

In any healthy church multiplication system, certain “best practices” seem to produce more fruit, as we find leaders, equip for effectiveness, plant and multiply. We offer some key recommendations here. **Path 1 New Church Strategists are available to help you develop these practices within your ministry territory.**

Find

1. Invite and challenge a broader base of people to hear a personal call to plant new congregations—including clergy, **laity, young people and more diverse people.**
2. Develop a **reliable planter assessment and discernment process, aligned with the particular planting strategies being pursued...**
 - to determine gifts and calling of potential church planters
 - to help match potential planters with strategies and teams that fit with their gifts and affinities
3. **Create a pool of prospective planters, both clergy and lay...**
 - who have participated in an assessment and discernment process
 - who have received some basic training in new church development and multiplication (such as a Launchpad event, Exponential, Bootcamp, or regional *New Church Leadership Institute*)
 - with customized plans for all prospective planters to develop their skills and to monitor their ministry fruitfulness
4. **Support and challenge local churches** to lead in planting new churches and multiplying their healthy congregations. Utilize resources to assess and increase readiness for effective planting.

Equip

5. Where possible, **deploy or connect these high-potential leaders to serve on a successful planting team** or within the leadership team of a vibrant, growing congregation before beginning their work as lead planter for a new church.
6. Provide **training for all planters once they have been assigned to specific planting projects**, making use of *Basic Training for Church Planters* or the Path 1 *Launchpad* events.
7. Assign a **qualified new church development coach** to the project for at least three years to work with the planter, the local partners and the district superintendent. *Consider working with a Path 1 recommended coach for this critical role.*
8. **Develop appropriate benchmarks** before the planting project starts, in conversation with the coach, planter(s), connectional partners, district superintendent and conference staff person for new church starts. Plan to review and possibly adjust the benchmarks about six months in.

Plant

9. In project planning, **think first in terms of the people we seek to reach with the Good News of Jesus Christ**, taking into consideration the generational, cultural and theological contexts. This site selection task is much more important than putting a point on the map.
10. When planting **racial-ethnic and multi-ethnic faith communities** consider specific recommendations for effective partnering that may differ from common assumptions or Anglo-majority planting experiences. *Contact New Church Strategists for Path1 resources for specific racial/ethnic planting constituencies.*
11. Always seek to plant with a well-developed **connectional partnership** – a partnering congregation, a partnering group of congregations or some other dependable resources (people and seed funding) to help begin an effective launch team quickly. *If you need to delay a year or assign the pastor to the staff of the partnering church until a local launch team has been cultivated, please wait.*
12. Develop a plan tailored to each community context, with these considerations: **financial streams, stewardship development, connectional giving and sustainability**. Financial streams include funds from launch team **and** planter tithing and may also include individuals, connectional partners, district and annual conference. Build into the budget the congregation's giving back to the conference. *Consider creating a Path 1 Missional Planting Zone in areas where conventional strategies are not feasible or likely to succeed.*
13. Establish **benchmarks that support an exit strategy**. Allow benchmarks to guide decisions related to continued funding, ministry strategy, fruitfulness, leadership effectiveness, and planting appointment transitions (see also 19 below). An **exit strategy** relates specifically to discontinuing external financial investment in an emerging faith community that fails to develop to a certain level within a certain time window. This strategy may involve reassignment of the planter. It must always involve a good pastoral plan for continuing to disciple the persons involved and to grow ministry in a more sustainable manner. *Occasionally, you may adjust benchmarks but please don't ignore or discard them.*
14. Be sure the **planter appropriately matches** the needs and challenges of the community. If the planter is new to the area, **look for ways s/he might live and serve in the community** before the planting appointment formally begins.
15. Only assign planters to projects after they have **completed assessment and discernment processes, where their gifts, affinities, and previous experiences appropriately match** their particular planting challenges. Upon assignment to planting projects, ensure that planters receive ongoing support and appropriate training, such as prayer partners, formal and informal peer support groups, coaching and accountability. Consider funding training opportunities for the planter and key leaders for a specified length of time.
16. Provide a **clear line of communication** from the planter to the district superintendent and others involved with conference congregational development and offer a **safe, confidential environment** in which the planter can share concerns, frustrations, and ministry successes.

17. Build an **infrastructure of small groups, mission teams and ministry teams** within the planting team before launching weekly public worship. Small group multiplication and discipleship systems lay the foundation for success and sustainability of a new church.
18. **Resist the temptation to launch weekly public worship prematurely** or to wait too long. Right timing depends on the leadership of the Holy Spirit, critical mass, momentum and cultural context. Churches that launch weekly public worship too soon often get stuck as very small, cash-dependent fellowships with reduced chances of growth and financial self-sustainability.
19. When, eventually, a **succeeding pastoral assignment** occurs (either the assignment of a new lay pastor, the assignment of a new campus pastor within a multi-site church staff or the appointment of a new pastor by the bishop), those in oversight pay extremely close attention to gifts, affinities, and calling of the second pastor, as well as the unique culture and growth (or lack thereof) of the new faith community. When a clergy appointment is involved, the cabinet **works collaboratively with the church and founding planter** in the appointive process.

Multiply

20. **Think “multiplication” from the start.** Create a culture for multiplication of leaders, ministries and congregations in existing churches and new church starts. Include a focus on leaders and team members constantly mentoring new leaders and team members.
21. **Protect the planter’s time** by releasing her/him from annual conference committee work and other connectional leadership demands that steal focus from the church plant. Specifically, planters serving in their first three years at a new church should not serve on conference board overseeing church planting. This type of distraction sometimes involves conflicts of interest.
22. **Leave the planter long enough** in the new church appointment to stabilize the new church. If the new church has good potential to grow into a high-attendance congregation and to multiply, plan for the planter to remain long-term with the church.
23. In reaching new people for Christ, **keep existing congregations from blocking or undermining** the efforts to plant a new church. In many communities, the diversity and sheer quantity of people require more and varied congregations to increase the share of the population connected to The United Methodist Church. New approaches and creative, missional faith communities will appeal to different people groups and serve new populations.
24. When existing churches close, **designate a significant portion of the assets** toward new church development in the annual conference. Annual conferences that employ such a policy typically keep a good reservoir of funding for new church start projects.

For additional information or support exploring or implementing these best practice recommendations, please contact any of the New Church Strategists on the Path1 staff.