

Statistical Update on Quadrennial Goals – July 15, 2011

Report from Rev. Gary A. Shockley, Executive Officer, Path 1 New Church Starts Division at GBOD

National Goals for the Denomination

The United Methodist Church established the following goals for this quadrennium related to new church development in the United States: **1,000** potential planters assessed and equipped; and **650** new churches planted by the end of 2012. This brief report answers two frequently asked questions:

1. “How many new churches has The United Methodist Church planted from 2008 to the present?”
2. “How many potential planters has The United Methodist Church assessed and equipped from 2008 to the present?”

How Many Churches?*

The United Methodist Church has planted **440 churches** (of the projected goal of 650) in the United States since January of 2008, which represents **58% growth** over 2004-2007, when the denomination planted **278 churches**.

It is of interest to note (based on the most current GCFA and developer-confirmed data available) that the **close rate** for new churches since 2008 has been **9% (or 39 of 440 churches)**. That rate was **26% (72 of 278 churches)** for the years 2004-2007, which means we are currently planting at a rate of **9.5 new churches per month** (compared with 4.23 new church starts per month from 2004-2007).

* To accurately respond to this question our office reviewed information from several sources including GCFA, our 2007-2009 congregational developers' surveys, information about new churches previously submitted for Path 1's new church map, and our most recent query of annual conferences. As of this date (7-15-11) 75% of annual conferences have responded to our inquiry. As we receive more information we will update numbers accordingly.

How Many Planters?

1332 (more than the projected 1,000) prospective planters have been assessed through Path 1's online assessment tools (English and Spanish) and through assessment processes in jurisdictions and annual conferences.

854 potential planters have been equipped through a multitude of local, national and regional training events (e.g., New Church Leadership Institute, School of Congregational Development, Lay Missionary Planting Network, etc.).

What do the numbers suggest?

Following these trends we can surmise...

If nothing changes in our current planting rate (and based on our current rate reported – roughly 130 churches per year) we will plant somewhere between **500 and 550 new churches** this quadrennium. However, as we are now working in partnership with many annual conferences, helping them to develop more effective and culturally appropriate systems for new church development, we expect this rate to increase before the end of 2012.

The church planting strategies represented in the numbers include:

- **Conference Start** – conference decided that it needed a church in a certain geographical area and had no healthy existing United Methodist church willing or able to serve as partner
- **Connectional “Parachute Drop” Projects** – planter appointed to a target area to start a new church without an established team or relationships in the area; some conference/district financial support offered
- **Partner Church Projects** – traditional mother/daughter or multiple parent/partner church plants
- **Multi-site Projects** – an existing church reaches and disciples a new community, primarily at a site other than the original campus; includes launch of second campus, off-site worship, etc.
- **“Elijah/Elisha” Projects** – “passing the mantle” (resources, etc.) from an established church to a new plant; includes examples of when one congregation ends and something new starts in its place
- **Vital Mergers** – two or more churches closing and merging to become a new church start to better reach the mission field
- **Church-Within-a-Church** – established church starts a new church; often to reach a different language group or generation
- **Non-traditional** – options such as new monastic communities, campus ministries becoming congregations, house/cell church (family-sized, rapidly multiplying church that seeks to replicate the apostolic pattern of first-century churches), etc.
- **Surprise Birth Projects** – sometimes, churches are born unexpectedly because a church splits, a group decides to affiliate with The United Methodist Church, laity envision a new church and proceed without asking permission, or a campus ministry develops a desire to become a congregation in the fullest sense of the *Book of Discipline*.
- **Lay-led Projects** – includes both licensed local pastors and laity assigned to plant
- **Part-time Projects** – planting projects with bi-vocational or part-time planter
- **Racial-Ethnic Projects** – predominantly non-Anglo congregations, including multi-ethnic church plants (may also be included in Church-Within-a-Church category above)

Path 1 defines New Church Starts as having these characteristics:

- Are theologically Wesleyan
- Worship frequently and are sacramental
- Have an effective system for developing disciples
- Teach and practice biblical stewardship
- Are missional and work toward community transformation
- Receive new members
- Will embed multiplying DNA in all ministries and will plant other new churches in their first decade (ideally in 3-5 years)
- Will remain connected and accountable to The United Methodist Church

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