

Planting Circuit

A Fresh Expression of Creating New Places for New People



Having been called to encourage and support all of our faith communities and congregations to join with the movement of God's mission in the world, our Circuits in the California-Nevada Annual Conference are being called, encourage and engage to work collaboratively in creating new places for new people.

WHAT IS PCI?

The **Planting Circuit Initiative** is designed to support and resource the efforts of each and every new planting circuit project the best possible opportunity of becoming the vital partner for leading in church planting and developing vital churches.

Through this effort, we measure our fruitfulness considering the following benchmarks:

- Starting fresh expression of a church or faith community
- Multiplication of existing vibrant ministry
- Working together toward community transformation
- Developing missional partners within the community
- Equipping leaders, lay and clergy, for new church development

Planting a new church requires careful planning, resourcing, and leadership. Below is a list of things to consider in leading church planting or new faith community development.

FIND: EFFECTIVE LEADERS

- Start with circuits with passion, ongoing work and evidence of fruitfulness to reach new people and new mission field or focus group.
- The Bishop and Cabinet will use the following criteria to identify and invite Circuits to participate in the Planting Circuit Initiative who have exhibited the following:
 - a. Participatory: All clergy attend and participate in discussions and actions
 - b. Supportive: Care about one another and one another's ministries
 - c. Missional: Discuss how to best share out God's mission in circuit mission field
 - d. Collaborative: Two or more churches plan and do something missionally together
 - e. Strategic: Create a new ministry to reach out into the mission field
- Each of the District Superintendent will recommend potential Planting Circuits to the Bishop and Cabinet to enlist as potential participating Circuits
- At least one Circuit for each district will be named and invited to participate on PCI
- All Circuits identified will be invited to attend to an Orientation to Planting Circuit Initiative event to layout the vision and plan of the PCI.
- Following the orientation event, circuit leaders and pastors will be asked to prayerfully discern participating in the PC initiative.
- Circuits that have determined to participate in this new adventure will be requested to indicate

their decision by signing a Covenant Agreement.

- At this point, Cabinet representative/s will meet with Circuit leaders to discuss next action steps.

EQUIP: CIRCUITS AND CHURCHES

- Encourage all churches in prospective Planting Circuit in each district to take the *Readiness 360*-survey tool to measure congregations' current capacity to create new ministry, for new people, in new places.
- Conduct 1-day event to analyze the results of the congregational survey with circuit leaders, pastors and key lay leaders from identified Planting Circuits.
- Conduct 1-day workshop on church planting with pastors and key local leaders from selected circuits.
- Offer continuing training, networking and peer learning programs for leaders to help them develop church planting competency.
- Assign a Planting Circuit Coach to each planting circuits.

PLANT: FOCUS ON THE MISSION FIELD

- Study and learn the variety of models or strategies for developing new churches or faith communities.
- Develop well-thought-out strategic plans with all key players on the same page.
- Don't forget that a "One Size Fits All" approach in church planting in this kind of ministry setting has not worked in the past and will not work in the future.

Prior to launching a new church or faith community, make sure to study and put in place all six of the following key components to produce a successful new church or faith community. Listed below is a simple overview of all six components:

- 1. The Right Mission Field...** is the driver for starting a new church or faith community. Listen to the mission field and meet the needs it presents. Listen to the mission field to determine the style of worship, the focus of the ministry, and the scope of the project. Learn the mission field demographics from Mission Insite, and from on the ground observation and analysis. The strategy of Circuit-Based Accountability hopefully helps each circuit prioritize this task.
- 2. The Right Planter...** is the product of passion, discernment, and training. "Past behavior is the best predictor of future performance." We are looking for planters (lay and clergy) who have some track record of 'starting something' in their past.

On---line surveys to determine spiritual gifts and one’s passion for starting a new church are the beginning point. Attending the New Church Leadership Institute (NCLI) or Lay Missionary Planting Network (LMPN), being assessed, and going through Church Planter’s Basic Training, and working with a church planting coach are all essential requirements.

3. **The Right Partner Church...** is the best indicator of most thriving new church plants. Partnered new faith communities have the greatest chance of success. Since often the most important element a partner church brings to a new start is its DNA, we are looking for healthy partner churches. Potential Partner Church assessment and training, completing the online “Readiness 360” assessment tool, strong connectionalism evidenced through 100% apportionment payout, and working with the conference New Places for New People Committee are requirements of all potential partner churches.
4. **The Right Strategy.** All new faith communities must have a well thought out strategy and have stakeholder alignment and agreement.
 - a. **Peer Church Strategy.** An existing United Methodist congregation functions as an anchoring, sponsoring or parenting force in launching a new church.
 - b. **Multiple Partner Strategy.** Similar to the Peer Church strategy, this variation involves multiple partners sharing leadership to launch and support the project. **Multi---Site Expansion Strategy.** An existing United Methodist congregation extends its brand to another physical site. The new faith community meeting at the new site remains part of the original church, even as they may develop a distinct staff and ministry team system.
 - c. **Shared Facility Strategy.** In a world of very expensive real estate, many new churches will share space with other churches (both partner churches and other collegial congregations). Existing congregations choosing to share property may find that new churches may better serve their immediate neighbors, especially when the new church specializes in a certain racial/ethnic culture and/or a certain generation or social group.
 - d. **Reopened Facility Strategy.** Similar to the above strategy, except that there is no church left to share its facility. The new church begins to address the needs and culture of the community population.
 - e. **Connectional Parachute Drop Strategy.** This strategy is most similar to Paul’s missionary adventures in the first century and happens when the cabinet sends a planter into a territory to plant a church and (1) that planter is not from that territory plus (2) there are no partnerships in place with other United Methodist churches or institutions in the area.
 - f. **Vital Merger Strategy.** A vital merger requires all of the merging churches to sell their buildings, pool the funds, move to a temporary location, find a new name, receive a trained planter and proceed as if they were a new church.

- g. **House Church Strategy.** House churches are typically small, limited to the number that can fit in a home or a small meeting space. In some parts of the world, they multiply rapidly. Multiple house churches may gather monthly in a large worship venue. They are often lay--led, with clergy sometimes riding a circuit to bring the Sacraments.
 - h. **The Elijah/Elisha Strategy.** An existing church ceases to exist and passes their legacy and mantle of ministry to a new faith community.
 - i. **The Surprise Birth.** Sometimes, churches are born unexpectedly – just as children may come along in a season when we did not expect them.
5. **The Right Time.** In the California-Nevada Conference, we have large underserved populations and some areas that are projected to experience significant growth. Starting too soon before a building boom in a particular demographic is as dangerous as starting too late. One must take into account reversals and trends in housing markets, economic conditions availability of resources, prioritizing of investments and other market---driven factors. To assist us with this, we utilize the expertise of many outstanding laity with a heart for starting new churches.
6. **The Right Funding.** Jesus’ words of caution in Luke 14:28 about a man wanting to build a tower, but failing to count the cost and thus ending up looking like a fool, are of particular importance to us in planting new churches. Funding from the Conference must be committed for an extended period of time for any project, and the project itself must be capable of generating necessary income to become self-sustaining within 3---5 years (except in ethnic/language mission projects). To go into a project with only the ‘hope’ of sufficient resources down the road is short sighted.
- We will resist the temptation to attempt to plant when less than all six of the above key components are in place.
 - In consultation with variety of experts and mission partners, the decisions about which new church or faith community, when, where and led by whom rests with the Bishop and the Cabinet.

We are launching the Planting Circuit Initiative (PCI) to embolden our Circuits to develop and improve their collaborative ministry together so that our purpose – becoming agents of God’s mission in the world – might be better fulfilled.