

BEST PRACTICES: FUNDING

Top Ten Effective Funding Strategies for New Church Development in Annual Conferences

1. Expect and Train New Church Pastors to Raise Funds

Set an expectation that planters will immediately begin to tithe to their churches. Also, establish a percentage of the new church's budget to be raised by the planter. Train planters how to raise these funds for their ministries.

Encourage launch team members to raise "virtue capital" by inviting friends and family to support the church's ministries. Launch teams may develop a brochure or flyer that explains the vision, mission and core values of their new church and whenever possible ask friends and family, in person, to consider making a financial commitment to their project.

2. Allocate a Percentage of the Conference Budget

Adjust the budget of the annual conference so that a percentage could be set aside and used to start new churches. Set a five-year goal of reaching a tithe. Begin at 2% in year one and increase to 4% in year two and so on until a tithe is allocated to new church development.

3. Use Funds Gained from the Sale of Properties

Consider using the funds gained from the sale of property to support new church starts. Many annual conferences have found this to be a helpful strategy when churches are moving toward closure. In addition to funding new churches the leaders of these closing congregations may see the use of the resources as their legacy to advance the kingdom.

4. Receive an Offering Each Year for New Church Starts

Encourage congregations to receive an offering for new church development on a specific Sunday each year. Churches might receive their "love" offering on the Sunday nearest to Valentine's Day, or Pentecost when we celebrate the birth of the church. In rural communities the offering might be received on Rogation or Harvest Sunday.

5. Designate an Offering at Annual Conference Session

Encourage each church in the annual conference to invite every member to contribute \$10 per year for church planting. This gift could be received prior to annual conference session and offered when a collection is taken at opening worship and designated for new church development.

6. Encourage Support from Local Church Funding Campaigns

Invite congregations that are conducting (or considering) capital stewardship programs to designate a percentage of what they raise to new church starts. Inviting congregations to do this enables them to become church-planting partners with other churches in the conference.

7. Create an Endowment through Major Donors

Ask the lead pastors of your larger congregations to suggest persons who have the heart and the financial means to create an endowment for new church starts. Develop a strategy to visit these individuals and invite their response.

8. Plan a Capital Stewardship Campaign

Consider a conference-wide stewardship campaign to create funds for new church development. Often conference-wide campaigns seek to raise funding support for more than one ministry (e.g. new church development, camping, revitalization programs for existing churches, etc.) Check out Path 1's "Best Practices for Interviewing and Selecting a Capital Stewardship Company" white paper at www.path1.org.

9. Share Resources Among Annual Conferences

Encourage annual conferences to share resources with other conferences to help them plant new churches. Some annual conferences in the country, like those devastated by natural disasters, may not have the funds to build new churches to replace displaced or newly emerging congregations. For example, the Florida Conference gave \$90,000 to the Mississippi Annual Conference to support their efforts to develop new congregations in hurricane-devastated areas.

10. Consider Ecumenical Partnerships

Consider partnerships with other denominations in a target area to pool resources together to plant a new church. This strategy may not be popular because of the difficulty it presents in the appointive process but is nonetheless a proven strategy worth considering. For example, Hot Metal Bridge, in Pittsburgh, PA, is a partnership between the United Methodist and Presbyterian Church (USA) denominations. The Village @ Northwest Ohio is a planting partnership of The United Methodist Church and United Church of Christ.

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