

# NEW FAITH COMMUNITY

(New Church Planter)

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



faith  
community  
formation



Mississippi Conference  
of The United Methodist Church

Living Out  
ThePOWERof We

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## INTRODUCTION

The Faith Community Formation Office (FCF), constituted in 2015, exists to transform the Mississippi Annual Conference to a culture of vitality by forming new faith communities and by revitalizing existing congregations – thereby living into our Core Values: Love Generosity, Justice and Apprenticeship.

Statistics confirm that the best way “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” is to start new faith communities for new people. With that in mind, the Faith Community Formation Office (FCF) has set a goal of starting twenty new faith communities by 2020. This 20/20 vision is believed to be the best way to reach the 64% of the Mississippi population that has no significant involvement in a faith community, and in doing so will help counteract the Mississippi Methodist’s decline in numbers.

Church planting comes from the ‘Apostolic’ spirit of the New Testament, which is missional, entrepreneurial, and creative. The following policies are not intended to ‘tie the hands’ of the planters, but to celebrate ‘the ties that bind’ us in mutual trust, accountability, and covenant. Adhering to the following policies and procedures frees the planter to do the apostolic work of starting a new faith community.

It is required that every new church start pastor, District Superintendent, and Senior Pastor of a prospective mother church (if applicable) read, understand and agree to follow all policies. However, each new church plant is unique and situations or circumstances may arise at which time the planter, District Superintendent and/or director of the Faith Community Formation Office (FCF) may agree that the project needs some variation from the following policies and procedures (which will be determined at that time).

A new faith community shall be established only with the consent of the bishop in charge, the cabinet and the office of Faith Community Formation (FCF).

**PLEASE NOTE:** *While many new faith community planters have started under a previous version of this policy, the new faith community planter shall update to the newest version within 60 days of the release of a new version. More information and access to updated versions of this document can be found on the Mississippi Conference website at [www.mississippi-umc.org/newfaithcommunities](http://www.mississippi-umc.org/newfaithcommunities).*

## OUR MISSION

### The Mission of the Mississippi Annual Conference

The Mississippi Annual Conference — empowered by love, generosity, justice and apprenticeship — forms spiritual leaders, faith communities and connections so more disciples of Jesus Christ transform the world.

### Faith Community Formation Ministry

#### Vision

Create a culture of vitality through faith community formation and revitalize existing congregations to transform the Mississippi Annual Conference.

#### Mission

Forming faith communities so more disciples of Jesus Christ transform the world.

#### Theme

Form Faith Communities

## OVERVIEW

### The Decision

Launching a new United Methodist congregation is a great adventure of faith. There is no one magical process or formula that guarantees success. It is a dynamic process that includes the following:

1. God's will
2. Prayer, prayer, prayer
3. A vision in harmony with God's will
4. Leadership attuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit
5. A passion for the mission field
6. A well thought out strategy and plan
7. A flexible, adaptive spirit
8. A population that is open to hearing and responding to God's word
9. Location, location, location
10. Connectionalism
11. Stewardship
12. Clear policies, procedures and guidelines

## SIX KEY COMPONENTS NECESSARY TO PLANT A NEW CHURCH

The Mississippi Conference is committed to having all six of the following key components in place prior to launching a new church or faith community.

**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 as you determine the style of worship, the focus of the ministry, and the scope of the project. Pull mission field demographics from MissionInsite ([www.missioninsite.com](http://www.missioninsite.com)) [[MissionInsite: Getting Started Instructions](#)] and, more importantly, gather information from on the ground observation and analysis and from your local district missional strategists.

**THE RIGHT PLANTER** ... is the product of discernment, assessment, 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. Online surveys to determine spiritual gifts and one’s passion for starting a new church are the beginning point. Attending Exponential and Launchpad or other approved event, being assessed, and going through a Church Planter’s Orientation/Basic Training, and working with a coach are all essential requirements.

**THE RIGHT PARTNER CHURCH** ... is the best indicator of most thriving new church plants. Evidence demonstrates that the ‘mother/daughter’ model has the best chance of success. Since the most important element a mother church brings to a new start is its DNA, we are looking for healthy mother churches.

**THE RIGHT STRATEGY** ... all new church projects must have a well thought out strategy and have stakeholder alignment and agreement.

**THE RIGHT TIME** ... in the Mississippi Conference, it is crucial to start a new church project at the right time. Starting too soon before a building boom in a particular demographic is as dangerous as starting too late. We must take into account reversals and trends in housing markets, economic conditions, availability of resources, prioritizing of investments, and other market-driven factors.

**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 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-sufficient within 3-4 years. To go into a project with only the ‘hope’ of sufficient resources down the road is short sighted.

## CHURCH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Download [full description](#) from Path1 – (<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/strategies>).

**PARTNER CHURCH/MULTIPLE “PARENT” STRATEGY:** An existing UM congregation – or, perhaps several churches come together – as an anchoring, sponsoring or parenting force in launching a new church.

**CLASSIC MISSIONARY STRATEGY (sometimes known as “Parachute Drop”):** This type of plant happens when a 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 active partnerships in place.

**MULTI-SITE EXPANSION STRATEGY:** This strategy may look like a Partner Church. However, the difference is that 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.

**CHURCH-WITHIN-A-CHURCH STRATEGY:** Many new churches will share space with other churches (both partner churches and other collegial congregations).

**THE “ELIJAH/ELISHA” STRATEGY:** This strategy involves congregations who haven’t borne much fruit for the past several years and/or who may be at the end of their natural life cycle. Churches intentionally choose to either (a) join another church and give their physical assets to the conference or (b) open their doors to a planter and launch team that takes over management of the facility to start a new congregation.

**VITAL MERGER STRATEGY:** This strategy requires merging churches to sell their buildings and relocate to a new location, worship in a neutral location from the day of the official merger, reset the new congregation’s focus to be on the mission field and begin new ministries that will reach the new mission field, receive a pastor that has been assessed and trained as a church planter, and choose a name that is not a part of the name of any of the merging churches.

**CLOSED/REOPENED FACILITY STRATEGY:** Similar to the above strategies, except there is no church left to share its facility, turn over its ministry, or merge with another congregation to create something new. The new church begins to address the needs and culture of the community population.

**HOUSE CHURCH STRATEGY:** House churches are typically small, limited to the number of people who can fit in a home or small meeting space.

**INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES (NEW MONASTIC):** Intentional Communities gather together (typically 3-12 people) with the purpose of growing spiritually, following Christ and aligning around a particular focus on social justice and acts of love, mercy, and hospitality toward others.

**THE SURPRISE BIRTH:** Sometimes, churches are born unexpectedly – church splits, a group that decides to affiliate with The United Methodist Church, a group of laity who envision a new church and proceed without permission, or a campus ministry that develops to become a congregation.

**INTEGRATED MULTI-ETHNIC PROJECTS:** This strategy results in an intentionally multi-ethnic church plant that worships as one integrated body to create a unique cultural expression and reflects all groups involved.

# SEVEN SEASONS OF CHURCH PLANTING

Download [full description](http://s3.amazonaws.com/path1/Files/7seasons_07-21-11.pdf) from Path1 –  
([http://s3.amazonaws.com/path1/Files/7seasons\\_07-21-11.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/path1/Files/7seasons_07-21-11.pdf)).

When planting new churches, we seek to help congregations grow through a series of seasons.



1. **DISCERNING:** Are you called to be a church planter or to partner a new congregation? The discernment process begins when a prospective planter (or potential partner congregation) senses God's calling to plant a new church.
2. **VISIONING:** What does it mean to cast a clear and compelling vision? Emerging and clarifying a vision that connects to the mission field and God's dreams for the people in it may arise from a need to reach a geographic area, cultural group, or specific community of people.
3. **GATHERING:** How do God's people go about gathering others to be on God's mission with them? Attracting and engaging a critical mass of people to fulfill a new church's vision requires a great deal of invitation, networking, and relationship-building.
4. **DISCIPLING:** How will we make disciples who, in turn, make disciples? Creating a culture of multiplying discipleship requires the planter to focus on leading, teaching, guiding and growing the planting team both in size and spiritual depth. Spiritual growth and leadership development are the building blocks of a healthy faith community.
5. **WORSHIPING:** What does relevant, spirit-filled worship look like? Worship is central to the church's launch and congregational launch. How we begin a church's public expression of worship requires careful planning and timing (not too soon, not too late). Worship styles vary greatly among cultural contexts, areas of the country, and age groups. Let the mission field guide your decision-making.
6. **MATURING:** What systems are needed to sustainability? Growing people while developing healthy systems for mission and ministry (leadership development, financial sustainability, structure, and discipleship) will help the church grow spiritually, multiply its mission and ministries, and prepare itself for inevitable leadership transitions.
7. **MULTIPLYING:** What can we do to ensure that multiplication remains in our church's DNA? Christ mandates churches to be healthy, grow in ministry and mission, reach new people for Christ, and reproduce. Healthy churches, like healthy organisms, reproduce and multiply – multiplying disciples, leaders, ministries and congregations – building new bridges to the community around us.

# TRAITS OF HIGH-POTENTIAL PLANTERS

Behaviors of a planter from *Church Planter's Toolkit*, by Robert Logan and Steven Ogne. (Read more [here](http://path1.s3.amazonaws.com/Files/Hi-potential_planters_10-05-10.pdf) - [http://path1.s3.amazonaws.com/Files/Hi-potential\\_planters\\_10-05-10.pdf](http://path1.s3.amazonaws.com/Files/Hi-potential_planters_10-05-10.pdf))

## Has a “visioning” capacity

- Can discern and persuasively share a vision of God’s will for the congregation
- Can articulate a pattern of ministry that expresses this vision through the work of a congregation
- Believes in God’s capacity to do great things

## Is intrinsically motivated

- Gives evidence of internal motivation, self-starting & initiation
- Persistently and positively committed to person and ministerial excellence
- Willing to work exceptionally hard

## Can create ownership of ministry

- Can help others understand and commit to vision of ministry
- Establishes a congregational identity

## Can relate to the unchurched

- Communicates and relates well outside of church culture and mentality
- Loves and knows unchurched people
- Can cope with crises faced by troubled people

## Family/Friends are supportive

- Has explicit covenant of support from family/intimate friends
- Family/friends have comprehensive understanding of extraordinary ministry
- Deliberately plans to set appropriate boundaries around personal & public expressions of ministry

## Is good at building relationships

- Displays God’s love through a comfortable compassion for others
- Can quickly accept and assimilate relationship with new or different people

## Is committed to church growth

- Understands the connections between numerical and spiritual growth
- Can operate within established time-lines for financial self-sufficiency
- Sees the church project as an expression of the Kingdom of God

## Is responsive to community

- Has affinity, understanding and love of community that is site of ministry
- Can effectively connect resources of church to spiritual needs of community
- Can guide church to discern God’s direction in meeting community needs.

## Mobilizes the giftedness of others

- Can discern and deploy others to effectively use their gifts in ministry
- Is good at working in teams
- Is good at empowering leaders

## Is flexible and adaptable

- Enjoys ambiguity and chaos
- Enjoys rapid change
- Constantly evaluates, improves and adapts ministry models
- Will do “whatever” is necessary to further the Gospel of Christ

## Can build a cohesive church body

- Can build a core group of leaders
- Can connect and include new people regularly into church body
- Understands and uses small groups well

## Is resilient

- Can experience setbacks without defeat
- Has positive self-image rooted in deep faith commitment and resources

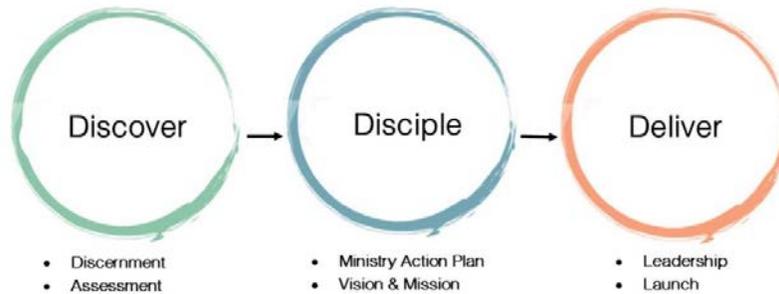
## Exercises a dynamic faith

- Understands and accepts a specific calling to church planting or church revitalization
- Prays and practices spiritual disciplines
- Has a passionate spirituality and displays an excitedly Christian lifestyle
- Is marked by expectation and hope
- Is willing to wait for God’s guidance

# PROCESS FOR BECOMING A NEW FAITH COMMUNITY PLANTER

The following steps are required:

DISCLAIMER: *By completing the new church plant process, the Mississippi Conference of the United Methodist Church is not committing to an appointment to a new church plant nor does it constitute a commitment on behalf of the potential new church planter to accept an appointment to a new church plant.*



## 1. DISCOVER (Discernment Phase):

- a. Attend a discernment event (Day of Discovery).
- b. Complete the two online surveys from Path 1 at the Day of Discovery event. (Add “Mississippi” in the Annual Conference field and do NOT check the “I don’t want my results shared with my annual conference” box.)
  - i. [Initial Planter Assessment](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/assessment) - (<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/assessment>)
  - ii. [Spiritual Gifts Assessment](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/spiritual-gifts) - (<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/spiritual-gifts>)
- c. An application to become a new faith community planter must be completed and approved by the Faith Community Formation Office before proceeding to the next step. The “[New Faith Community Planter Application](https://mississippi-reg.brtapp.com/NewFaithCommunityApplication)” (<https://mississippi-reg.brtapp.com/NewFaithCommunityApplication>) includes:
  - i. An updated resume.
  - ii. A letter from your district’s Chief Missional Strategist (District Superintendent) stating that you have communicated your desire to explore your gifts in planting a new faith community.
  - iii. Submission of a video of yourself leading and preaching at a worship service that you designed (if applicable).
  - iv. A self-reflective essay [© Dr. Robert Crossman, [www.umnewchurch.org](http://www.umnewchurch.org)] describing your call story. This one page document should include:
    1. Why do you feel called to plant a church? (How did you arrive at the conclusion that God is leading you to become a new faith community planter? What process did you go through?)
    2. Your vision, mission, core beliefs and core values.
    3. A summary of your affinity group.
    4. The church planting strategy that suits your profile. Explain why.
    5. Your optimal new church planting scenario.
    6. Concerning your possible appointment to plant a new church:
      - a. What other conclusions have you made and
      - b. What questions remain for you?

## 2. DISCOVER (Assessment Phase):

- a. Upon an invitation from the Faith Community Formation Office, complete the following assessments:
  - i. LifeWay Church Planter Assessment
  - ii. Strengthfinders Assessment
  - iii. DISC Assessment
- b. Submit to a Conference Assessment Interview (your spouse or significant other, if applicable, must be included)
- c. Complete any additional assessment/s that may be determined necessary by the assessment interview and the FCF.
- d. Non UM Persons: Prior to beginning the assessment process, it is the responsibility of a prospective planter, who holds ministerial status with a denomination or body other than the United Methodist Church, to clear their eligibility to receive an appointment or to be assigned to start a new church within the Conference with the Director of Spiritual Leadership, in consultation with the presiding Bishop of the Mississippi Conference, and the district's Chief Missional Strategist in the district in which they wish to serve.
- e. The planter, upon the recommendation of their district's Chief Missional Strategist (CMS), will attend Exponential or a similar approved event.
- f. The planter will also gather a group of key leaders (and/or core group) and attend Launchpad, at the planter's expense.

## 3. DISCIPLE (Appointment Phase):

If the assessment process deems a potential planter is ready to plant a new faith community, she/he will be placed in the "Planters Pool" from which the Cabinet makes appointments. (For details, see "Creating a Planter's Vision for a New Faith Community," pages 12-16)

- a. Create a [Ministry Action Plan \(MAP\)](#), appropriate to the model to be used (i.e., mother/daughter, parachute, etc.). Read [Your MAP Out of the Wilderness of Ministry by Dr. Marty Cauley](#). A Ministry Action Plan (MAP is a discernment tool that:
  - i. Allows you to formulate objectives, goals, and plans that will help you order your daily ministry live, thereby discovering where you are and make intentional, prayer-directed decisions about where you are called to go.
  - ii. Assists you in creating "to-do" lists, weekly plans, monthly goals, and will help you determine strategic milestones to keep you on track.
  - iii. Provides clear ways to measure progress and ministry effectiveness. The goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time sensitive (SMART).
- b. Develop Support Groups and Core Team.
- c. Attend required training as determined by the FCF Committee:
  - i. New church planter's basic training/orientation
  - ii. First 12 with Path1
  - iii. Any other training deemed necessary
- d. Pre-appointment benchmarks must be agreed upon between the planter, the church (if applicable), the district's Chief Missional Strategist (CMS) and the Director of Faith

Community Formation. Benchmarks are not only a valuable monitoring tool, they guide the planter in planting a successful new start (read more in the “Benchmarks” section, pages 16-18).

- e. The planter will be assigned a ministry coach by the Faith Community Formation Office (selected in consultation with the planter) for up to 18 months. The cost will be covered by the FCF Office as part of the budget for a new start.
- f. Funding a New Faith Community:  
The planter’s projected compensation package and housing will be determined between the planter and their district’s Chief Missional Strategist (CMS) in consultation with the District Faith Community Formation Committee and other appropriate entities as determined. All appropriate forms will be returned to the Faith Community Formation Office for approval. (See “New Faith Community Accounting Practices” section (pages 19-21) for additional guidelines.)
- g. The appointment is made and the project will begin.

**4. DELIVER (Post-Appointment Phase):** Conference support will not be sent unless all requirements are met.

- a. The Planter must sign a New Faith Community Planter Covenant Agreement acknowledging she/he has read, understands, and agrees to follow all the policies and procedures for starting a new faith community.
- b. The planter must attend regular training/fellowship events (held quarterly) with other planters.
- c. Adhere to the guidelines set down in “Creating a Planter’s Vision for a New Faith Community” (see pages 12-16):
  - i. Submit all applications, worksheets, reports as stated.
  - ii. Reporting (Accountability) to begin as soon as the appointment to plant is made (read “Document/Report” section, page 15).



# CREATING A PLANTER'S VISION FOR A NEW FAITH COMMUNITY

Each new faith community planter (and launch team) should pray, study, and share together in order to formulate the initial vision.

## 1. Develop Your Spiritual Life

- a. Begin each day with prayer, scripture and meditation.

## 2. Create an Effective Ministry Action Plan (MAP)

A [Ministry Action Plan \(MAP\)](#) (both the plan document and the graphic) must be submitted by the planter (and/or Mother Church if it is a multi-site) to the Faith Community Formation Office and their district's Chief Missional Strategist. Launching of a new faith community cannot proceed without approval by the Faith Community Formation Office and the Cabinet. Read [Your MAP Out of the Wilderness of Ministry by Dr. Marty Cauley](#) to help create a MAP for your new faith community. The MAP will include the following:

- a. Justification for a New Faith Community Start – “Why does this community (mission field) need a new church?”
- b. MissionInsite *FullInsite Report*™ of the target area [[MissionInsite: Getting Started Instructions](#)]
- c. Financial Plan – a plan for anticipated expenses to launch the new congregation. This plan should also include anticipated funds from the Conference, District, new church, and “Friends and Family” of the pastor and core/launch team members. Use the “[Budget Sample Worksheet](#)” as a guide.
- d. Initial Operating Budget – prepared by the district's Chief Missional Strategist, new church planter and planting pastor (if applicable).

## 3. Develop Support Groups

- a. Solicit pastors of surrounding churches to be your prayer partners
- b. Solicit churches to assist you (i.e., request each congregation to secure persons to pray for the new faith community start and to commit to send two or more persons as visitors to the first service).
- c. If a launch team has not been formed, recruit a launch team.
- d. Participate in district sharing and support groups.
- e. Establish relationships with other new start pastors.

## 4. Utilize Your Coach - your coach will guide you through the basics of planting, including:

- a. Naming your church
- b. Reaching your benchmarks
- c. Avoiding common mistakes
- d. Achieving what you learn at Exponential, etc.

**5. Decide Which Model of “New Places for New People” is Right For You** (see Church Development Strategies, page 6)

**6. Understand and Agree to Meet Benchmarks**

Benchmarks are not only a valuable monitoring tool, they guide the planter in planting a successful new start (read “Benchmarks” section, pages 16-18).

**7. Funding a New Faith Community**

- a. Typically, a new faith community project will receive some funding from the Annual Conference.
- b. The goal is for each new faith community to develop funding streams so they become financially self-supporting within 3-4 years. It is recommended that an offering be taken at the first session of all small groups and at the first worship, continuing forward so that the new congregation begins sharing in program/ministry and operating costs.
- c. Every dollar spent on one project is a dollar not available to another new project. Therefore, in good faith, we expect each new church and mission to strive for self-sufficiency at the earliest possible date and to use extreme fiscal responsibility in all that it does.
- d. Each new church start is unique. The cost will vary for each. Don’t fall into the trap of comparing what your church is receiving with another new church start. The goal is to successfully launch a new church as quickly and successfully as possible.
- e. Worksheets to help you get started:
  - [Budget Sample Worksheet](#)
  - [Quick Financial Estimate Worksheet](#)

**8. Be Clear about Conference Financial Support:**

The Conference through the Faith Community Formation office may provide, via a grant, funds in keeping with its resources and the needs of the new project. This grant is not guaranteed and should be perceived as seed money – which must lead to year over year growth (fruitfulness, meeting benchmarks and need) in order to continue receiving funds throughout the grant period.

Beginning twelve months from the appointment (or approval of ministry action plan) and every year thereafter until chartered, there will be a review/evaluation of the progress (see [New Faith Community Strategy Review](#)). *If at this review it is determined that sufficient progress has not been made, the conference funding may end at the conclusion of that fiscal year or conference year, depending upon when a pastoral change will occur.*

**9. Identify Your Potential Members**

- a. Study and use the *FullInsite Report*™ from MissionInsite ([www.missioninsite.com](http://www.missioninsite.com)) [[MissionInsite: Getting Started Instructions](#)].
- b. Network, network, network – become known in the community.
- c. Use social media.
- d. Have business cards made.

- e. Place a sign on site of future building or meeting place.
- f. Seek introductions to key leaders in the community. Ask what the needs are.
- g. Meet with city/county planner to find out where and what type of growth is coming to the area.
- h. Meet with the school superintendent to see what the projections are for new schools, families, etc.
- i. Visit by phone and in person all people who are interested.
- j. Use approaches such as “Random Acts of Kindness.”
- k. Set a date in late summer or early fall for a community gathering, such as a free bar-b-que, in order for people in the community to come and see what the church is all about and meet you and your leadership team. Provide an opportunity for people to register their interest.
- l. Consider using a local theater to advertise.
- m. Use direct mailings and/or door hangers to targeted audiences.
- n. Join the Chamber of Commerce and/or other civic or school group.
- o. Coach a children’s sports team.
- p. Visit the community gathering spots.

## 10. Location, Location, Location

- a. A new start shall be located in an underserved ministry area.
- b. In most instances, a new church site should be at least five (5) miles from an existing United Methodist Church (unless the existing church(s) in the area is/are not prepared or equipped to serve a new, growing, and/or changing area).
- c. Temporary Venue: a school, theater, retail space, etc. suitable for worship, child care, and if possible, Sunday school class rooms should be able to accommodate at least 200 in multiple services.
- d. Permanent Venue: a minimum of 10 buildable acres is strongly recommended. A [New Site Selection Worksheet](#) (or for an existing facility, an [Existing Facility Assessment](#)) must be completed and submitted to the Faith Community Formation Office before land is purchased (or a building/facility is selected).

## 11. Launching the New Congregation

- a. It is strongly recommended that the new congregation not be launched until you have a reasonable chance of having 200 people in attendance the first Sunday (except in low density or mission situations).
- b. The space for worship should be able to accommodate at least 300 worshippers. Space limitations will limit growth!
- c. Before launching, you need to have musicians, ushers, parking lot attendants and greeters recruited and trained. The first impression is a lasting impression – so strive for excellence in all aspects.
- d. Have a Safe Sanctuary Policy in place. See [Safe Sanctuaries in the Mississippi Conference](#) on the Conference website.
- e. Follow up! Make developing a strategy to personally contact every person who attends within 48 hours, your top priority.

- f. The *Book of Discipline* defines a mission as technically an unchartered church, however for communication purposes in the community, every new faith community start should use the word “church” as opposed to “mission.” People typically want to join a church not a mission.

## 12. Receiving Members Prior to Chartering

- a. Do not delay baptizing and transferring people who wish to be members of the new church. Develop a roll for all persons received using the *United Methodist Membership Record Book* (or a comparable online tool).
- b. When your new church starts meeting, contact the conference finance office to request a temporary GCFA (General Council on Finance & Administration) number.

## 13. Document/Report

- a. After each coaching appointment, planter will provide a brief follow-up email outlining key discussion topics and next steps, to the director of Faith Community Formation Office, the district’s Chief Missional Strategist (CMS) and their coach.
- b. Monthly check-in calls with your district’s Chief Missional Strategist (CMS) to ensure alignment to goals and to gather feedback/support as needed.
- c. Monthly progress report to the Faith Community Formation Office.
- d. Annual progress reviews/evaluations, beginning 12 months from appointment and every year thereafter, until chartered must be submitted [see [New Faith Community Strategy Review](#)]. This review will focus on:
  - The ministry areas of Evangelism, Discipleship, and Mission;
  - Planter presences in the target area;
  - Budget and administrative issues;
  - Planned future events.
- e. Vital Signs reporting to begin after the launch team meetings begin [[VitalSigns: Quick Guide for Local Churches Instructions](#)]:
  - Average Worship Attendance
  - Professions of Faith or Reaffirmation of Faith
  - Small Groups
  - Number of persons actively engaged in small groups
  - Mission Outreach (number of persons engaged in mission/outreach)
  - Offerings Received
  - Mission Giving

## 14. Take Advantage of the Connection

- a. Your district’s Chief Missional Strategist (CMS) or your District FCF Chairperson is your first contact person. Call him/her for information and to keep him/her informed.
- b. Faith Community Formation Director, Rev. Tim Thompson, [tthompson@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:tthompson@mississippi-umc.org) or Administrative Assistant, Jane Horstman, [jhorstman@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:jhorstman@mississippi-umc.org), 769-243-7072.
- c. Spiritual Leadership Director, Rev. Larry Hilliard, [lhilliard@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:lhilliard@mississippi-umc.org), 769-243-7030.

- d. Connectional Ministries Director, Rev. Vickie White, [vwhite@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:vwhite@mississippi-umc.org), 769-243-7040.
- e. Conference Senior Communications Specialist, Tamica Smith-Jeuitt, [tsmith@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:tsmith@mississippi-umc.org), 769-243-7042.
- f. Treasurer and Conference Benefits Officer, David Stotts, [dstotts@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:dstotts@mississippi-umc.org), 769-243-7020.
- g. Episcopal Office, Administrative Secretary, Donna White, [dwhite@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:dwhite@mississippi-umc.org), 769-243-7071.

**15. Share your successes** (See “Tell Your Story!” on page 22 for details.)

You have joined with the Faith Community Formation office in starting a new venture — planting a new faith community — and we want to celebrate your successes. As you begin building your ministries and doing amazing things we want you to help us tell your story through video.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Benchmarks

Benchmarks are not only a valuable monitoring tool, they guide the planter in planting a successful new start. The following benchmarks are required of all new faith community plants. In addition, each new start will have their own unique benchmarks, developed by the planter, the coach, the district’s Chief Missional Strategist and the Director of Faith Community Formation Office. Benchmarks are organized into three phases:

1. Pre-Launch
2. Launch
3. Post-Launch

### Pre-Launch

**1. Submit a Ministry Action Plan (MAP)**

A [Ministry Action Plan \(MAP\)](#) (both the plan document and the graphic) must be submitted by the planter (and/or Mother Church if it is a multi-site) to the Faith Community Formation Office and the district’s Chief Missional Strategist. Launching of a new faith community cannot proceed without approval by the Faith Community Formation Office and the Cabinet. Because the DNA of this new community of faith will be affected by the strength of this plan, the plan should be well-thought out.

**2. Marketing Plan:**

A plan to market the new faith community start must be in place (see MAP).

**3. Partnership with Faith Community Formation Office (FCF):**

- Within three (3) days of establishing a website, access codes will be provided to the Faith Community Formation Office.

- Keys to vehicles, storage units, buildings, etc., will be copied and given to the sponsoring body (district or local church under which you are appointed) within five (5) days of the planter acquiring keys.
4. **Small groups:**
    - Prior to launch (first worship service), there must be effective small groups. This will greatly enhance the infrastructure and outreach of the new church. The makeup of the small groups should be sufficient to handle the tasks associated with the launch and follow-up activities.
  5. **Other United Methodist Churches:**
    - Nearby United Methodist Churches should be consulted in planning for the new congregation and asking for their support. Other churches can assist by contributing “startup” materials and lending facilities as needed.
  6. **Meeting Place:**
    - Select an initial meeting place, capable of seating 200 people, for the congregation. A lease or other secure understanding for a period of at least one year should be obtained.
  7. **Establish a Digital Presence:**

Establishing a digital presence is critical to a new faith community’s success, especially when trying to reach young and unchurched people. Once you have created the following, be sure to share the web and email addresses with your district and FCF Office (Jane Horstman at [jhorstman@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:jhorstman@mississippi-umc.org)).

    - Create a Facebook page and/or website
    - Create at least two email addresses: a church specific one and one for yourself
    - Join Twitter, Instagram, Flickr or other sites as preferred

## Launch Benchmarks

### 1. **Worship attendance:**

The new church pastor should develop realistic expectations in conjunction with their coach, their district’s Chief Missional Strategist (or district FCF chair), the Faith Community Formation Office (FCF) and mother church (if applicable). However, there should be every reason to be confident that there will be at least 200 adult attendees in the new congregation within 3-4 years from the date of the first worship service and that the congregation will become self-supporting within this time period. And because attendance numbers are key to assessing growth and viability, they must be documented in Vital Signs.

### 2. **New Start Financial Giving Goals:**

New church starts are asked to tithe their offerings raised above conference support during their period of development. Mail tithe to the attention of Laura Rollins at:

Mississippi United Methodist Conference  
 320-A Briarwood Drive  
 Jackson, MS 39206

New Churches shall be apportioned for the first time beginning in the year after their consecration as a new congregation. When consecrated, the new church pastor must, with agreement by their district's Chief Missional Strategist, submit a timeline, to achieve payment of 100% of conference and district mission shares by the new congregation, to the Faith Community Formation Office.

### Post-Launch Benchmarks

#### 1. On-going progress reports/evaluations:

- Monthly check-in calls with your district's Chief Missional Strategist (CMS) to ensure alignment to goals and to gather feedback/support as needed.
- Meet annually (beginning 12 months from date of appointment) with their district's Chief Missional Strategist and a representative from the Faith Community Formation Office (FCF) [a [New Faith Community Strategy Review](#) must be completed].

#### 2. Weekly Missional Vital Signs Reporting [[VitalSigns: Quick Guide for Local Churches Instructions](#)]: Each week (if applicable), the new church will submit their Vital Signs Report online, beginning the week after the launch team meetings begin. If the report is not submitted online weekly, then the subsequent month's conference support will not be issued until the report is submitted.

#### 3. Church multiplication:

In order to create a culture of churches starting churches, the goal is that new churches will be capable of starting a new congregation within 7 to 10 years from the first worship service. (Read [Multiplication Dynamics](#) and [Church Planting Best Practices](#) for additional recommendations.)The following timeline is an example to use to identify and plan for the next new faith community:

- Years 2 & 3 ..... Cast vision
- Years 4 & 5 ..... Incorporate into strategic plan
- Years 6 & 7 ..... Identify potential locations
- Years 7 & 8 ..... Develop preliminary plans
- Years 9 & 10 ... Launch team recruitment to actual planting



## New Faith Community Accounting Practices

The 2009 Annual Conference referred the accounting procedures for new church starts to the Council on Finance and Administration for study. Following is the document that was agreed upon by the CFA, New Church Development committee and the maker of the referral motion. The procedures will be implemented on July 1, 2010. [As found in the *2010 Official Journal and Yearbook*, page244]

## New Places for New People Accounting Procedures

The Committee on New Church Development, the Annual Conference staff person assigned to this committee, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, the Bishop and the Cabinet have developed the following financial guidelines for New Places for New People before they become constituted churches.

New faith community plants remain under the authority of the District Superintendent serving the district in which the new plant resides. All financial audits of New Places for New People shall be included in the district audits. The appointed planter shall work directly with the District Superintendent or the District Superintendent's Designee to fulfill the financial obligations and responsibilities as detailed below until a new church is constituted according to the annual conference and Disciplinary guidelines.

1. Accountability and transparency are vital for the success of any new endeavor. Both the pre-launch and the initial application for starting a New Place for New People include a section regarding finances that must be approved by the appropriate district superintendent, the designated staff person, the chair of the committee on new church development and other designated persons. The initial annual operating budget will be prepared by the planter of the New Places for New People, the District Superintendent and the ministry coach. It is the responsibility of the district finance committee (within which the New Places for New People resides) to keep the New Places for New People within the approved budget until such time as that committee is replaced by the finance committee of the New Places for New People. All future budgets will be prepared by the finance committee of the New Places for New People which should be made up of the district superintendent, the planter, the treasurer, the finance committee chair, and other members as needed. The District Superintendent has direct oversight of this committee and the finances of the New Places for New People.
2. The treasurer, financial secretary, and committee chair of New Places for New People plants shall take on the roles as defined for the local church in the current *Book of Discipline*.
3. The treasurer shall maintain the New Places for New People books in an acceptable computerized system and provide monthly reports for all members of the finance committee. Appropriate paper trails and documentation of approval shall be developed.
4. Expenditures within the budget may be approved by the New Places for New People planter in consultation with the finance chair. Expenditures up to \$1000 may be made by the planter without the immediate approval of the district superintendent. This level of \$1000 may be adjusted in consultation with the District Superintendent, Church Planter, and Chair or designee of the chair of New Church Development. It is the responsibility of the New Places for

New People planter and the finance committee to keep the New Places for New People within the approved budget.

5. Giving records shall be maintained by the financial secretary and reported to the giving units on a quarterly basis. The financial secretary is responsible for counting the offering and depositing of all funds according to the *Discipline*.
6. Each New Places for New People shall have adequate insurance and shall obtain that coverage through the same carrier who writes the district coverage.

## Legal and Financial Protocols

For Parachute and Restart models (with no mother church) until a congregation is chartered, is a component of the district [in which the new plant resides] of the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church and has no legal standing. The related District and the Faith Community Formation Office will provide all legal oversight in matters relating to the development of ministry plans, budgeting, financial accountability policies and staff hiring. The funding provided for a new faith community start comes from grants awarded by the Faith Community Formation Office and comes primarily from apportioned mission shares. As such all monies must be treated with extreme fiscal responsibility and respect. Therefore:

1. Until public launch of worship (only with the permission of the district's Chief Missional Strategist or designee and the director of Faith Community Formation Office), the new church pastor may not open a new faith community checking account. All expenditures and deposits must be channeled through the district office in which the new plant resides.
2. A planter is not permitted to enter into any legal or financial arrangements commonly known as "Doing business as..." (i.e., the planter opening a bank account in his/her name, "doing business as: the name of the church").
3. A new faith community planter must be fiscally responsible. Therefore, if Faith Community Formation (FCF) grant monies are being spent in seeming excess, a meeting will be called between the Director of Faith Community Formation Office, the district's Chief Missional Strategist, and the planter to discuss the situation, reasons, etc. A new plan may have to be implemented.
4. A covenant agreement between the new faith community planter, the district's Chief Missional Strategist (CMS) and the Faith Community Formation Office must be signed. This covenant remains in effect until the new church is fully chartered and is no longer receiving money from the Faith Community Formation Office.
5. The new faith community planter must have a coach for at least the first 6-12 months of the project. The coach will be mutually agreed upon between the planter and the director of Faith Community Formation Office, and be paid for out of the new faith community grant. If for any reason the planter is dissatisfied with the coach, the director of Faith Community Formation Office must be contacted immediately and a mutually agreed upon new coach will be contracted.
6. All contracts, lease obligations and other financial instruments must be entered into by the sponsoring entity and the new faith community pastor.
7. If a planting pastor or lay worker holds keys to anything related to the church plant (vehicles, trailers, portable church, location venue, etc.) a working copy of each key must be given to the sponsoring entity within 30 days of the project securing keys.

8. Any large contracts and/or expenditures of over \$1000 must be pre-approved by the district's Chief Missional Strategist (CMS).
9. The name of the new faith community and its logo are owned by and considered property of the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church and/or related district or mother church, if applicable.
10. In all legal/contractual/vendor relationships, a clear relationship to the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church (or the mother church, if applicable) must be clearly expressed.
11. Any civic or local organization the new faith community planter belongs to, for which the Faith Community Formation grant pays the membership dues or fees, must express a clear relationship to the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church (or the mother church, if applicable) and the organization must be made aware that the planter's membership in all such organizations is on behalf of the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church (or the mother church, if applicable).
12. In the event a planting pastor surrenders his/her credentials and/or withdraws from the United Methodist Church, the last paycheck from the District or mother church will not be delivered until all personal and church items paid for by the Conference are returned to the District Office or the Faith Community Formation Office.
13. Any items not enumerated above should be discussed with (and approved by) your district's Chief Missional Strategist before action is taken.

## Tell Your Story!

You have joined with the Faith Community Formation office in starting a new venture – planting a new faith community (or embarking on a mission to revitalize your church or ministry) – and we want to celebrate your successes. As you begin building your ministries and doing amazing things we want you to help us tell your story through video.

As you know, a picture (video) is truly worth a 1000 words and it's no more apparent than in a video story illustrating how God is working through you in your ministries.

So if you are doing something amazing – if God is working in your life in amazing ways and you're proud of the ministry that you are doing – this is an opportunity to share your story. We want to hear how your congregation has experienced God's presence and what practices are working for your church, since receiving your grant. And there's no better way to do that than through photos and video.

Use your gifts and personality to share your story. It could be lots of images and photos of your members doing ministry, with a voiceover. It could include Glory Sightings from people (more than one) or interviews\* with people who have received the grace of God and are benefiting from your ministry. (\*Use testimonials and interviews sparingly – show your ministry in action.)

### Show, don't tell!

- How are you using the grant?
- How are people being affected?
- How has receiving the grant changed the way you are doing ministry?
- What has been accomplished?

### Here's how to share your story using video (minimal guidelines):

- Must be five minutes or less in length
- May either be video or photos with voiceover
- Copyrighted music or images that do not belong to the one submitting the video must include written permission from the copyright holder
- Every person appearing in the video must have a completed image release form on file with the Conference Office

Our goal is to share your video footage (and photos) to produce a professional video showcasing new church plants and revitalization at the Session of the Annual Conference every year.

So start capturing your stories!

Videos should be sent to Jane Horstman, administrative assistant for Faith Community Formation at [jhorstman@mississippi-umc.org](mailto:jhorstman@mississippi-umc.org) or 320-F Briarwood DR, Jackson, MS, 39206.

For more information about the Faith Community Formation Office, visit <http://www.mississippi-umc.org/faithcommunities>.