

Report of the WCA Church Multiplication Task Force to the Global Council of the Wesleyan Covenant Association

Executive Summary

Task Force's Commission: to develop a high-level strategy for catalyzing a global movement of multiplying churches in the Wesleyan tradition.

Vision: Our strategic plan aims to start 3,500 new churches globally in 7 years.
To start fewer means that the denomination will shrink and decline.

The Task Force's Guiding Principles

1. Empower catalytic, visionary leaders.
2. The local church owns the church planting task.
Local churches (not denominations) reproduce local churches.
3. We will encourage working as networks.
Networking spreads out the risk, multiplies encouragement, and amplifies resources.
4. A multiplication mindset - as evidenced by a passion for evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development on all levels.
5. Encourage multiple forms of new churches.

A Strategic Plan

1. Establish a denomination-wide prayer base
2. Develop a multiplication mindset
3. Discover church planters
4. Develop church planters.
5. Fund church plants
6. Provide post-birth support and oversight
7. Start Ethnic and Multi-Ethnic Churches in the U.S.
8. Respond to "Stranded" UMs
9. Encourage churches to form networks to plant new churches
10. Foster Global movements

Recommendations

1. Establish General and Conference-level church planting offices to execute and expand the above plan.

A church planting movement will be the result of a cooperative effort between Local church, Annual Conference, and General leadership.

2. Make sure Church Multiplication Directors are high on the organizational chart.

If church multiplication gets buried several layers down the org chart, needed synergy and influence will be missing.

3. Designate 1% of local churches' total budgets for church planting.

4. Adopt a polity that attracts and empowers church planters.

For example, streamline the credentialing process in order to make it accessible for lay persons, bi-vocational planters, and effective planters from other traditions.

5. Prioritize ethnic and multi-racial churches in the U.S.

As the U.S. becomes "minority white" by 2045, we must reach persons of color.

6. Prioritize new plants in the Western Jurisdiction

7. Announce the start of new churches on the day the new denomination is legally established.

Full Report

The Church Multiplication Task Force met from February through September 2020. The members were Steve Cordle, chair; John Kenney, David Walters, David Warren, Ted Smith, Patti Nemazie, Bryan Collier, Louis Carr, and Ben Ingretson.

Consultants reviewing the plan: Gary Rohrmayer – President, Converge MidAmerica; Patrick O'Connell – Global Director, New Thing Network.

Task Force's Commission

The purpose of the Task Force was to develop a high-level strategy for catalyzing a global movement of multiplying churches in the Wesleyan tradition.

There is no biblical command to plant churches. However, there are sound reasons to prioritize church multiplication.

First, in the Great Commission Jesus commands us to go make disciples,

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

- Matthew 28:19-20

In the New Testament, we see that when disciples make new disciples, a new church is the natural by-product. Studies show that new churches reach unreached people more efficiently than do existing churches.¹ Therefore, church planting is an effective means for _____ Church to fulfill our mission of making disciples.

A second reason to prioritize church multiplication is that it is essential to the growth of the new denomination. Put simply, if we want to see _____ Church grow numerically, we must plant new churches. Just as a local church grows as it multiplies new groups for new people, denominations grow as they multiply new churches for new people. Studies suggest that a denomination must start new churches at a rate

¹ *New Churches More Effective at Reaching Unchurched* – by Lisa Cannon Green; *Facts and Trends* December 8, 2015

equivalent to 3% of its total number of congregations per year in order to maintain current membership. To grow, it needs to start more.

Church multiplication is also part of our heritage. Because early Methodists had a passion to see people won to Christ and transformed by the Spirit's power, at one time they were planting one church per day in the United States.

As new Methodists committed to fulfilling the Great Commission, church multiplication will shape the _____ Church's future.

This report outlines a path toward planting two or three churches per day around the world. Our goal is for local churches to start churches that start churches, and so multiply into a movement that will spread scriptural holiness across the globe.

Vision

Our strategic plan aims to start 3,500 new churches globally in 7 years.

We arrived at that numerical goal as follows:

We assumed that the Protocol for Separation will pass and that approximately 20%, or 6,000, of the United Methodist Churches in the United States will opt to join the new denomination. If just one out of four of those churches act on our strategies and begin a new work over a seven-year span, then we would plant 1,500 new churches in the United States. Without knowing how many churches from the Central Conferences will join the new denomination, estimates of future plants are less firm. However, the Central Conferences of the UMC have been starting about 350 new churches per year, and we believe that those joining with the _____ Church will be able to match that number, resulting in approximately 2,000 churches during this time frame.

These targets are not wishful thinking. Not only can they be achieved, but they must in order for the _____ Church to grow (see preceding section "The Task Force's Commission".) To start fewer churches means that the denomination will shrink and membership decline.

This kind of multiplication movement will require not only focused effort, it will demand different values, thinking, and practices than those of the UMC. This plan offers some steps toward a change of culture.

The Task Force's Guiding Principles

A thriving church planting movement is built on the foundation of a biblical and Spirit-empowered ministry. The Task Force's recommendations are based on the following principles:

1. Empower catalytic, visionary leaders.

Churches are planted by apostolic leaders, not organizations. Therefore, we will create a culture that empowers church planting leaders. Local churches and pastors will be given permission to plant where and when they feel directed by the Lord, and governance structures are geared toward equipping, empowering, and releasing.

We can organize either for growth or for control, but not both. We choose to organize for growth.

2. The local church owns the church planting task.

In movements, disciples make disciples, and local churches (not denominations) reproduce local churches. This is a significant point of departure from UMC polity and practice.

In order to become a movement, church multiplication must be a cooperative effort between leadership that is:

- Local (Local Church)
- Regional (Annual Conference)
- National (Denomination)

Each level has an important role to play. Crucial decisions should be pushed toward the most local level, though the denomination can provide broad parameters, strategy, and guidance.

Churches of all sizes can be involved in the multiplication task. Small- and medium-sized churches can be at least as effective as large churches in planting new churches.

3. We will encourage working as networks.

“Networks are the backbone of movements.”

- Sam Stephens (started 100,000 new churches in India)

Methodism’s connective nature means that the concept of networking is not foreign to us. However, voluntary networks are less familiar. We will encourage the voluntary association and cooperation of local leaders and churches in the mission of church planting. Networking allows a church that could not plant on its own to do so with three or four other churches. Networking spreads out the risk, multiplies encouragement, and amplifies resources. Networking builds unity, which God blesses.

4. A multiplication mindset.

A church planting movement requires a denomination-wide culture of multiplication. Without a shared value of multiplication of disciples and groups, church multiplication will not thrive. A multiplication mindset is evidenced by a passion for evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development on all levels. We must resist the mindset that advocates focusing on “growing stronger” before multiplying. Health comes from pursuing both aims simultaneously, as they are mutually reinforcing.

5. Encourage multiple forms of new churches.

The Task Force does not advocate a specific model of church planting; we encourage them all. The three main categories of church plants required for a comprehensive multiplication strategy are:

- a. “Traditional” church plants
- b. Culturally-targeted and first-generation church plants
- c. Unconventional: micro-churches, multi-housing, online, collegiate.

Because culture is constantly and rapidly changing, *innovation* must be a high value in our church planting efforts.

For the purposes of this report, we define a church as a congregation of believers under the direction of a credentialed full-time or part-time pastor that is fulfilling the denominational definition of a church.² Thus, an individual house church might not meet the criteria, while a network of house churches may. A new campus of an existing church technically may not be defined as a new church because a multisite church is one church in multiple locations. However, because the campus is a new congregation under direction of a credentialed pastor, we view it as a new work for the purposes of this report.

A Strategic Plan

The Task Force's strategic plan for church multiplication is a broad framework. We assume others will build it out in more detail.

Each element of the plan consists of a goal and some proposed steps toward that goal. The report concludes with some recommendations on making the plan a reality.

1. Establish a denomination-wide prayer base

* **Goal:** *Create a denomination-wide team of intercessors who will pray for new church multiplication.*

* **Some proposed steps:**

Recruit and train the following volunteers:

a. A National Multiplication Prayer Leader: will build and resource a national team made up of regional prayer leaders. Those volunteers would generate prayer movements in their regions that would pray for new planters, new parent churches, and emerging church plants.

b. Regional Social Media Platform(s): Volunteer(s) can establish national Social Media prayer pages that could serve as model for regional platforms.

c. Yearly Prayer Summit: focused on the multiplication of leaders, churches, and new followers of Jesus Christ.

2. Develop a multiplication mindset

* **Goal:** *Challenge each church to multiply within five years.*

* **Some proposed steps:**

a. Create an initial WCA cohort of 25 influencers to participate in Exponential's *Multipliers Learning Community*. (In process)

² While we celebrate the Fresh Expressions movement and value its focus on reaching the unchurched, we concluded that it functions as a ministry of an existing congregation rather than as a strategy for producing a new stand-alone church.

Those who have been part of the UMC for decades have learned to exist within a culture that is not multiplication-oriented. In order to grow, the new denomination will need to make a culture shift. Church planting momentum will become viral when the multiplication of disciples, groups, and churches becomes a widely-shared value. We need leaders to change their scorecards from addition to multiplication.

- b. Frequently offer a seminar on “Churches Planting Churches”, as well as an annual Evangelism-focused event.
- c. Make heroes of church planters by making them visible at District and Annual Conference meetings.
- d. Establish a denomination-wide Annual Church Multiplication Weekend
- e. Offer the *Catalyst Community* workshops to spur churches to multiply disciples, groups, and churches (We have a verbal agreement from Dave Ferguson and New Thing Network to use this material.)
- f. Offer periodic workshops on multi-site churches and starting a campus.
- g. Equip parenting congregations to increase their “multiplication quotient” using a Values Assessment and by working with parent church coaches.
- h. Challenge each newly planted church to reproduce within its first 4 years.
- i. Provide “New Start Incubator” events where potential parent church leaders can design/develop a project for peer review.

3. Discover church planters

*** Goal:** *Within 5 years, be discovering and recruiting 750 potential church planters per year, globally.*

Churches are planted with those who have apostolic gifting from God. Though God is calling some, we cannot wait for planters to show up; we must actively seek and discover them. We need a large number of planters. Our goal is quantity, not just quality.

*** Some Proposed steps:**

- a. Create a “Farm System” that starts with all church members hearing about church planting as a potential call. Work with leaders of youth and college ministries to help their students discover church planting. Point them to first steps inquiry opportunities.
- b. Establish an annual Church Multiplication Sunday in local churches that celebrates new works and the chance to explore answering the call.
- c. Presentations about church planting at District and Annual Conference meetings.
- d. Partner with college ministries (such as Wesley Foundation or its successors) to challenge and recruit graduates to commit to church planting.
- e. Establish an Annual Call Conference
- f. Promote lay people and Local Pastors starting churches
- g. Make the opportunity known at seminaries.
- h. Equip local churches to establish church planting residencies.
- i. Encourage local church leaders to look for unaffiliated leaders in their regions.

4. Develop church planters.

* **Goal:** *each planter will be assessed, trained and coached.*

The odds of a plant succeeding increase greatly if the planter is assessed, trained, and coached.

* **Some proposed steps:**

A. Assess each planter.

1. Develop an online “assessment pathway” that screens candidates.

Qualified individuals are then invited to a consultation and potential invitation into an Assessment Center.

2. Develop our own assessment process and to offer it in multiple locations. When we run our own centers, we develop relationships with the new planters, and we also strengthen ownership of shared denominational values.

Assessment must be appropriate to the model the planter intends to pursue. For example, a house-church planter will need a much different assessment than a large-launch model.

National leadership can provide assessment centers in multiple locations and times, and provide minimum standards for regional centers. Large Annual Conferences may be able to offer their own assessment centers.

3. We might also explore SEND Network’s post-assessment “Orientation” program.

B. Train each church planter.

1. In the U.S., utilize training available from sources appropriate to the model chosen by the planter.

- *Dynamic Church Planting International* material is a tool for principle-centered training, especially outside U.S.

- Partner with *Ecclesia Network’s* Context-Based Church Planter Training.

- Provide a menu of model-specific training, including online church planting.

2. Annual Conferences can provide regional cohorts for peer learning among planters.

3. Promote and resource effective local churches to develop Church Planting Residencies.

C. Coach each planter.

1. Train experienced church planters to be coaches. (These coaches will be part of the _____ Church.)

- Coaching needs to include a Planter Care component that includes care for planting families.

2. Coaching is best offered through Annual Conferences, but the General Office should set minimum standards

5. Fund church plants

* **Goal:** *Each plant will have adequate funding.*

Investing a lot of money in a project doesn't guarantee that it will succeed. However, when the right team is in the right place at the right time, money accelerates effectiveness.

*** Some proposed steps:**

- a. Apportion each local church 1% of their total giving to be used for church planting.
- b. Fund plants through:
 - National and Annual Conference funding (10-50%)
 - Local/Mother Church (1-25%)
 - Church planter raised funds (25-50%)
- c. The National and Annual Conference funding comes from apportionment giving. Local Church funding can come from capital campaigns. Church Planter Training will include modules on how to raise funds personally.
- d. Designate proceeds from the sale of closed buildings for use in church planting.
- e. Develop a framework for determining the duration and amount of a plant's outside funding that comes from the denomination, and determine who makes the decision.
- f. All checks to church plants are written by the sponsoring local church (even when funds come from the denomination)
- g. Determine how funding models will scale globally so that funding decisions are appropriate to each area.
- h. Annual Conferences and General level create an "R & D" budget for innovative planting forms.

6. Provide post-birth support and oversight

*** Goal:** *Each new church is part of an Annual Conference and denominational connection that nurtures its development.*

*** Some proposed steps:**

- a. Annual Conference and Denominational leadership provide training for churches that are less than 5 years old.
- b. Establish criteria for continuing denominational support.
- c. Recruit and train coaches.
- d. Train District Superintendents in overseeing church planters.

7. Start Ethnic and Multi-Ethnic Churches in the U.S.

*** Goal:** *Reach the growing non-white populations of the U.S. by starting single-ethnicity and multi-ethnic churches. (Other nations will contextualize for their populations)*

*** Some proposed steps:**

- a. Seek to discover non-white planters by:
 - recruiting from new denominations joining the movement
 - recruiting from AME and other

- invite Latin/South American-based Wesleyan denominations to send missionary planters (for example, from the Venezuela Methodist Church); and Asian Churches and African Churches to do the same.

b Encourage local churches to share their facility with independent ethnic congregations which might affiliate with the denomination.

c. Encourage local churches consider merging with a church(es) of another ethnicity.

d. Let language groups become Districts. For example, as new Latino churches are planted, consider giving Hispanic leaders oversight of churches which use Spanish as their first language. The resulting non-geographic District would be messy organizationally, but likely will result in reaching more people and more new churches.

8. Respond to “Stranded” UMs

* **Goal:** Establish a process by which “stranded” post-separation groups will become new churches.

*** Some proposed Steps:**

a. The General Church Multiplication Office create a process for determining a group’s potential as a new congregation, with the determining factor being the group’s outward-focused vision.

The General Office also create a training that helps groups think like a new church.

b. The Annual Conference Church Multiplication office meets with the groups to determine suitability as a new congregation.

c. Annual Conferences consider forming new churches by bringing together clusters of evangelicals leaving several psUMCs in a given area.

9. Encourage churches to form networks to plant new churches

* **Goal:** *Identify Apostolic pastoral leaders and help them create planting networks.*

*** Some proposed steps:**

a. Utilize New Thing’s *Catalyst Community* training to create local networks of 4-6 churches that partner to plant. (We have a verbal agreement with *New Thing Network* to use their material, which has been effective in over forty countries worldwide.)

10. Foster Global movements

* **Goal:** **Each global zone to have their own multiplication champion networked to the General body.**

*** Some proposed steps:**

a. Identify a church planting champion in each world zone:

- North America
- Africa
- Europe
- Central/South America

- Asia

b. Connect these leaders periodically for mutual resourcing, visioning, and encouragement.

c. Collaborate with Global Missional Partnerships Team in formulating these strategies.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Establish General and Conference-level church planting offices to execute and expand the above plan.

Our goal is to start a large number of churches. This will require some staff.

A church planting movement will be the result of a cooperative effort between Local church, Annual Conference, and General leadership. Each has a role to play, but those roles must not be confused.

Because the local church needs to own the planting task, Annual Conference and General Church leaders must see their role as encouraging, equipping and empowering local church leadership. Decisions must be pushed down to the most local level possible. This will be reflected in fund allocation.

A Suggested Approach to Structure and Staffing

1. General Level:

The main roles of a General church multiplication office are:

1. Convene the right people for the right reasons
2. Set Standards – for training, assessing, coaching, certify residency programs
3. Platform people who are doing what we hope everyone will do (make heroes of the right people)

General Office personnel may consist of:

a. *General Church Multiplication Director*: oversees the work and staff on the denominational level. The primary focus is to resource Annual Conference C.M. Directors (train the trainers). Staff would build out slowly, as needed and as the right persons emerged for the roles. Staff roles will include:

b. *Communications Staff*: to share the stories of church multiplication (make heroes of the right people), reinforce the culture of multiplication, and promote opportunities for planting. Assure quality and consistency of message and values.

c. *Administrative Support Staff*

The following General staff roles may start as part-time, or roles may be bundled in various configurations for a full-time position when warranted.

- * *Training Staff*: Oversee content and execution of training process.
- * *Coaching Staff*: Oversee standards and resourcing of Annual Conferences
- * *Assessment Staff*: Oversee content and execution of assessment process.
- * *Recruitment Staff*: Shape strategies for discovering new church planters

2. Annual Conference Level:

a. *Annual Conference Church Planting Director*: oversee the regional level of the church planting task. Their focus will be encouraging local churches to multiply, connecting planters to coaches, deliver training and assessment. They will also manage funding for the region.

b. *Administrative Support Staff*

3. (Helpful, if not immediate): *Zone Church Multiplication Director*: This leader will network the Annual Conference church planting directors within in a given continental zone (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America) for the purposes of encouragement, sharing best practices, and strategic development. This role could be filled by an Annual Conference Church Multiplication Director as an additional or volunteer duty.

Recommendation #2: Make sure Church Multiplication Directors are high on the organizational chart.

To structure to accomplish the denomination's stated priority on planting, an Annual Conference Church Multiplication Director should report directly to the Bishop. Similarly, the General Church Multiplication Director should be part of the highest decision-making body.

Almost every decision a denomination makes affects church planting. Church multiplication is an outgrowth of congregational and denominational vitality and culture. If church multiplication gets buried several layers down the org chart, synergy and influence will be missing.

Recommendation #3: Designate 1% of local churches' total budgets for church planting.

Church planting takes money. Make church multiplication a part of the apportionment giving from churches. The Funding goes to support National and Annual Conference office operations and to serve as seed money for church plants.

Recommendation #4: Adopt a polity that attracts and empowers church planters.

A church (or denomination) cannot be organized for control and growth at the same time.

We need to plant a lot of churches, so let us organize for that goal.

"If local leaders are given permission to plant where and when they feel directed by the Lord, and governance structures are weighted toward equipping, empowering, and releasing, you will plant a lot more churches."³

One example: we urge the new *Doctrine and Discipline* offer a streamlined process of credentialing in order to make it accessible for lay persons, bi-vocational planters, and effective planters from traditions and cultures for whom acquiring an MDiv. will be a barrier. Make theological alignment and effectiveness the primary criteria for receiving and retaining credentials.

Recommendation #5: Prioritize ethnic and multi-racial churches in the U.S.

³ *Leading Church Multiplication*, by Tom Nebel and Steve Pike. Church Smart Resources, 2014

The United States will become “minority white” by 2045. Hispanics will be 25% of the population and blacks 13%.⁴ To reach the nation, our denomination must reach persons of color. One of the best ways to do that is to start multi-racial and ethnic churches.

We urge each global zone to strategize and mobilize to reach the unreached people groups in its jurisdiction.

Recommendation #6: Prioritize new plants in the Western Jurisdiction

From 2010-2018, the general population within the Western Jurisdiction grew from 70 million to 76 million. During that time, membership of the WJ of the UMC dropped from 365,000 to 312,000.⁵ Therefore, planting new churches in what is now the Western Jurisdiction must be a priority for _____ Church.

Some healthy local churches in the West may be already dreaming of multiplying. The Annual Conference church multiplication offices will come alongside to assist them.

The General church and an Annual Conference can also provide initiative in the West. Steps can include the steps listed in #3 of the Strategic Plan, plus:

1. Challenge and resource healthy local churches in the West to begin a new congregation.

2. The Annual Conference can discover and deploy church planters to start churches in the West.

Even now, God is calling leaders to plant in the West. We need to identify them. Some of the ways to do that may include:

- a. Our first priority should be to identify leaders who are living in the region. They will have the highest likelihood of succeeding because they have absorbed the culture and know their communities best.

- b. Recruit planters out of seminaries and colleges, especially those in the West (e.g.: Fuller seminary, Azusa Pacific, and others) Asbury Seminary’s church planting program can be another source of leaders.

- c. Connect with independent ethnic church leaders and networks (language groups, nationality groups). Make known the opportunity to affiliate and/or plant with the new denomination.

- d. Recruit at church planting conferences like Exponential. Become program sponsors and presenters, where possible.

- e. Hold some of the Annual Call Conferences (see #3) in the West.

- f. Recruit online.

3. Seek out planters and plants who are unaffiliated.

There will be non-denominational planters who will be open to affiliating with the _____ Church.

⁴ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/>

⁵ *UMC Membership Growth and Decline Relative to Population; UM & Global*
<http://www.umglobal.org/2019/05/umc-membership-growth-and-decline.html>

Recommendation #7: Announce the start of new churches on the day the new denomination is legally established.

On the day that the new denomination is officially formed (after General Conference), announce that following weekend new congregations in North America, Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia will be holding their launch services.

This will help shape the values, self-image, and mission of the new denomination. It will be an unmistakable message to all that we are intent on reaching the world and spreading scriptural holiness across the globe.

Though we will not have an official church planting office or structure, this goal is achievable if we start soon.