer to others what is still unrealized in us. Lessons of love and life are to be taught by us who are still learning them. Self-understanding in others is to be encouraged by us who do not yet understand ourselves. We are to witness, nurture, and admonish others in their spiritual pilgrimage while still struggling with our own. We who are sick are asked to heal others. We who are fractious and cause conflict are called by Christ to be peacemakers. We who have dark corners in our soul still unredeemed are sent out to baptize. We who need the Word ourselves are commissioned to proclaim and to preach. We who are possessed by irrational urges and baser motives are sent out to cast out demons. We are called by Jesus to do what we need, to offer what we ourselves need.⁷

How do you react to the challenge of being an imperfect person who is called to do the type of great works mentioned in the above referenced scriptures?

Can you name some “saints without halos” who have influenced your life?

How does the chance to start a new church give you opportunity to “let Christ’s word dwell in you richly”?



part three

GOD IS STILL SPEAKING

Equipping

God speaks
to church
planters

GOD MAY HAVE SPOKEN A WHISPER OR A SHOUT. Whichever it was, you have heard the call to plant a new church. You understand your motivations and can articulate your values, vision and mission. But what do you do next? How do you connect with the United Church of Christ? What are their procedures? Do they confirm God's call in your life? How do you make divine dreams become reality? When all the questions start to hit, it's important to remember that our faith is lived out in community. God speaks to church planters, but don't forget that God is also active in Associations/ Conferences, in the national setting of the denomination, and in the ministries of your colleagues. Reach out to them for advice, partnership and inspiration and you will learn how God has been speaking to them.

Characteristics and Assessment of Church Planters

The church has a mandate to help people find and respond to their vocation. Not all are endowed with the gifts and skills that are necessary for the planting of new churches, and no church planter is gifted with every skill for this vocation either. Still, as you discern a call to develop a new church, it is important to listen to the combined wisdom of others who have served in the field. Recently the United Church of Christ took part in an ecumenical survey of more than 700 founding pastors of new church developments. Some of the learnings from that study include:

Marks of a Successful Church Pastor

Driven by a vision	Strong faith
Passion for this new church	Strong devotional life
Willingness to risk	Gives the mission away
Can live with ambiguity	Equips the people
Self-starter	Always the vision caster
Strong sense of call	Reinvents self as church grows

The leaders most effective in developing new churches are not conformists, but catalysts. They are not marginal believers; they cultivate vibrant faith. They are not half-hearted achievers; they cast bold and risky visions—and they expect to be followed. This constellation of traits can run counter to the popular notions of leaders as “team players” or even “servant leaders.” These are leaders tremendously invested in people,

but zealously and unwaveringly invested in a vision. The paradigm for missional growth may involve inviting an aggressive, action-oriented bull into the china shop of church tradition.

Of course, these leaders do not lead in a vacuum. They have followers who make the vision manifest. This is, not a smooth and easy process. Even in the best circumstances, leading new congregations is hard work. New churches have soaring peaks and perilous chasms. These leaders have a keen understanding of self, God's call and a vision of the Kingdom of God in particular ministry contexts. Despite external challenges and the spiritual challenges of affirming Christian faith, they press on unreservedly in God's call to plant a community of faithful witness.

Just as an individual's call to the ministry needs the affirmation of the church, an assessment of a church planter can discern a good vocational match for the particular call to new church ministry. Assessment is a tool that will highlight a person's strengths and weaknesses. It also will determine the presence or absence of indicators and attributes associated with church planters. The assessment will gauge a pastor's readiness for this stressful, all-consuming, highly rewarding ministry. The Evangelism Ministry Team recommends that new church planters undergo assessment. There are a variety of assessments available, and new ones are under development. If you sense a call to plant new churches, be in conversation with your Association/ Conference to determine how to receive an assessment. If the Association/ Conference does not have a standard assessment tool, the Evangelism Ministry Team can suggest appropriate options.

Coaching

We are not called to do this work in isolation, but in the company of others. Just as Jesus worked with the disciples, leading and mentoring them, it is of key importance that the new church pastor relies on a mentor or coach. A coach is someone a new church pastor can turn to for advice, someone who will challenge and stretch their thinking, someone who can lift up and nurture their soul. Coaches and mentors hold new church pastors accountable for their actions and keep them focused on the vision and mission of the church in development. Look for these characteristics in a coach:

- Passion to reach people for Christ
- Knowledge of skills needed for new church pastor
- Experience in starting a new church (preferred)
- Spiritually, theologically and biblically grounded
- Willingness to devote time and energy
- Ability to challenge, motivate and encourage
- Creative and strategic thinking
- Good listening and communication skills
- Ability to keep confidences



The pairing of a coach and new church pastor will utilize the spiritual gifts of both toward offering God excellence in leadership of the new church. The pair should meet regularly through email, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. At minimum the coach should meet in person with the new church planter once every three months, and at least weekly by other means. The coach, in concert with the Association/Conference will work to keep the new church planter focused on the core values/behaviors, vision, mission and ministry plan of the congregation. The coach will advocate for the new church pastor with the covenantal partners in Association/Conference, other local churches, and the national setting. Areas that may need to be addressed by a coach include helping the pastor deal with challenges, counseling the pastor to learn from mistakes, theological reflection and dialogue, questioning the pastor's use of time and encouraging a balance between work and family life. Most importantly, a coach, working with the Association/Conference, will hold the new church start pastor accountable for good ministry and will celebrate the victories that the new congregation achieves, in the manner of Paul, who said;

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

Romans 1:11–12

Who starts new churches in the United Church of Christ?

New congregations come to life in a variety of ways in the United Church of Christ. At times Associations and Conferences take the initiative to develop a new church.

Ecumenical Partnerships at times will initiate a new church start. Sometimes an existing congregation will birth a new congregation. At times an established congregation seeking affiliation with the United Church of Christ will be a new church start. Visionary leaders or groups of people can also effectively begin a new church. Each of these ways is acceptable and important in order for the United Church of Christ to extend the widest welcome possible as Christ's ambassadors in covenant one with the other.

Association/Conference initiates

When an Association/Conference starts planning for a new church it seeks to answer the questions of who, what, when, where and why. Through a strategic planning process the Association/Conference addresses such issues as location, leadership, support, resources, demographics, emerging immigrant communities, partnerships, training and funding. In most cases the Association/Conference appoints a New Church Start Committee or a Church Development Committee to oversee the effort. Committee members' passion for new church starts and a strong work ethic will see them through as they monitor projects and continue to develop relationships with the new congregation or congregations. Serving on a new church committee takes a high level of commitment, acceptance of challenge, and a desire to follow God's leading. By doing this work the Association/Conference will help meet the challenge of reaching out and establishing a legacy for future generations of disciples.

Congregations birthing congregations

As congregations discern the call of God to extend God's realm they begin to recapture that pioneering spirit of their ancestors to reach people not involved with a church. Established congregations find new ways of becoming God's instruments as they venture

The established church "seeds" the new church start with people from their congregation who have a heart for evangelism and community outreach.

forth in the mission of church planting. They may be more effective at reaching out to growing and changing communities by assisting a new church start than they would be if they tried to reach those same people with their own program ministries. The established congregation works in partnership with the Association/Conference, and perhaps with other churches, to identify possible targeted service areas, gather demographic information, determine budget needs, and available funds. The established church "seeds" the new church start with people from their congregation who have a heart for evangelism and community outreach. Often this commitment and excitement to birth a new church brings new vitality to the established church itself.

Individual or new group starts

A third viable way of starting new congregations is for an individual or group of persons to initiate the process. Typically such churches begin with small group Bible study and prayer gatherings, and hands-on mission opportunities. As the newly formed group begins to live out what God is calling them to do and be they begin to develop relationships with the Association/Conference and with established United Church of Christ congregations in the area.

Covenantal Partnership

The in-care process taps only the beginning of the opportunities for congregations to partner with other covenantal partners in the denomination. To fully birth a church and point it to viability and vibrancy takes the work and commitment of many people. Covenantal relationships across the United Church of Christ empower strong partnerships to reinforce the ministry of new church development. The rationale for such partnerships is found in the United Church of Christ Constitution, Article III, Paragraph 6:

Within the United Church of Christ, the various expressions of the Church relate to each other in a covenantal manner. Each expression of the church has responsibilities and rights in relation to the others, to

the end that the whole church will seek God's will and be faithful to God's mission. Decisions are made in consultation and collaboration among the various parts of the structure. As members of the Body of Christ, each expression of church is called to honor and respect the work and ministry of each other part. Each expression of the church listens, hears, and carefully considers the advice, counsel, and requests of others. In this covenant, the various expressions of the United Church of Christ seek to walk together in all God's ways.⁹

Established local congregations who partner with new churches can help tell the story of exciting new birth. They can offer support in the form of church members as temporary volunteers or seeds for a new harvest. They can offer the supportive gifts of prayer and financial support. In return, the new church can challenge the commitment level of existing congregations, giving the established church an opportunity to work for renewal in its own church life.

The Association/Conference often partners in the decision of where and when a new church start will occur. It selects the Church Development Committee that will interface with local churches and the national office on behalf of the new church start. Look to this partner for help with funding and budgeting, and for assistance in securing a pastor through Search and Call. New congregations often give to the Association/Conference a spirit of holy adventure, of new possibilities. New congregations are often faithful in sharing committed volunteers for service beyond the local church. New churches also are faithful stewards who financially support Our Churches Wider Mission, the common funding source for Association, Conference and national setting ministries.

The national office is a source for information, advice and counsel, training, funding, and help in finding new church planters. Before seeking secular assistance for specialized needs, such as building assessment, loans and investment options, learn about the United Church of Christ ministries of the national setting that offer partnership in these areas.

Developing a new church in North America is often likened to serving in the mission field. Your congrega-

tion may find strength in exploring a partnership with one of the United Church of Christ's Global Mission Partners.

This is just a sampling of how each entity lives out covenantal partnership. Without the help and resources of all we cannot fully claim the unity we have in Jesus Christ. Through partnerships we take seriously our common commitment, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

Through partnerships we take seriously
our common commitment,
"In essentials unity, in non-essentials
liberty, in all things charity."

United Church of Christ New Church Development Process

Whatever way the new faith community begins, it is important that it work closely with the Association/Conference and members of the New Church Development ministry team. It is the Association/Conference that will journey with the new congregation while it is "in-care," that is, from its initial inquiry about affiliation with the United Church of Christ until the church receives full standing as a member congregation of the denomination.

Association/Conference Support Committee

To begin, the Association/Conference Church Development Committee appoints a Support Committee or individual person to guide the new church throughout the in-care process. Sometimes the group makes recommendations to the Association/Conference concerning administrative actions and expenditure of financial resources. Check with your Association/Conference to determine the scope of the Support Committee in your area.

Support Committees may also work with core teams that do not yet have a pastor. Under these circumstances, the committee encourages the core team to stay together, grow spiritually, learn about the United Church of Christ, establish core values, vision and mission, work at ministry and determine the immediate needs of the church. If the Association/Conference initiates a new church start, the Support Committee will have the additional responsibilities to discern the early questions concerning where and when to launch a new

congregation and who to call as its founding pastor. In some cases the Support Committee may even assist the new church pastor in orientation and welcome to the community.

The committee will assist in establishing a mission and vision statement, short and long range planning and a ministry plan of action for the new start. This group will serve as a liaison to the Association/Conference Development Committee, keeping the lines of communication open and clear. It will also assist in communicating with the area United Church of Christ churches and advocating for their support of the new congregation. The group will regularly report to the Association/Conference on the programs of the new church and will make recommendations regarding such matters as the continuation or termination of the new church, a change in target area, and financial support. Since there are concerns particular to the nature of the work that affect the new church pastor's job performance and family/personal life, it is suggested that the Support Committee spend time in each meeting addressing those concerns.

The Church Development and Renewal Team recommends that membership on this Support Committee be multi-disciplinary, with twelve voting members representing diverse stakeholders as follows;

- Six persons who will be charter members of the new church (or area United Church of Christ clergy and laity until a core group is formed)
- Pastor Developer
- Pastor of a Local Church
- Association/Conference Church Development Committee Member
- Person with financial skills
- Person with building construction skills
- Association/Conference staff person
- Evangelism Ministry Team staff person, non-voting member, (if church is funded by Local Church Ministries, or if requested by the Association/Conference)

Members of the new church start shall serve on this committee as soon as possible so they can develop participation as covenantal partners and exercise leadership. The committee should meet no less than once a month.

Entering into Covenant

Local Church Ministries has outlined a common process to guide Associations and local churches wishing to establish covenant with the United Church of Christ. The following guidelines and chart of responsibilities are revised from *Considering a New Church Covenant in the United Church of Christ: A Process for Exploring, Developing, and Affirming New Relationships*.

New Church Starts, or Churches in Formation, come into being in a variety of ways:

- As a project of the Association/Conference
- As a project of ecumenical partnership
- As a satellite of an established United Church of Christ congregation
- As a self-starting group seeking affiliation with the United Church of Christ
- As an established congregation seeking affiliation with the United Church of Christ.

New Churches wishing to enter covenantal relationship with the United Church of Christ need to request and receive formal standing in an Association or Conference. The Association oversees this process of guiding Churches in Formation toward standing in the United Church of Christ.

In its formation, a New Church needs to organize its life with some official documents. These vary by state laws, but may include such items as: 501 c 3 non-profit status, a tax exempt number, Articles of Incorporation, a Constitution and Bylaws, and Officers. For guidance in securing such documents, and for collaboration in the discernment of God's mission for the local church, New Church Starts should work closely with the Association, or Conference acting as an Association.

Associations may find the following guidelines on establishing covenant with the United Church of Christ to have bearing on their processes for churches in formation. However, this section of the *Manual on Church* specifically outlines procedures to guide Associations as they work with established local churches that seek affiliation with and standing in the United Church of Christ.

Exploring and Establishing Covenant

A local church becomes a part of the United Church of Christ by uniting with other local churches in a covenantal relationship (*Constitution*, Article V, par. 17). This relationship is one characterized by trust, mutual commitment, promises and the kind of shared experiences that are rooted in commitment to God. All settings of the Church—local, Association, Conference and wider church—participate in exploring and establishing this covenantal relationship, discerning God’s will together.

Responsibility of the Local Church Exploring Covenant

By the time a local church discerns its readiness to enter covenantal relationship its members should have widespread conversation, knowledge and familiarity of the identity, history, theology, and polity of the United Church of Christ. Preparation for this step will also include active participation in the life of the United Church of Christ, in as many settings as possible.

Churches should form a Covenant Development Committee in the early stages of exploration to represent the church in its contacts with the United Church of Christ, and to ensure wide participation and knowledge throughout the congregation. This group should also plan ways to introduce their local church to the Association and make its culture, traditions, and commitments deeply known and understood.

Responsibility of the Association and Conference

In the United Church of Christ, the Association and Conference play the primary role in guiding the process whereby local churches may explore and develop covenantal relationship. The Association staff or representative committee will identify a Sponsoring Church, offer guidance in organizational matters, and network the local church with consultants from the national setting of the United Church of Christ.

Responsibility of the Sponsoring Church

The sponsoring church will provide fellowship and welcome to the local church exploring covenant. The sponsoring church will nurture shared experiences which will introduce the local church to the United Church of

Christ and provide opportunities for the exploring congregation’s discernment of God’s will and its development of covenantal relationships.

Representatives of the National Setting

Representatives from the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ may play a role in this process of covenantal exploration, and may be invited to participate by the Association. In certain cases a staff member from the national setting may be involved from the beginning of the exploration, working collaboratively with the Association throughout the process of exploring and entering covenant.

Establishing Covenant: Guidelines for the Process¹⁰

The process of establishing covenantal relationship between a local church and an Association of the United Church of Christ has three main stages: exploring covenantal relationship, developing covenantal relationship, and affirming covenantal relationship.

The first stage is a preliminary exploration, an introductory acquaintance that helps a local church and Association decide if there is likelihood for establishing a formal relationship. Questions to consider at this stage include: What are the affinities we sense with potential covenant partners? Why is there an interest in exploring covenant with the United Church of Christ?

If both the local church exploring covenantal relationship and the Association discern there is likelihood of covenant, they enter a second stage, and agree to develop that covenant together. As with all relationships, it will take time and a wealth of shared experiences to help this covenant fully develop.

Should the development stage conclude with a request for standing, in all likelihood the final stage will be an affirmation of covenant for both parties.

Stage One: Covenant Exploration

At this stage, a local church that seeks standing in the United Church of Christ initiates contact with the Association or Conference in which it is located. Informal discussions focus on history, polity and practice, as well as the reasons for exploration and help determine whether a formal, intensive process will follow. Since a substantial initial knowledge is needed, this phase may take from six months to a year, depending on previous knowledge and the pace of the exploration. This initial acquaintance

should be comprehensive enough to provide an answer to this central question: Is it likely that a covenantal relationship will result from further exploration?

As deeply and sincerely as the United Church of Christ welcomes local churches, it also recognizes the importance of discernment between potential covenantal partners. Careful preliminary discussions should reveal God's will for a suitable relationship. Sometimes a local church and an Association of the United Church of Christ will decide to remain ecumenical colleagues but not to continue exploring covenant, at least for the present time. When this is the discernment of either partner in exploration, the United Church of Christ affirms its solidarity in Christ with all who believe, and celebrates ecumenical unity even though exploration of covenantal partnership ends at this stage.

If the discussion reveals the likelihood of a covenantal commitment, the partners move on to further develop their relationship. The local church and Association then enter into a stage of "Covenant Development."

Stage Two: Covenant Development

During this stage the local church and the Association enter into a formal relationship. Associations may vote to grant the local church a specific status as a "Church in Covenant Development." This status recognizes the commitment that both the local church and the Association have made to deepen and broaden their knowledge of, and appreciation for, one another.

A Church in Covenant Development is granted voice without vote at Association and Conference meetings for the duration of this stage of establishing covenantal relationship. The local church sends representatives to the meetings as an important way to develop the local church and the denomination. Typically a full meeting of an Association takes place once a year and a Conference conducts an annual meeting, so for that reason alone this phase of the process may last one to two years. Another factor that requires planning and ample time is the need to involve many members of the Church in Covenant Development, the Sponsoring Church and the Association in this stage of developing covenant. The Church in Covenant Development will want to provide means for the Association to become involved in its congregational life in ways that will assist the discernment process.

The Church in Covenant Development and the Association will remain in this relationship until both are comfortable that ample time and effort have been devoted to discerning God's will.

Until these final decisions are made, standing remains an option, and discernment is not concluded. Throughout this stage, a positive attitude toward standing is paired with a concern to honor the time and space for a faithful discernment process.

There are two possible outcomes of this formal period of developing covenant, each of which affirms the particular nature of the covenant developed by the local church and the Association:

Determination not to seek standing. The Church in Covenant Development, the Association, or both, separately or mutually, may discern that it is not God's will for the Church in Covenant Development to seek standing. If this determination is made, the United Church of Christ affirms its solidarity in Christ with all who believe, and celebrates ecumenical unity even though exploration of covenantal partnership ends at this stage.

Determination to make a formal request for standing. Together the Church in Covenant Development and the Association affirm that it is God's will for the local church to seek standing in the United Church of Christ.

Stage Three: Covenant Affirmation

During this stage the Association receives the formal request from the Church in Covenant Development and acts upon it. If the request is approved, the Association formally accepts the request and grants standing in the United Church of Christ to the local church. The timing of this vote will usually be determined by the Association's meeting schedule, but will be taken within a year of the formal request.

The Sponsoring Church will be thanked for its ministry during the discernment process and may play a role in the celebration of the covenant affirmation.

The Association, with its newly received local church, will consecrate the establishment of covenantal partnership by the worship of God and in celebration of the Church's oneness in Christ. See the Supplemental Materials section of this manual for suggested worship materials for use in planning such a service of worship.

Church Considering Covenant	Sponsoring Church	Association
<p>1. The leadership of a local church wishes to explore standing in the UCC will approach the Association in which it is located through a staff person or other member of the Association.</p> <p>3. Undertake exploration of the UCC, including meeting with designated representatives of the Association.</p> <p>4. Determine whether exploration has shown a likelihood that further development of relationship will result in a covenantal bond.</p> <p>5a. If not: agree to remain ecumenical colleagues. OR: 5b. If so: begin Developing Covenant stage: receive from Association designation as a Church in Covenant Development; name a working group to represent the local church; and to meet with leaders of the Sponsoring Church.</p> <p>6. The Covenant Development Committee and other church leaders assure widespread conversation, knowledge, and familiarity with the UCC.</p> <p>7. In consultation with the Association, determine readiness to enter into covenant with the United Church of Christ.</p> <p>8a. If not: agree to remain ecumenical colleagues. OR: 8b. Make a formal request for standing in the UCC.</p> <p>9. Plan, celebrate and consecrate covenant with the Association.</p>	<p>5b. Accept invitation to sponsor the Church in Covenant Development and meet with leaders of the process from both the Association and the Church in Covenant Development.</p> <p>6. Become familiar with the Church in Covenant Development, introduce that church's members to local church life in the UCC, and accompany its leaders to Association, Conference, and wider church events. Assure ample opportunity for developing and deepening a relationship.</p> <p>7. Provide feedback to all other parties about the opportunities for relationship development that have been pursued.</p> <p>8a. Agree to remain ecumenical colleagues. OR: 8b. Affirm its relationship with the local church, as is appropriate in the Association's process.</p> <p>9. May help plan and celebrate the covenant.</p>	<p>2. The Association, through an appropriate committee, will meet with and welcome representatives of the exploring church and provide initial information, and support to help the church in its discernment.</p> <p>3. Designate a contact person or working group to assist local church in its exploration. Receives information about the church that is exploring.</p> <p>4. Determine whether exploration has shown a likelihood that further development of relationship will result in a covenantal bond.</p> <p>5a. If not: agree to remain ecumenical colleagues. OR: 5b. If so: begin Developing Covenant stage: designate the local church as a Church in Covenant Development; name a working group to represent the Association; designate a Sponsoring Church and introduce its leaders to the Church in Covenant Development and to the Association contacts.</p> <p>6. Assures widespread conversation, knowledge, and familiarity with the Church in Covenant Development. Invite consultation and collaboration, as appropriate, with Conference and wider church leaders.</p> <p>7. In consultation with the local church working group, determine whether the leaders and membership of the Church in Covenant Development have adequate understanding and appreciation of the UCC to enter into covenant.</p> <p>8a. If not: agree to remain ecumenical colleagues. OR: 8b. Receive and vote on the formal request for standing. Thank the Sponsoring Church.</p> <p>9. Plan, celebrate and consecrate covenant with the local church.</p>

Buying Land

Sometimes the Association/Conference New Church Development Committee or the core leaders of a new church want to “nail down” a piece of real estate as a way to help the congregation in its earliest stages of formation. This practice is called “land banking.”

Unfortunately, such a property decision made too soon can create unforeseen problems for the new congregation. Do not rush into purchasing a plot of land before the new congregation has clarified its values, vision and mission.

A Home of our Own: When?

Every new church must choose a place for its ministry to be housed. Often, in the beginning, this place is a compromise, with the adequacy of the building or location balanced against the cost. Whether the church is sharing space with a more established congregation, or renting a storefront or a school auditorium there is often much tedious work involved in setting up for worship and storing items afterwards. It's no wonder people tire of it and long for surroundings that are familiar, controlled by them, and available to them at any time. One of the primary functions of the Office of Local Church Building, a part of the Evangelism Team of Local Church Ministries, is to assist churches in their planning for the day when this dream can be realized.

When a church begins to dream about a building for their ministry, they often overlook compelling reasons to continue waiting, and do not completely consider the alternatives, such as moving to another location they can rent. The Evangelism Team recommends patience on this front. Consider the following reasons for new congregations to hold off on becoming a “home owner.”

Let God shape the church's ministry

One unique opportunity of a new church is to let the ministry of the church be shaped by the people who respond to the invitation to be with the church. In any church with a long-term commitment to a church building, these possibilities for ministries are less appar-

ent, since the church must also maintain the building. The desire to fully use the building, or the space limitations of a building, can cause a church to overlook ministry opportunities that do not fit easily into their existing space.

Developing real estate, as difficult as it is technically and financially, is nowhere near as difficult as developing a community of people doing God's work.

Keep costs down

There are many financial obligations associated with building purchase and ownership that are often overlooked by a new church. Maintenance expenses, utility bills, and the necessity that church leaders pay more attention to building management are all costs that are often overlooked by churches without buildings of their own.

Worldly thinking about rent also can mislead a church. It is true that rent is an expense to a congregation's ministry. But so is interest expense on a mortgage. Interest is just another form of rent. Before a church can faithfully consider purchasing a building, it must be able to afford a substantial equity in the building, as well as the diversion of significant funds from hands-on ministry.

Stay focused on growing the church

Growing and developing a new church is hard work. It is joyful work, since people are being brought into a new relationship with our God, but still, it is natural to wish that the work were not so hard. Developing real estate, as difficult as it is technically and financially, is nowhere near as difficult as developing a community of people doing God's work.

Sometimes, a church will turn to real estate issues because the real work, the ministry and mission, is just too hard. Or too personal. It involves meeting new people, learning to live in community with them, and building personal relationships. Working with building materials, money and building plans, may seem preferable. When this is the real reason for a church's building purchase, it never results in a strong, vital, and growing ministry. It is like a couple deciding to have a baby before they have built a strong relationship with each other.

Let your church's image in the community grow with you

The longer a church waits to purchase a building, the more resources they can bring to the purchase, and the more architecturally appealing the building can be. A church building makes a statement to visitors about the nature of the church community they are visiting. A church building can also assist in inspiring its members to new understandings of their faith. But this is rarely inexpensive, and so a small church building, such as a converted residence, is almost never a good idea.

As a church grows in membership and in discipleship, it gains an important financial resource—the congregation's willingness to contribute to the financing of its ministry including the buildings necessary for them. The longer a church waits to purchase a building, the better the building they can usually purchase.

Be financially self-sufficient

New churches are often started with the assistance of financial resources from outside partners. In the United Church of Christ, this may include Leadership Subsidies from the denomination and from the conference. It also may include assistance from other churches in the area, and additional financial assistance for specific needs as the church goes through its first few years of development.

Before a church undertakes the long-term obligations of a building and its financing, however, the new congregation needs to be fully responsible for its own financial future. The financial resources of the church, and the mind-set of the church's leaders, must develop to the point where they are truly ready to become an independent church in the United Church of Christ before they take on the obligation of a building loan.

Be faithful to scripture

God called Israel out of Egypt with a vision of a wonderful future. God promised to be with them always, and to give them a wonderful land in which to be God's people. So of course, the Israelites wanted their promised land, immediately! But that was not God's way. God kept the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years before they crossed the Jordan into their promised land.

Today, most new churches do not need to wait that long for a building. Still, the decision to purchase a building requires more discernment, and more patience

than many new churches realize. The Evangelism Team of Local Church Ministries can be your partners in that time, helping you in prepare for the day when you move into your church building.



Sharing God's House

Locating space for a new church is one of the more important elements in its development. The temporary quarters a new church uses can make or break the new church start. Not only does the new church need space for worship, it also needs office space, and enough

room for meetings and fellowship. Most new congregations move several times before they own their own space. Until that day comes, sharing space with another congregation is one possibility.

Church buildings do not belong to a congregation, they are places that have been dedicated for the explicit use of expressing God's love and grace to the community in which they are located. Sharing God's House in order to expand ministry to the community offers a wonderful opportunity for established churches to be good stewards of God's gifts. Oftentimes an established church will share space with a new church start that focuses on reaching an ethnic group within the neighborhood.

Sharing space requires more than the use of the facilities. It requires that the host congregation nurture the new congregation towards self-sufficiency. Maintaining a joyous sense of mission allows the established church to aid a new church that does not have adequate financial resources. Sharing space is one way to live out good stewardship. It also presents an opportunity to model anti-racist behavior and establish cooperation between different racial/ethnic groups.

Care must be taken to attain and maintain good communication as the host and developing congregations discuss the possibility of sharing space. Do not be afraid to broach issues in the beginning that could affect the relationship later on.

A committee composed of representatives of both congregations and representatives from the Association/Conference should be formed to assure clear lines of communication are established and maintained. The Church Development and Renewal Team strongly recommends that a Facilities Use Agreement be negotiated early on.

Kitchen use, growth in numbers of participants and expectations of children are examples of issues that can threaten a host congregation and cause a budding relationship to be terminated. It is wise to clearly negotiate shared use agreements and then work diligently with each other. Listed below are some issues that have surfaced when congregations share space:

- Differences in culture, worship style and theological understanding
- Scheduling for use of the building, including priority for special events and procedures to employ during emergencies
- Whether or not to meet separately for Sunday worship
- What space is to be shared, and what space is to be used by each church
- Use of kitchen facilities, including methods of food preparation
- Financial arrangements between the churches, including insurance coverage
- Janitorial arrangements
- Having a written or verbal agreement
- Whether or not the new church is considered a part of the established congregation.



Sharing God's House: Facilities Use Agreement

This is a sample agreement between two churches entering into shared space of facilities. Adapt it for your particular situation.

I. Host Church

Contact Persons

Name: _____ Name: _____

Work phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Home phone: _____ Home phone: _____

II. Developing Church

Contact Persons

Name: _____ Name: _____

Work phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Home phone: _____ Home phone: _____

III. Schedule Agreement

_____ covenants with _____ to share the sanctuary, all-purpose building, educational space, parking space, and grounds beginning on _____ for a donation of \$ _____ per _____.
_____ covenants that _____ will use the facilities each Sunday between the hours of _____ and _____. (Other days and times to be listed here, plus special days and programs that you know will be up coming.)

IV. Insurance

State here how the host church provides liability and personal property insurance coverage. For what amount will the new church be responsible? How will insurance be purchased? Can it be done through the Conference?

V. Calendar

There will be a master calendar to guide the program activities of both congregations. It is very important that both churches notify each other in advance of any change in programming as soon as possible. List here the procedures for working together on scheduling events.

V. Video and Sound Equipment

List in this article the details of who, what, where, when and how concerning use of sound equipment.

VI. Kitchen Guidelines

List similar details for kitchen use.

VII. Cooperation and Communication

A joint committee shall meet regularly, at least monthly, to review the calendar and make changes as appropriate. At least once every three months the pastors and two lay persons from each congregation shall meet to share each church's ongoing mission, and to resolve any problem areas that may be of concern to either congregation. The pastors have a mutual responsibility for developing a collegial relationship. This Facility Use Agreement will be reviewed every six months and will be subject to change and renewal at that time.

VIII. Signatures

Sign and date

Host Congregation

Council Chair _____

Office Manager _____

Pastor _____

Developing Church

Council Chair _____

Office Manager _____

Pastor _____

Notes

8. Wood, H. Stanley. Final Report to Lilly Endowment. 2002.

9. Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ,

10. Considering a New Church Covenant in the United Church of Christ, PLL304.

11. Wesley K. Willmer quoted by John and Sylvia Ronsvalle in *At Ease: Discussing Money and Values in Small Groups*, Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1987, p.55.

Bible Study on Money

(see page 47)

Matthew 6:19 (NRSV) Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Did you know that the words “believing” or “believers” appear 272 times in the Bible, “pray” or “prayer” occur a total of 371 times, “love” or “loving” 714 times, but “possessions” and “giving” appear a total of 2172 times? 17 of Jesus’ 38 parables are about possessions.¹¹

When you hear the word “money” what feelings does it surface for you? How do you feel about money? Does it have positive or negative qualities for you? Does money excite you? Confuse you? Trouble you?

How would you put these words of Jesus into your own words: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”?

Can you name the things you treasure the most?

What will your new church treasure the most?





part four

GOD IS STILL SPEAKING

Financing

Building trust
around money
issues is important
pastoral work
in new church
development

WHEREVER YOU LIVE YOU ARE SURROUNDED by an economic system of money, trade, bartering, wealth and poverty. You are part of a local economy, a national economy and, increasingly, a global economy. In the midst of such complex realities you are starting a new church. Will you talk about money? How will you talk about money?

Money talk in the church is often an obscure language. Think of all the unusual terms we use like pledge, tithe, second mile giving, love offering, and giving our first fruits. Would a person unfamiliar with church even know we are talking about money?

Various cultures talk about money and commitment in different ways. For example, tithing, the giving back to God of 10% of one's income, is seen differently among Americans from different cultures. For many Hispanics and African Americans, tithing is expected as a sign of one's faith commitment. For many European Americans tithing is a potential goal, but few give at a level of 10% of their income or assets. Most Asian American cultures emphasize sacrificial giving out of a sense of obligation. It would be unseemly for them to quantify that sacrifice by measuring it out in percentage points.

There are so many different understandings of money and its value. No wonder it is intimidating to talk about not only for the church, but especially for the unchurched. How can we church leaders translate the intimidating, obscure language of money into a faith-based understanding of being in relationship, in covenant, with God? Telling stories and learning about giving beyond our own culture can go a long way in helping each new church discover its own voice in money-talk.

Building trust and common understanding

A new church start will attract and welcome people who probably have not given to a church in many years. Still we know that one thing a new church needs, and expects, is generous giving. Building trust around money issues is important pastoral work in new church development. Patience, listening, modeling and teaching are all a part of the money conversation at church. A useful resource for this teaching is *At Ease: Discussing Money and Values in Small Groups* (see bibliography). This book helps people talk about how they were raised, including what values were put on money. In so doing, it helps people explore the art of talking about our faith and our money.

Generous stewards

In the Bible, there is no independent concept of thanks. The expression of thanks to God is included in “praise.” It is a way of praising—a way of giving honor to God—because “to praise” means to give honor. It has to do with what we prize, which is the older English word from which we get our word “praise.” Praising is “prizing” or “giving honor” to something we cherish. In the Bible, thanking is only a part of praise and secondary to it. Merely saying “thank you” has no stand-alone meaning or value. . . . It is to say that, for the Bible, giving “thanks”—gratitude—is “praise”—giving to honor something we prize or cherish.¹²

Building a faith community calls together people who come to give God thanks and praise, and who leave worship empowered to serve others in ministry. The work of developing a new congregation calls together a community of people who, in gratitude to God, give of their time and treasures, their talents and their lives. Planting a church calls people to be generous, growing as stewards—receiving gifts from God and sharing the gifts of God.

Seen this way, financial giving to the church is a means of honoring God because money enables the church to bear witness to God in ministry to the world. A church’s finances may look like those of any other business or non-profit organization, but the motivation of stewardship that praises God makes for one critical difference: “Every dollar in a church budget is a dollar that someone has given freely, under no compulsion, driven by a wish for the church to exist . . . the church budget is a celebration of organized generosity.”¹³ Funding a new church start begins with generous gifts of offering. Core supporters of a new church want it to continue and grow: they know it needs their financial support.



Teaching tithing

In most cultures, to speak of tithing, giving back to God at least ten percent of one’s riches, is an effective way to set a high expectation of spiritual generosity for a new congregation. A tithing church is a generous church, and a generous church will thrive and grow. When we tithe we place God as our first priority. We trust in God’s abundance instead of worrying about not having enough. Tithing churches live out a vision of abundance rather than a mentality of scarcity. When members give generously a church has the resources to sufficiently fund its ministry plans.

Tithing in African American churches

In the African American church, tithing is just as important as ministries of community outreach and public witness. It is as important as Sunday School, Bible study, and services of worship. In many congregations, the prophet Malachi’s instruction to “bring the tithe” is reenacted on Sunday morning as worshipers walk to the altar to participate in the act of stewardship.

In addition, it is not uncommon for tithers to be given the honor to make their contributions first, before other contributors are summoned forward. As givers make their offerings, everyone is greeted with words of affirmation for their gifts and a gentle reminder to reach higher in their giving, as their relationship with God grows and matures.

In many ministry settings, singling out those who take seriously the commitment to bring the tenth would be uncomfortable. In the African American context, it is meant as a friendly challenge to encourage greater faithfulness. And isn’t that the point? To trust God with all of our being and our resources—even the tenth!

Giving does not stop with the tithe. People will give above and beyond a tithe with special offerings and additional pledges, such as for a building campaign.

A tithing church doesn’t focus on finances, but on keeping true to the mandates given by God. In the African American tradition, tithing is “who we are and what we do.”

Stewardship among PIAA Churches

Samoans are very devoted to supporting the church. Everybody gives a love offering to support the pastor. Members are expected to give the same amount regardless of ability; an amount is set for each family on

monthly basis. Samoans believe in giving from the heart. They are very generous and hospitable people who welcome strangers, share with those in need, and support each other.

Examples of their special occasion for fund raising include family nights. They invite the whole community, and sometimes develop a contest atmosphere in which each family tries to outdo the other. It is a celebration with a goal of raising as much money as possible.

To the Micronesians, financial support of the pastor is not a primary concern. The pastor may be paid a token salary, such as \$100 per month, but church families rotate the responsibility of meeting the pastor's family's daily needs. One custom from their homeland they keep is "each one give one." While the church families sing each person present gives a dollar. One-half goes to church's general fund. One-half goes to the minister's family.

Tithing is not part of Hawaiian cultural tradition. Pledging or promising to tithe is avoided because they place high importance on keeping a promise. They would see it as dishonorable to adjust a pledge downward if economic times became hard, so they choose not to enter pledge agreements. Native Hawaiians give generously from the heart as they are able. They give when there are particular needs, taking several offerings until the need is met.

Luaus are primary annual fund raisers in Hawaiian churches. *Ho'ike* is another uniquely Hawaiian money raising activity. Churches gather, on a rotating basis, by districts for a *Ho'ike* gathering to worship, and share knowledge in creative ways. At the close of the *Ho'ike* everyone makes an offering. The money goes to support the host church. *Ho'ike* is still practiced by country churches, with many offerings being taken. People are called up by categories such as staff, choir, and church officers. The treasurer counts as the offerings are taken and the choir keeps singing until the amount sought is reached.

Generational differences may be seen in the giving of Japanese Americans. The first generation has a "whatever it takes" attitude and gives sacrificially. The second generation also gives out of loyalty to the organization.

Later generations are more apt to give out of respect or appreciation for the pastor. For some Japanese, tithing is a model. People will rise to meet crisis, so crisis giving is common.



Chinese churches also experience crisis giving. The sense of obligation to one's community is always present in both Chinese and Japanese cultures. The Chinese feel a strong sense of obligation to keep the church alive. Benefactors will step forward at crucial moments. In both Japanese and Chinese churches members value the responsible handling, budgeting, use and reporting of the congregation's financial ministry.

Common fundraisers in Japanese or Chinese congregations include special event or anniversary dinners, benefit concerts or theater performances, and special dinners to honor a prominent member of the community.

Stewardship giving in most Filipino churches is westernized. Tithing is becoming a way of supporting the ministries of the church. Some sources of fund raising for Filipinos churches include sales of homemade Filipino food packages, house-to-house serenades, and caroling during Christmas season. Special occasions such as birthday and thanksgiving celebrations are major fund raising opportunities. At church anniversary programs the program books often include business ads from local establishments. Some congregations put on concerts or sponsor combined church choir events as fund raisers. On occasion members will experience sacrificial meal, forgoing a meal and donating its cost to the church.

In a nutshell, Pacific Islanders and Asian American people utilize methods of starting and financially supporting new churches that are steeped in their own cultural practices. Church leaders from the dominant culture may need to understand and appreciate this diversity, not impose Western practices upon it.

Other possible sources of funding

There was a time when the Conference and national settings of the United Church of Christ provided major sources of funding for new church starts. While

resources are still available in some cases, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is not economically feasible to start each new church with an infusion of funds from the denomination. We must seek alternative forms of funding for new churches such as churches starting churches and fundraising from a donor base.

Churches Starting Churches

Often in the history of the United Church of Christ and its predecessors, congregations started new churches. In this model, an established congregation, or a coalition of congregations, initiate and share a vision for a new church. The “parent” congregation/s serve as the primary financial support to the new church, sending out people, resources and money. Shepherded in this way, the new church forms close ties to the Association/Conference. The new church is welcomed and celebrated and brought into the full fellowship and mission of the larger body. This, in turn, enlarges the circle of people who support and work toward the growth of the church in formation.

Funding via Personal Relationships

Using this model, the pastor and core members of a church in formation ask people they know for a capital investment in the new church start. Each church member should write brief personal letters, not form letters, to no fewer than 30 of their relatives, friends and business associates.

You will want to adapt the letter for your own situation, but make sure it includes these items:

- One or two sentences about why the new church means so much to you.
 - If the church has a web page, include its URL address so potential donors can get a look at the congregation’s mission. In the same vein, if the church has an informational pamphlet, enclose it with your letter.
 - A request for funds, such as “I hope you will consider a one-time gift to (insert the church’s official name),” or “I hope you will help me reach my personal goal of raising \$ (insert your goal amount).”
 - Instructions about how to send in a donation. Make sure the church’s name, phone number and mailing address appear on the letter and response card.
- Include a “make checks payable to (insert church name)” sentence.
- Ask for a response by a certain date. Set that date three weeks later than you expect them to receive your letter of request. The response time needs to be fairly brief, so they take action instead of putting off a decision. Giving them three weeks to respond will allow them to make room for this donation when they take care of regular personal finances. If they choose to make a large gift, a three-week response window will allow them enough time to access their funds.
 - Enclose a response card that gives three standard options for giving, plus a fourth response option labeled “Other \$_____”. The core group of the new church should determine the contents of this response card and print them for each member’s use. The dollar amounts you chose as options for this response card should be arranged in order from smallest to largest. Experience shows that the first box, the lowest amount, is the box chosen least often. It allows people with few discretionary dollars to make a positive commitment. Most people chose the middle box. Do not make this middle option so low that it will undershoot the church’s needs. The largest option signals that larger gifts are needed. By giving three options you welcome gifts from individuals with various income levels. Each is challenged to respond favorably to your request. The dollar amounts chosen for each option depend on the amount of money needed at start up and on the levels of income in your mission field and among the donors. There is a tendency to ask for too little. If you do not have fundraising experience, seek advice from the Church Development and Renewal Team or from other church planters.
 - Keep the door open. On the response card include a fifth option that states: “No, we cannot participate at this time. Please keep us updated by email, telephone, mail and personal contact.” If they care enough to send the card back with this option checked, you still have a potential donor. Follow up with them in the ways you suggest on the response card.
 - The response card should include a means for donors to give you their name, address, phone number and email address. It is helpful to assure them you will not share or sell this information to others.

- Enclose a stamped envelope addressed to the church. The response card should fit into this envelope. Don't skimp on this feature. It is often the difference between getting a donation and getting nothing. This step makes it as easy as possible for donors to act promptly.
- Send a thank you note promptly whenever a gift or pledge of support is received. Update your donors concerning what their money has accomplished. People like to give to a winning cause, so focus on the strength and momentum gained by your financial gifts. Let your donors know how many people are contributing and the total dollar amount of gifts.

Denominational Funding

Conferences of the United Church of Christ start new churches and are often partners in the funding of a new church. They may have New Church Development Funds available, usually as a grant for pastoral leadership and/or for start-up costs. Conferences may also have resources for the purchase of land.

A limited amount of Partnership Funds are available through the Evangelism Ministry Team of Local Church Ministries, a Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ. Application forms come to the Evangelism Ministry Team through the endorsement of the Conference. New churches who receive funding from the national setting must use "United Church of Christ" in their congregation's public identification and name.

Financial Procedures

Even before the first public service of worship, the new church will receive gifts, tithes and offerings. Clear accounting procedures need to be in place before donations are received. You must show that your new church is a place where people can put their trust. An important way of doing that is by listening to God speak about accountability and making wise choices. Remember that the real core values, vision and mission of your church can be read in the actions of your administrative volun-

teers and in the budgets and record-keeping practices of your church.

This chapter will consider procedures that are important during the start-up of a new church. More specifics about legal documents and financial records keeping are noted in the following chapter.

Remember that the real core values, vision and mission of your church can be read in the actions of your administrative volunteers and in the budgets and record-keeping practices of your church.

Checking account

When should you open a checking account? If the new church receives money from

the Conference, it may be that the church in its infancy will not need its own checking account. In such cases the Conference assumes the responsibility to oversee a payable and receivable account for the new church. Check with your Conference first to determine the right time to open a checking account in the church's name.

It is improper for a non-profit organization to have its financial arrangements in the name of an individual. Do not open an account in the name of the pastor or a lay leader.

Building a budget

The church's budget is a spending plan for your mission. It describes who you are and what ministries you give priority attention. It reflects what you hear God saying and tells how you will live out your core values, vision and mission. Plan carefully and give sufficient time to the intentional development of your church's budget.

The Church Development and Renewal Team highly recommends the book *Inspiring Generosity* (see bibliography) for your use in budget planning. It includes samples of three different budgets, and offers step-by-step instruction on how to develop a budget and how to assess the giving potential of your congregation.

Congregations are strongly encouraged to list Our Church's Wider Mission, our common fund for ministry across the United Church of Christ, as a line item in their church budget. Appeals for United Church of Christ Special Offerings occur throughout the year. These offerings include One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church and the Christmas Fund. Congregations that support these offerings and give from

their budget are praised as being “5 for 5” churches. In addition, the New Church Challenge Fund assists the United Church of Christ in its efforts to develop new congregations.

A significant portion of the budget will focus on staff salaries and benefits. Ask your Conference staff if they have compensation guidelines for you to use. Contact the Pension Board for a copy of the *Tax Guide for Ministers: Information on Filing Tax Returns* to guide you in determining this portion of the church budget.

Counting and Recording Procedures

There are a number of computer programs, which are designed especially for church finances, such as Church Windows. This software program has a United Church of Christ version. Secular software, such as Quicken, can be adapted for church use.

Determine who will keep track of incoming money. It is recommended that employees and volunteers who are authorized to receive or disperse church funds be bonded. Care must be taken to secure money from the time an offering is collected until it is deposited in a bank. Carefully think through how to minimize the time money is left unguarded. Collecting and counting offerings should never be done alone. It is best if those who handle the church offerings are not related to each other.

Many churches purchase pre-printed envelopes to encourage regular giving. Include in your order additional envelopes to cover the Special Offerings of the United Church of Christ. Larger congregations may find it worth the cost to use a system of monthly envelopes sent by direct mail to the homes of your members.

While most congregations collect offerings at each service of worship by passing an offering plate or pointing out a praise basket near the entryway, you may want to consider other methods of encouraging regular giv-

ing. Individuals may set up an Electronic Transfer of Funds (ETF) so that regular withdrawals can be made from their checking account directly to the church's checking account. Some congregations make arrange-

ments for receiving monthly donations by credit card.

There is a fee to the church for this service. While it is a convenient means of regular giving that may be appealing to some givers, especially those who earn benefits or discounts like frequent flier miles for using their credit

cards, the congregation may unwittingly add to the burden of credit card debt for some of its members.

A treasurer keeps track of both income and expenses for the church. The treasurer writes checks for disbursements and keeps an accurate and up to date accounting of monies received, disbursed, checks cleared, and checks outstanding. These financial records and reports should be available to the new church's leadership team. The church is accountable to its donors. Any donor should be able to receive information about the congregation's income and expenses. What the church does with money should not be treated as a secret in the new church start. What may be kept private, however, is the information concerning the givers' names and the amounts of their gifts. In some congregations only one or two people, known as Financial Secretaries, are entrusted with this information. In other churches, the pastor knows the details of these stewardship records. Give careful thought as to how your church is policies on these matters reflect your core values and your ability to conduct the church's mission.

A record of contributions must be kept. At year's end, statements that list the dollar amount and date of financial gifts or in-kind donations must be issued to all contributors. It is important to include the following sentence in such year-end statements: “No goods nor services were exchanged as a result of this gift.” Use this occasion to thank your donors and to share with them what ministries were accomplished because of their generosity.

What the church does with money should not be treated as a secret in the new church start. What may be kept private, however, is the information concerning the givers' names and the amounts of their gifts.

Additional Resources

The United Church of Christ offers many programs and resources:

Stewardship and Church Finances Team of LCM encourages the whole church to grow as stewards by providing an array of publications and materials, as well as staff training and support. Call 216.736.3858.

United Church Foundation helps churches earn more money for ministry and mission through proven, professional investment management services. Call toll-free 877.806.4989.

The Pension Boards administer professionally managed pension, life, disability, health, and dental plans for lay and clergy staff and retirees of United Church of Christ churches. Call toll-free 800.642.6543.

United Church of Christ Insurance Board offers a full range of quality causality and liability insurance coverage specifically designed for United Church of Christ churches. Often Conferences enroll new congregations through the Conference's own policy. Call toll-free 800.437.8830.

Local Church Building assists new or relocating churches with site selection, a construction program and/or building purchase. They offer low-cost site and building loans. They provide Capital Campaign Consultant referral service 216.736.3834.

Cornerstone Fund, Inc. provides loans to established churches for building-related projects, renovation for accessibility, and refinancing, using a pool of funds created by investment from individuals, churches, and other United Church of Christ-related organizations. Call toll-free 888.822.3863.

The following journals detail accounting, financial and tax developments that affect churches and clergy: **Church Treasurer Alert!** (published by Church Law Today, P. O. Box 2301, Matthews NC 28106, 800.222.1840, www.churchlawtoday.com) and **Net Results** (www.netresults.org). These publications are not produced by the United Church of Christ, however the Church Development and Renewal Team recommends their use.



Notes

12. *Inspiring Generosity*, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ, 2002, p.7.
13. *Inspiring Generosity*, p.34.

Bible Study on Secular and Spiritual Laws

(see page 55)

Joshua 1:8 (NRSV) This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.

Romans 3:31(NRSV) Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

1 Corinthians 14:40 (NRSV) All things should be done decently and in order.

Luke 20:21–25(NRSV) So they asked him, “Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” But he perceived their craftiness and said to them, “Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?” They said, “The emperor’s.” He said to them, “Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

When a child is born, a birth certificate is filed with the city where the delivery occurred. When someone purchases a house, a deed is recorded in the county where the property is located. When starting a business, you must file documents that spell out the intent of the business and the terms of any partnerships. Whether we like it or not, there are local, state and federal regulations that everyone must follow. The church is no exception.

What does Jesus say about following laws?

What is the tension in the church between the spiritual law and the secular law?

How can we live “in but not of” the world?





part five

GOD IS STILL SPEAKING

Launching

To claim covenantal partnership with the United Church of Christ requires an understanding of the denomination's policies and polity.

THE LIFE-BLOOD OF A NEW CHURCH is its ability to listen to God's still speaking voice, but there are other important voices to listen to, as well. Congregations cannot ignore the guidelines and requirements of the government or the denomination. A new church must adhere to city, state and federal laws that govern non-profit organizations. To claim covenantal partnership with the United Church of Christ requires an understanding of the denomination's policies and polity. This section of the New Church Development Guidebook will inform you of the formative documents your new church may need. Not all the documents mentioned are required in every circumstance, but having knowledge of them will help guide your decision-making.

United Church of Christ Documents

United Church of Christ Constitution and By-laws and the Statement of Faith.

These documents clearly state who we are and what we believe as the United Church of Christ. Study these documents in order to gain a clear understanding of the way the United Church of Christ is organized and governed.

Church Charter and United Church of Christ Standing. Each Conference of the United Church of Christ is authorized to make its own rules and guidelines for granting standing to new congregations. There is no denomination-wide determination about such matters as how many members a new church must have before receiving standing or becoming chartered, or whether a charter may be received before a pastor is called. Contact your Association/Conference office for specific information about its time line and process for recognizing new congregations.

A church charter declares the official name of the congregation and its particular mission. The Association/Conference will help you determine when to open a charter. All new churches are encouraged to include "United Church of Christ" in their official name. The day the charter is signed by the founding members of a church is a time for special celebration.

The Association/Conference grants standing to the local church. Standing is the official term for affiliation with the United Church of Christ. It signifies that the local church is recognized as a covenantal partner.

Church Identification Number. The United Church of Christ grants a temporary identification number to each congregation with in-care status. Once a church has been recognized as a church in full standing in the denomination it will receive a

church identification number. This number, specific to your church alone, should be used on all formal communication with the national setting.

Authorization of Ministry. In order to pastor a United Church of Christ congregation a minister, whether ordained or lay, must be recognized, authorized, and have standing in the Association/ Conference. Authorized ministers are expected to abide by the United Church of Christ Ministerial Code of Ethics. Contact your Association/Conference office for more information about the authorization of ministers.

Minister's Profile and Background Check. When authorized ministers of the United Church of Christ seek a call to a church they complete a Minister's Profile in the denomination-wide Search and Call process. This Profile, similar to a resume, tells about their credentials, spiritual journey, abilities, and vision for a church. Congregations that seek pastoral leadership are strongly encouraged to obtain candidates only through the Search and Call process, especially because Ministerial Profiles include character references and a background check for clergy misconduct. Congregations obtain ministerial profiles from Association/Conference offices.

Pastor's Letter of Call and Agreement. A call agreement outlines the duties and terms of a pastorate including salary and compensation. It also clarifies what is required of both the church and the pastor if either party wants to end their covenantal relationship. Your Association/ Conference office may have samples of typical call agreements for you to review.

Insurance. Contact the United Church of Christ Insurance Board for information on liability, worker's compensation and malpractice insurance.

Local, State, and Federal Documents

Try not to become overwhelmed or discouraged when making application for all of the legal documents. Some applications take awhile to process, so plan accordingly. All legal documents should be placed in a safe place and more than one person should know where the documents are kept.

Articles of Incorporation. Each state has its own regulations concerning Articles of Incorporation for non-profit organizations. Check with the state authorities or your Association/Conference for specific forms and requirements.

Federal Tax Exemption Status. When a church has standing as an affiliate of the United Church of Christ it is automatically included in the denomination's group exemption from federal income tax. Some churches prefer to obtain their own identification number. Information on how to apply can be found at www.irs.gov. Contact the Association/Conference office for assistance.

501(c)3 Not for Profit Status. To apply for recognition as a tax exempt organization go to www.irs.gov and obtain the Application for Recognition of Exemption form. Also look on the IRS website for a step-by-step application process, which will inform your church officers how to apply for a tax exempt status. There are fees involved with this application.

State Tax Exempt Status. Many states exempt churches from paying sales tax. Contact your state government or Association/Conference for the details specific to your location.

Employers Identification Number (EIN). The Internal Revenue Service issues churches tax ID numbers, or Employers Identification Numbers. You will need to have an EIN before you can open the congregation's bank account. An Employers Identification Number must be posted on all of the congregation's payroll forms. You may get Form SS-4 to request an EIN at your local IRS office, or download one from www.irs.gov.

State Withholding Number. This number is issued by the state and is required for payroll forms. Contact your state taxation department to request a state withholding number.

Bulk Mail Permit. The United States Postal Service will allow non-profit organizations a reduced rate on bulk mailings of 200 or more pieces of mail. Apply at your local post office. Expect a one-time application fee, a one-time imprint fee, and annual maintenance fees. Bulk mailing rules must be followed precisely in order to receive reduced mailing rates. If this process is new to your staff or volunteers, inquire about free training sessions which the postal service provides.

Other Important Documents

Local Church Constitution and By-Laws. Each local church needs a Constitution and By-Laws document to spell out how the church will be governed and how decisions will be determined. Do not rush into writing this document. It is

best if the congregation has a chance to live together and grow for a time before setting down precisely how it will be organized and what processes it will use to make decisions. Some congregations experiment with various styles of decision-making or organizational models before settling on the ones to codify in their constitution. There is no one specific way United Church of Christ congregations must structure their governance. Some churches chose to follow Roberts Rules of Order; while others prefer a consensus model for decision-making. Some churches choose collaborative ministry teams with no terms of office, while others choose to have standing committees with term limits. The Constitution and By-Laws should be adopted by a vote of the congregation's members. Ask for sample copies of constitutions from other United Church of Christ churches in your area, other new church starts, the Association/Conference office, or from Parish Life and Leadership at the United Church of Christ national office.

Safe Church Policy. The United Church of Christ wants its congregations to be safe havens for all people, especially for children. Policies that protect against sexual harassment or abuse are essential. Setting them in place early in the life of your church sends a clear message of the seriousness with which the congregation takes its responsibility to be a safe and just environment. Local and state governments may have specific laws concerning background checks of employees and volunteers. If you host a childcare program there may be additional compliance requirements. Your insurance company may insist on policies and training programs to build awareness around issues of sexual harassment and ethical boundaries. Check with your local government and with the Association/Conference to assure compliance in this area.

Financial Accounting System. Accuracy in recording and reporting financial matters is essential. A budget is designed to be an accounting of all funds collected and expended by the church. A detailed budget should be presented to the congregation for adoption annually, and spending should correspond with the budget's projections. Basic accounting practices, including checks and balances in the methods of collecting, recording and dispersing funds, should be followed.

Before the end of January each year the church must report all W-4 and 1099-Misc income for its workers to

the Internal Revenue Service. Also in the month of January the church must provide statements to all people and businesses that contributed at least \$250 in money or in-kind items to the congregation in the previous year. As an employer the church has additional obligations, such as reporting new hires and withholding federal and state income tax from lay employee's wages. Speak with a tax professional or your Association/Conference for guidance if you are unfamiliar with these practices.

Bank account signature cards. Set up a checking account in the church's name before accepting tithes and offerings. The bank will provide information on the number of signatures required on checks. It is wise to have two signatures required on checks over a certain dollar amount. This requirement should become part of the local church's Constitution and By-Laws. Work closely with your Association/Conference office to determine the best time to open the church's checking account.

Job descriptions. Develop a job description for all paid and volunteer staff. Job descriptions allow for accountability among staff persons concerning their individual job responsibilities.

Domain name and website. As soon as possible purchase a domain name for your church website. There is a fee for each domain name acquired. You may want to purchase more than one domain name for future use.

Today's society is internet savvy. More and more people are finding a church, not by driving down the street and randomly visiting, but by researching the choices on the internet. Developing an interactive, informative and appealing website will assist in bringing people to the church. Set up a web page with information about your church's vision, ministry and worship experience. List your web page at www.ucc.org. Often a youth or young adult volunteer with knowledge and ability in web design can serve the congregation as web master.

Core values, a vision and ministry plans promote a healthy spiritual direction for the church. Likewise, it is important to have all the necessary documentation in place to set the course for the church to be in compliance with governmental and denominational requirements. New churches can minimize delays in their formative period by having good organizational practices and by knowing what documents are required of them.

Bible Study on Renewal Day by Day

(see page 59)

By this point you might be saying, "I am not so sure this is for me. I did not know a new church start would take this much work." You are somewhere in between, still praying, still discerning, still listening and also you need renewal in your life day by day.

So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. 2 Corinthians 4:16, The Message

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 2 Corinthians 4:16, New International Version

The scope of Paul victorious life:

- Pressured but not forsaken
- Anxious but not distressed
- Pressed but not in a box
- Perplexed but not desperate (not knowing which way to turn).
- Lost indeed, but not a hopeless loss

The secret of Paul's victorious life. It is a two fold secret:

- always experiencing death with Christ
- always expressing life in Christ

The fixed principle:

- Moment by moment Jesus drew on the infinite resources of God.

What worries can you turn over to God?

What hope do you have that shows God's grace?

How have you experienced death with Christ/ life with Christ since you have started on this church journey?

What blessings do you see in this journey?

How are you being renewed day by day?





part six

GOD IS STILL SPEAKING

Challenging

The Body of Christ
is strengthened as
new churches are
born in our midst

SO, YOU ARE STILL READING! Good for you. Many issues have been named. Many tasks of a new church start have been outlined and introduced. Perhaps by this point you are saying, “Here I am. Send me.” Perhaps by this point you are saying, “I am not so sure this is for me. I did not know a new church start would take this much work.” Perhaps you are somewhere in between, still praying, still discerning, and still listening for God. “Is God still speaking to me?”

New church starts do not happen overnight. New church starts do not happen in isolation. New church starts are hard work. There is nothing better than a new church start that really works, takes off, and thrives. There is nothing worse than a new church start that doesn’t.

When it all works well, a new church start is reaching out to new communities, new immigrants, and new populations. It is exciting to witness people who have had negative experiences of church in their past become a part of a vibrant new church. Many of these people say, “I never thought I’d be in a church again. I have been looking for a place like this my whole life!”

When it all works well, a new church start is part of transformation in people’s lives. People turn from despair and loneliness to hope and relationship. People find an intimacy with God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. People find meaning and purpose for their lives. People find joy and generosity. People become “contagious” with a spirit that others sense and wish for themselves also.

If the new church faces difficulty

When it all works well, the whole United Church of Christ celebrates the new church. New congregations are more likely to be growing churches than established churches. New churches may model innovation, teaching other congregations how to “do church” in a new way. But new churches can also come under suspicion by established congregations. Established congregations that are struggling to survive see the amount of resources and attention given to the new church, and wonder if anyone cares about helping to revitalize existing churches. The vision of a new church to be “Multiracial, Multicultural, Open and Affirming, Accessible to All” may not be the vision of some of the churches in an Association where the new church will seek its official United Church of Christ standing. It is important to have open communication and clearly established processes within an Association and a Conference as new churches are started. The Body of Christ is strengthened as new churches are born in our midst.

So what are some of the issues when it does not work well, when people do not respond to the vision, when a critical mass of people do not come together, when you try to build the church and they “do not come”?

The following are questions that can be asked not only at low points in the life of a new church, but anytime during its formation. They may be asked as “course corrections,” evaluations of current ministry that are raised repeatedly for continuous improvement. If you use them for fine-tuning your direction, substitute the present tense verbs as needed:

- Was the Vision clear and compelling?
- Were the Core Values/Core Behaviors clear?
- Was there a Ministry Plan?
- Was the Leadership, both pastoral and lay, suited to the task?
- Did the demographics match the vision?
- Did the Vision match the vision of the Conference/Association?
- What effect did the Facility/Space have on gathering a group?
- Were costs prohibitive from the beginning?
- Was funding sufficient?
- Was leadership mentored and well equipped?
- Was the partnership between the United Church of Christ settings strong?
- Was support available and appropriate?
- Was the worship style, including music and preaching, exciting and excellent?
- Did the ministries meet the needs of the people and community?
- Was there a traumatic event in the first 1–2 years of the new church start that perhaps stunted its formation as a healthy church?

The list of questions could probably go on and on. Honest and critical evaluation needs to happen on an on-going basis. Sometimes persons inside the new church are too close to the situation and need outside eyes and ears and voices to help them assess. Honest evaluation takes trust and care, and the willingness to act on the recommendations, that is, to change. Even new churches need to know how to change! If the new church is not happening according to the original

vision, it will not help to keep doing the same things over and over again. This will only lead to burnout, rejection and discouragement.

Burnout occurs when a small group of people are trying to do everything right, but they are not seeing the fruits of their labors. The harder they work, the fewer results they see. Support Committees, prayer partners, distance, reflection and evaluation may help re-focus and re-prioritize the work, even give permission for rest from the work.

If your new church does not grow as quickly as projected, you lose some key leaders, you have trouble with your meeting location, or you encounter a financial problem, your group may become discouraged as they mourn the loss of the original dream, the way it “was supposed to be.” You may compare yourself with other new church starts or you may get signals from other partners that you are not growing fast enough. How do you celebrate what God is doing, what lives have been touched, what ministry has been done? Can you find things to celebrate? Can your partners recognize you for the good work you have done? Re-state the vision in an encouraging way, speaking of abundance rather than scarcity, for example: “We have been a new church now for one year. We are not as large as we hoped we would be at this point. But listen to the stories of some of the people whose lives have been touched by our ministry. Hear the stories of how we have had a positive impact on our community. We need your continued support and help as we continue on our journey to be a United Church of Christ congregation in this community!”

You need to realize from the beginning that you cannot please all of the people all of the time, nor will you be attractive to everyone who visits your congregation. Other churches may not even support you in your area, as you may be perceived as a threat to the growth of their congregations. Some of the early core group leaders may walk away. You can choose to say, “I feel rejected. Look at all those people who are not coming to this new church.” Can you begin to refocus by saying, “Why did we start this church? What did we believe God was calling us to do and be? If we were not here, would anyone miss us? What voice are we speaking that no one else is speaking? Are there not other people out there searching for a place, a community, such as this? How do we start again? What gifts has God given us to build up God’s church?”

There may be times when it will be determined that a new church start will need to close. In the midst of the pain, how do we celebrate the good work that was done, the seeds of faith that were planted, the hope that God is Still Speaking to us, perhaps in a voice we have not yet discerned? One new church pastor said,

You have to believe in miracles. Not wait for them, but believe in them. In our first few years, there were challenges that might have shut us down. We lost the first pastor, we lost our space in the school, we had no place to go that we could afford. Then we found a space and a generous donor gave us a large check. People followed us now through two additional moves. We are not out of the woods yet, but it has been a journey of miracles, and hard work. It can work. We are meant to be in this community.¹⁴

Our Final Gratitude

We do not end all these pages in a word of despair. We end in words of encouragement and gratitude.

Thank you so much for your passion for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Thank you so much for exploring a potential journey into a new church start.

Thank you so much for deciding if this is really for you, if it really matches the gifts God has given you.

Thank you so much for listening to the Still Speaking God.

*One new church
pastor said,
You have to
believe in
miracles.*

Notes

14. David Krueger-Duncan, Northwest Community Church UCC, Las Vegas, NV at a new Church Development gathering, February 2004.





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The following resources are available through United Church of Christ Resources at 800.537.3394:

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Exploring Covenant in the United Church of Christ. Evangelism Ministry Team and Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team, available at www.ucc.org.

Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches. Order by calling 800.642.6543. A guide for local church treasurers with information on current tax laws.

Inspiring Generosity: A Stewardship Resource for the Local Church. This resource looks at ways to understand and approach money and mission realistically. It includes the theological background on the motivation for giving, as well as four programmatic approaches to fundraising in the church. Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry Team, Local Church Ministries. Order by calling 800.634.5235, ask for SCIGM.

It’s All About Evangelism. Evangelism Ministry Team, Local Church Ministries, 2003. An inspiring and engaging new video that tells the evangelism witness of six diverse congregations in the United Church of Christ. Order by calling 800.634.5235, ask for ECENCV.

The Manual on Ministry: Perspectives and Procedures for Ecclesiastical Authorization of Ministry. A series of ten booklets in a binder, outlining procedures for the authorization of ordained, commissioned, and licensed ministry; ordained ministerial partners; and perspectives and procedures for review and discipline of persons authorized for ministry. Parish Life and Leadership, Local Church Ministries. ucc.org/ministers.

Pastoral Call Agreement for Local Churches of the United Church of Christ. Guidelines for a local church to use in determining its call agreement and compensation package for a new pastor. Ask for OCLPCA.

The Power of Welcome and Invitation, God is Still Speaking Initiative, www.stillspeaking.org

United Church News. The primary source for news and information about the denomination on the web and in print.

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The United Church of Christ Constitution and By Laws. ucc.org.

Also Recommended

Griffith, Jim. *Getting Started: How to Start a New Church.* www.jimgriffithcoaching.org

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