



A Strategy for Church Planting in the Heartland Conference

Introduction

This paper is written in response to the 2025 Annual Conference session which asked for a group to develop a church planting strategy. This request also implied that a funding strategy would be proposed as well. This paper has five sections as listed in the following Table of Contents. The first section develops a strategy for church planting which is based upon a vision for multiplication. It is based upon the model found in the New Testament of churches planting churches and is reinforced by John Wesley's strategies of having societies, classes, and bands. The next three sections deal with three models of church planting: satellite campuses, house churches, and pioneer churches. These models encourage all sizes of churches in various contexts to plant churches. The fifth section is a plan for funding new churches. This funding plan allows everyone to be part of planting new churches. It too focuses on the impact of multiplication as it is based upon the power of matching grants.

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Heartland Conference Church Planting Strategy

A Vision for Multiplication

Wesleyan Foundations and Core Philosophy

The Heartland Conference of the Global Methodist Church is committed to planting churches in the biblical and Wesleyan tradition: through discipleship, multiplication, and the mobilization of lay leaders and pastors. As a movement, we exist to **make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness across the globe**. In the Heartland Conference, one of our values is the Pursuit of One More; we will pursue the Great Commission. We will pursue one more person for Jesus, one more pastor to be raised up, equipped, and sent out, one more congregation to be resourced and mobilized for Kingdom impact, and one more church to be planted. To that end, it is vital we have a clear church planting strategy for the Heartland Conference that holds to our values while also returning to our Wesleyan roots.

We believe the most faithful and effective approach to church planting is one that mirrors the **New Testament** and early **Methodist movement**: churches planting churches. This model does not rely on centralized bureaucracy or large financial grants but on faithful leaders, empowered laity, and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The role of the Heartland Conference is to provide **training, coaching, encouragement, and accountability**—not to be the primary planter or funder. Our goal is to raise up **Level 4 and 5 churches**¹ that multiply leaders and churches rather than focusing solely on church addition.

Three Multiplication Models for Church Planting

1. Satellite Campuses: Church-Led Regional Expansion

Definition: A healthy Level 3 or higher church launches a second campus in a nearby town or region, supported by a trained core team and resources from the parent church.

Key Characteristics:

- A **launch team of at least 25 committed, tithing members**.
- Team members sign a covenant of presence, prayer, service, witness, and financial support. Some Launch teams may commit to a set period of time such as one year or 18 months.
- Parent church provides spiritual leadership, governance support, and systems training.
- The parent pastor may rotate preaching and oversight for a season so that local leadership can receive the vision and culture (DNA) of the sponsoring church and lead pastor.

¹ From Hero Maker published by Exponential.

- **Prior to launch, training for the entire launch team** is essential in providing and maintaining healthy DNA.

Ideal For: Churches with leadership depth, a multiplying mindset, committed laity, and proximity to underserved areas.

Heartland Values in Action: *Wesleyan Way, Resource Churches, Servant Leadership, Intentional Connection, Pursuit of One More*

2. House Church Model: Grassroots, Lay-Led Gospel Communities

Definition: Small groups of laypeople begin gathering weekly for worship and discipleship in a home, supported and overseen by a sponsoring church.

Key Characteristics:

- Lay-led and non-pastor dependent.
- Reflects **early Methodist Class Meetings**, which fueled the rapid growth of Methodism without requiring clergy in every location.
- The sponsoring pastor serves as a **circuit rider**, checking in regularly to provide spiritual care, accountability, and sacramental leadership.
- Sponsoring church offers:
 - 501(c)(3) covering and financial systems.
 - Leadership coaching and biblical training.
 - Missional encouragement and vision alignment.

Goal: Over time, the house church may:

- Become a part of a network of house churches
- Become a satellite campus of its sponsor church or
- Grow into a fully chartered autonomous congregation,

Ideal For:

- Churches with 6-12 members in nearby towns with a heart for reaching the unreached.
- A church who has two or more individuals to send to a neighboring town to start a new house church who do not live in that community. This type of house church model would need to find a “Person of Peace” as found in Luke 10:5-6. This Person of Peace may be an individual who opens their home to meet in or a business owner (such as a restaurant) who allows the group to meet there.

Heartland Values in Action: *Wesleyan Way, Resource Churches, Servant Leadership, Intentional Connection, Pursuit of One More*

3. Pioneer Church Model: Team-Based New Starts

Definition: A church plant that is launched when there is **not** a church near enough to send a group of 25 or more committed lay members. A church, group of churches, and/or a district partner with the planter and any additional team members.

Key Characteristics:

- Partner-based approach, not solo planter dependent.
- Sponsored by one church or a **district-wide collaboration** of churches combining people and resources.
- Receives training, equipping, and coaching from the Conference and partner networks prior to and during planting.
- Strong emphasis on sustainability as soon as possible since there are no long-term grants available.

Ideal For: Churches or districts called to reach strategic areas where there is not a strong GMC presence.

Heartland Values in Action: *Wesleyan Way, Resource Churches, Servant Leadership, Intentional Connection, Pursuit of One More*

Role of the Conference: Equipping and Encouragement

Training and Equipping

- **The Awaken Network** (theawakennetwork.com). A comprehensive training system for new church leaders and sponsors.
- **The River Network** (therivernetwork.org): A comprehensive training system for new church leaders and sponsors.
- **Planter's Field** (plantersfield.org): An online platform for self-paced church planter training.
- **Exponential Multiplier Learning Communities** (exponential.org): For churches shifting toward Level 4/5 multiplication and lay leadership mobilization.
- Annual training events and conference workshops on:
 - Evangelism and outreach
 - Discipleship pathways
 - Governance and administration
 - Lay leadership development

Sponsoring Congregations

A sponsoring congregation plays a vital role in supporting new churches:

- Provides **spiritual oversight, financial systems, and leadership support**.
- Champions prayer and mission connection.
- Appoints a **point leader or pastor** to serve as circuit rider or launch partner.
- In coordination with the central coordinator of the church planting team, each new plant may be paired with a **seasoned mentor or coach** for mentorship and accountability who:
 - Meets monthly for spiritual encouragement and check-ins.
 - Reviews preaching, discipleship, governance, and outreach systems.
 - Offers twice-yearly onsite visits for evaluation and encouragement.
- Encouraged to build relationships, provide training, and celebrate shared mission.

Sponsoring churches are selected not simply by size, but by **vision and willingness**. At least two churches in every district are encouraged to become sponsoring churches to help fulfill our multiplication vision.

Heartland Values in Action: *Wesleyan Way, Resource Churches, Servant Leadership, Intentional Connection, Pursuit of One More*

Strategic Oversight

(To be developed separately for post-launch assessments and categorization of plants.)

Vision Goals: 2026–2029

- **Each district plants at least one church** in the next 3 years.
- **10% of churches in every district** actively serve as sponsors.
- **5+ satellite campuses** launched by 2028.
- **10+ house churches** initiated in rural or under-churched areas.
- **Every church plant contributes to mission and future church planting** from day one.

Conclusion: A Movement of Multiplication

The Heartland Conference commits to being a **movement of multiplication** that raises up leaders and sends out churches to make disciples of Jesus Christ who spread scriptural holiness across the globe. Through biblical models, Wesleyan practices, and Spirit-empowered vision, we trust God to use this network of churches to awaken communities and bring the lost into the family of God. **Let us not merely build churches—let us unleash a movement.**

Satellite Campus Model

Definition

As defined in the book Hero Maker by Exponential, a healthy Level 3 or higher church launches a second campus in a nearby town or region, supported by a trained core team and resources from the sponsoring church.

Key Characteristics

- A launch team of 25 or more committed tithing members
- Team members sign a covenant of presence, prayer, service, witness and financial support. Some launch team members may commit for a specific time such as one year or 18 months.
- Sponsoring church provides spiritual leadership, governance support, and systems training in areas such as discipleship, hospitality, etc.
- The lead pastor may rotate preaching and oversight for a season so that local leadership can receive the vision and culture (DNA) of the sponsoring church and lead pastor.
- Prior to launch of the Satellite Church, training for the entire launch team is essential in providing and maintaining healthy DNA.

Goal: By providing resources and people a sponsoring church seeks to significantly increase the Christian influence in a neighboring town or region. The impact of the Satellite Church Model is to reach more people more quickly, and help disciples to make disciples.

Ideal For: Churches with leadership depth, a multiplying mindset, committed laity, and proximity to underserved areas.

Effective Strategies for Satellite Campuses

- A pastor and/or lay leadership who grew up in the community and/or who currently live in the community increases the effectiveness of the satellite ministry. If the satellite has this type of leadership, they are years ahead in building relationships and in their knowledge of the community.
- If indigenous leadership is not available, then it is possible to overcome this by becoming a student of the community to learn as much as possible as quickly as possible. A great tool for this is Mission Insite. This demographic and psychographic service provides current information on many things including the religious preferences of the community and the 71 Mosaic Groups in the United States. This tool is also good for those who are indigenous to the community because it provides additional information. Mission Insite is available at no cost to GMC churches.

- A Launch Team provides an assortment of spiritual gifts to call upon and increases the relationship possibilities exponentially. Biblically, both Jesus and Paul show the importance of teams in spreading the gospel. Jesus had the twelve disciples and the seventy who were sent out by twos to prepare people for a visit from Jesus (Luke 10). Paul always had a team of people who accompanied him on his missionary journeys. His letters are full of references to his co-laborers.
- Training prior to launching the satellite campus provides a common vision and systems to use to be most effective in ministry. People will gravitate to the areas of service they are gifted and interested in.
- “Splash Events” are events that help to make the new church in town more known. These events make a “splash” in the community. They are fun and provide creative ways to introduce the church to the community.
- Developing a list of contacts from the Splash Events and conversations about the church is essential in reaching people. A name and a way to contact people who have shown interest in a new church allows the pastor and laity to remind these contacts about continuing events and ministries they may be interested in. These contacts are the lifeblood of a new church. Many church planters set a weekly goal for new contacts added to the list. For example, 10 contacts added per week will result in more than 500 people on the contact list in a year.
- Special worship services enable you to have something worthwhile for people to come to. Launch Sunday is, of course, a big worship service to invite people to. Christian holidays are natural times to invite new people to attend worship. Hosting a Splash Event prior to these times allows more people to attend these worship times. For example, host a community Easter Egg hunt on the Saturday before Easter and make sure that the Easter worship times are publicized at the Easter Egg Hunt and many invitations are given and contacts recorded on the list. Sermon series that address real issues that people face can be publicized prior to their being preached. Send the sermon series to those on your contact list.
- Building a “Runway” is a planning tool to go through the different things that need to happen prior to launch. When will the training for the launch team occur? When will the various systems be staffed with lay leadership? What Splash Events will be held and when? When will a Dress Rehearsal for the Launch Sunday be held? How many contacts do we need before launch and what do we need to do to reach that number? These questions and others are answered and a runway is developed.
- Establish various small groups to be an essential part of a new church. Groups are the “sticky” factor as relationships flourish and function like glue. People are not just looking for a “friendly church” they are looking for friends. If a network of House Churches has been established prior to the satellite then plan to create more House Churches to be in

the network. Traditional Sunday School classes and groups for children, youth, men and women can be added. Keep looking for groups that can minister to the needs of your community and the church.

Launch Team Covenant

A covenant for the Launch Team includes:

1. To continually lift up the members of the Launch Team and the participants of the Satellite Church in prayer.
2. To be present for Launch Team meetings and worship services of the Satellite Church unless ill or out of town.
3. To tithe your income to support the ministry of the Satellite Church. This financial commitment allows the church to offer more ministry to the community and less financial stress for the sponsoring church.
4. To identify and engage in mission opportunities quarterly that are close to the hearts of the Satellite Church.
5. To continually invite new people to come to events and worship services of the Satellite Church and get contact information so that they can continue to receive invitations for future events.

Financial Matters

The offering given by the Launch Team and later the participants in the Satellite Church can be set up in a designated account of the sponsoring church. The offering can be set aside using percentages as a basis for distribution. For example:

1. The ministry of the sponsoring church – 20%
 2. The Connectional Church ministry – 4%
 3. Ministries in the community that minister to those in need – 10%
 4. Current expenses of the Satellite Church and future expansion needs – 66%
- Future expansion needs include not only the future expansion needs of the Satellite Church, but also helping to fund House Churches, Satellite Churches or Church Plants. New church starts have a natural affinity to help other new church plants.

Items 2 and 3 will likely become a standard amount across the Conference. Items 1 and 4 can be set according to the vision for the Satellite Church to grow in its outreach to the community and the financial ability of the sponsoring church to support this ministry. For example, if the Satellite Church averaged about \$1,000 per week in its offering or \$50,000 for the year the offering would be divided in this way:

1. \$10,000 for the ministry of the sponsoring church
The sponsoring church may provide monetary help in the beginning or for several years in lieu of receiving this portion.
2. \$2,000 for the Connectional Church ministry
3. \$5,000 to be given to ministry in the community
4. \$33,000 for the current expenses and future expansion of the Satellite Church

Impacting the Community

The purpose of starting a Satellite Church is to significantly increase ministry in a neighboring town or community. It is easier to have people to attend a church if the activities and worship services are offered in the community in which they live. The Satellite Church Model outlined here has several ways to impact a community including:

1. The Launch Team and participants in the Satellite Church are more intentionally invitational and more consistent in their invitations through the establishment and use of a Contact List. For some this will be a way to connect with God again, and with a group who are seeking to follow the teachings of Jesus. For others it will introduce them to Jesus and they will be able to commit to following him.
2. The covenant states that there will be quarterly mission opportunities for the Satellite Church participants. The purpose of this part of the covenant is to give concrete ways to express the love of Christ to those in need ***in this community***. Some examples are: providing school supplies, visiting in a nursing home, providing coats prior to the winter cold, going caroling in the neighborhood, or cleaning up an eyesore in the community. Many non-Christians are looking for people who make a difference. These projects help the community to know there is a group trying to make a difference ***in this community***.
3. Part of the offering is earmarked to support Christian ministries ***in this community***. Sometimes this will provide the funds need to do one of the quarterly projects. Other times a monetary gift can be given to support other ministries.

Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) People in the community will see that your deeds back up the words that are said. The impact of a Satellite Church is multiplied by these ways as you put feet to the gospel.

Conclusion

The Satellite Church Model is an effective way of reaching new people for Christ and helping those who participate to grow in their faith. By launching this ministry with a trained, committed Launch Team of lay people the good news of the Christian faith is expressed in a way that has great potential to reach more people more quickly.

House Church Model

Definition

Small groups of lay people begin gathering weekly for worship and discipleship in a home, supported and overseen by a sponsoring church.

Key Characteristics

- Lay led and non-pastor dependent.
- Reflects early Methodist Class Meetings which fueled the rapid growth of Methodism without requiring clergy in every location.
- The sponsoring pastor serves as a circuit rider, checking in regularly to provide spiritual care, accountability, and sacramental leadership.
- Sponsoring church offers:
 - 501c3 covering and financial systems.
 - Leadership coaching and biblical training.
 - Missional encouragement and vision alignment.

Goal: The house church may

- Become part of a network of house churches
- Become a satellite campus of its sponsor church or
- Over time become a fully chartered autonomous congregation.

Ideal for:

- Churches with 6-12 members or more in nearby towns with a heart for reaching people for Christ.
- A church who has two or more individuals to send to a neighboring town to start a new house church who do not live in that community. This type of house church model would need to find a “Person of Peace” as found in Luke 10:5-6. This person of Peace may be an individual who opens their home to meet in or a business owner (such as a restaurant) who allows the group to meet there.

The Historical Purpose of Class Meetings

In the General Rules the role of the Class Meeting is stated:

“That it may more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader whose duty is:

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order: (1) to inquire how their souls may prosper: (2) to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church and poor.
2. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order: (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding."

The Importance of Class Leaders

The effectiveness of the Methodist movement was personified by the Class Leaders. The leader of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, recognized that converts at the preaching sessions needed to have other Christians to nurture their faith. The circuit riding preachers were covering much territory on their routes. So, lay people were asked to bridge the gap. There were larger groups called societies (normally consisting of 3 or 4 class meetings) and smaller groups called bands (consisting of 3-4 people). However, the hub of the Methodist movement was the Class Meeting. And the people helping to keep things moving along were the Class Leaders.

Effective House Church Leaders

The key person for the House Church model is the leader of the House Church. Leadership for the House Church model may include co-leaders or a leader and a leader in training. In the Book of Acts the church planting efforts are often co-leaders such as Paul and Barnabas. It also includes the presence of younger people accompanying these church planters such as Mark and Timothy. Co-leaders offer greater continuity and possibilities of additional house churches being started as growth occurs. Some characteristics of an effective House Church leader are:

1. *Setting the Tone*

The weekly meetings of the House Church revolve around the participants sharing their answers to the question, "How is it with your soul?" It is easy for this question to be misinterpreted as, "How has your week been?" The leader sets the tone by answering the question first until people get the hang of answering it. The leader shares how he has experienced prayer, scripture, and the presence of Christ during the week (or how these have not been experienced). The leader also shares if they have experienced pain, loss, sadness or grief as well as times of joy and happiness. The honest sharing by the leader encourages the participants to share honestly about how it is with their soul.

2. *Being a Shepherd*

The leader also sets the example of how to care for the flock in their charge. It starts with listening fully and attentively to how the participants answer the question. This is not a time to fix things and work out solutions to problems. It is a time to care for and encourage the person to lean on God for help. Praying for each other both at the

meeting and during the week shows this care. Encourage the group to pray for one another and send text messages or emails of encouragement.

3. *Keeping the Covenant in Everyone's Mind*

Encourage the group to keep the covenant by cultivating the habits of the covenant. Be one who models prayer and encourage the group to be praying. Be present at the meetings and encourage those who have missed to come back. Be generous in your giving and encourage others to contribute their gifts as well. Participate in the quarterly service projects and see that the group does too if they are able. Invite others to come to the House Church meetings and encourage others to be on the lookout for opportunities to invite others.

4. *Working with the Pastor of the Sponsoring Church*

As the leader you are the key connection with the pastor and the sponsoring church. Keep the pastor informed of the activities of the House Church. The Pastor is also a resource to share any problems and prayerfully seek answers together. Honor the Pastor of the sponsoring church with the House Church participants and express appreciation for the ministry of the sponsoring church.

Expansion Possibilities

1. The House Church Model can also become a network of small groups that meet in homes or public meeting places. If a House Church chooses to start another place for people to meet the original group does not have to divide into two groups. Instead, they multiply their outreach by offering a new place and/or time to meet. Groups are formed with a leader and at least 5 other people. They are then commissioned to “find the rest of their group” through inviting their friends, family and neighbors to join them in this new ministry. The new House Church continues to be connected to their sponsoring church and receive assistance from the pastor of the sponsoring church.
2. The House Church Model can also transition into a satellite campus of the sponsoring church. When there are 25 or more participants who are meeting together in one place or in a network of house churches it may be time to consider becoming a satellite campus. By this time there are enough people strength and enough financial strength to take on the expenses of staff and a meeting site either rented or purchased. A pastor, staff person or key lay leader is brought on board to provide leadership and support for the satellite ministry. This expansion is done to provide a greater impact on the community who may then be more likely to attend when there is a public meeting site.
3. The House Church Model can also transition into a fully chartered autonomous congregation. The Presiding Elder of the District can provide the steps needed to become a chartered congregation. This transition of a House Church Model or Satellite campus to a

chartered congregation occurs in consultation with the sponsoring church. Financial capability and effective lay and clergy leadership are essential to complete this transition.

House Church Covenant

A covenant made between the participants of a House Church can follow these guidelines:

1. To continually lift up the members of the House Church in prayer including the concerns raised in the group meeting.
2. To be present for the House Church meetings unless ill or out of town.
3. To give an offering which can be used to support: (1) the ministry of the sponsoring church; (2) to help with the larger connectional church ministry; (3) to provide or support ministries in the community that ministers to the poor and others in need; (4) to provide for the current expenses of the House Church and to set aside for future expansion as needed.
4. To identify and engage in mission opportunities quarterly that are close to the hearts of the participants of the House Church.
5. To continually encourage the participants to invite people who are not attending a church to attend the House Church.
6. To encourage mutual care among House Church participants as they share their journey with God by cultivating an atmosphere of listening to each other share how it is with their soul. It is a time of support for each other rather than trying to “fix problems” or “find solutions”.
7. These items are recommended, but can include other items based upon the circumstances of the group. For example, when care is needed for children of participants clarity is needed as to where care will be provided and how the cost is handled.

Financial Matters

The offering given by participants in a House Church can be set up in a designated account of the sponsoring church. The offering can be set aside using percentages as a basis for distribution. For example:

1. The ministry of the sponsoring church – 20%
 2. The Connectional Church ministry – 4%
 3. Ministries in the community that minister to those in need – 10%
 4. Current expenses of the House Church and future expansion needs – 66%
- Future expansion needs can also include helping to fund other house churches, satellites, or church plants. New church starts have a natural affinity to help other new church starts.

Items 2 and 3 will likely become a standard amount across the Conference. Items 1 and 4 can be set according to the vision for the House Church to grow in its outreach to the community and the financial ability of the sponsoring church to support this ministry. For example, if \$10,000 was given by the House Church participants the offering would be divided in this way:

1. \$2,000 for the ministry of the sponsoring church
2. \$400 for the Connectional Church ministry
3. \$1,000 to be given to ministry in the community
4. \$6,600 for the current expenses and future expansion of the House Church

Some Frameworks for the House Church Gatherings

The House Church model can include one of several models which provide a simple framework for the meetings. Some common examples are:

1. ***The Sermon Series Model***

5 minutes – Gathering and Opening Prayer

25 minutes – How is it with your soul?

30 minutes – Current Sermon series of sponsoring church

Depending upon the day of the week the House Church can reflect on the previous Sunday's sermon or look ahead to the coming Sunday. The sermon may be viewed by members ahead of time or watched together during this time.

2. ***The Topical Model***

5 minutes – Gathering and Opening Prayer

25 minutes – How is it with your soul?

30 minutes – Topical Discussion

The topical study could include a list of practices that center around a life centered on Christ. It could include books that address these practices that the group reads together. It is advised that the leader of the group would consult with the sponsoring pastor about curriculum or books to be studied.

3. ***The Bible Model***

5 minutes - Gathering and Opening Prayer

25 minutes – How is it with your soul?

30 minutes – Bible Study

This model can use a curriculum in consultation with the sponsoring pastor. Or it may consist of reading a passage of scripture seeking input from the members about how the Bible is speaking to their lives.

4. ***The Prayer Model***

5 minutes – Gathering and Opening Prayer

25 minutes – How is it with your soul?

30 minutes – Intercessory prayer

This model may have an emphasis on praying for the needs of the participants, the community they live in, and/or the needs of the world.

Some House Churches may include children and youth. These groups will need to determine the best way to provide care for these children. It may be that there is another room in the house where care is provided. Some groups may be able to take their children to another house or church where care is provided. The cost for providing care for children may come from the offering or from funding provided by the church.

Groups may choose to spend a different amount of time than the hour allotted here. Some groups may have a time of worship or a time for the group to eat together as a part of the meeting. However, if a meeting is going longer than usual the leader should be mindful of this and close the meeting so that people who need to go can leave when they need to.

Impacting the Community

The purpose of starting a House Church in a neighboring town or community is to help those who are already living in that community to have a greater impact in the area they live in. It is easier to have people join you for a House Church meeting if they live in that community and don't have to drive to another town. The House Church Model outlined here has several ways to impact a community including:

1. The participants of the House Church invite others to join them. For some it will be a way to connect with God again and with a group who are seeking to follow the teachings of Jesus. For others it will introduce them to Jesus and they will be able to commit to following him. All of the participants will have regular check ins about "how is it with my soul."
2. The covenant states that there will be quarterly mission opportunities for the House Church participants. The purpose of this part of the covenant is to give concrete ways to express the love of Christ to those in need ***in this community***. Some examples are: providing school supplies, visiting in a nursing home, providing coats prior to the winter cold, going caroling in the neighborhood, or cleaning up an eyesore in the community. Many non-Christians are looking for people who make a difference. These projects help the community to know there is a group trying to make a Christian difference ***in this community***.
3. Part of the offering is earmarked to support Christian ministries ***in this community***. Sometimes this will provide the funds needed to do one of the quarterly projects. Other times a monetary gift can be given to support other ministries.

Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) People in the community will see that that deeds back up the words that are said. The impact of a House Church is multiplied by these ways as you put feet to the gospel.

Conclusion

The House Church Model is an efficient way of reaching new people for Christ and helping those who participate to grow in their faith. Financially, there are two main costs to providing a traditional church model: paying for a facility and paying for a pastor and/or other staff. The House Church Model negates these two costs by meeting in a home or a free public meeting place. The House Church Model is also not staff dependent. A sponsoring church and its pastor provide minimal staff time because the House Church model is lay led. Kevin Watson in his book “The Class Meeting” writes of the effectiveness of this type of ministry, “The class meeting is valuable because participating in a group that asks you weekly how you are doing in your relationship with God is one of the most effective ways you can plan to stay focused on your growth as a follower of Jesus Christ.”

Pioneer Church Model

Definition

A church plant that is launched when there is **not** a church near enough to send a group of 25 or more committed lay members. A church, group of churches, and/or a district partner with the planter and any additional team members.

Key Characteristics

- Partner based approach, not solo pastor dependent.
- Sponsored by one or more churches or a **district wide collaboration** of churches combining people and resources.
- Receives training, equipping and coaching from the Conference and partner networks prior to and during planting.
- Strong emphasis on sustainability as soon as possible since there are no long-term grants provided.

Goal: By planting a new church where there is not a strong GMC presence the preferred outcome is that a new church becomes sustainable in a short time frame and begins to thrive.

Ideal For: Churches and districts called to reach strategic areas where there is not a strong GMC presence.

Biblical Basis

Acts 13: 2-3 states, *“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”* This is the beginning of the first missionary journey when Barnabas and Saul (Paul) went to Galatia and started four churches. Later in Acts 16 Paul and Silas go in response to the Spirit’s leading them to go to Macedonia on the second missionary journey to start three churches there. Since then, people in response to the calling of the Spirit continue to plant new churches where the gospel needs to be preached.

Effective Strategies for Pioneer Church Plants

- Those interested in Pioneer Church Plants establish partnerships. These partnerships include: funding partners, ministry partners, and oversight partners. Philippians 1:5 states the relationship between Paul and the Philippians as a partnership, *“for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.”*

- In response to the Spirit's leading, planters are identified, assessed, trained, and coached. The Heartland Conference may partner with other organizations to provide assessment, training and coaching.
- If possible, the planter is indigenous to the area; that is, they have grown up there or lived there for a period of time. If a church plant is cross cultural then the planter needs to fit the culture or ethnicity of the group needing to be reached.
- A great tool for planters is Mission Insite. This demographic and psychographic service provides current information on many things including the religious preferences of the community and the 71 Mosaic Groups in the United States. Mission Insite is available at no cost to GMC churches.
- Find a "Person of Peace" in the community you are wanting to plant the church in. For example, Lydia in Philippi urged them, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." (Acts 16:11) A Home Church Model may be the way to start in some communities as people open their homes to meet in. In other communities, business owners (such as restaurants) may open their place of business as a place for the new church to meet in. Some places may offer a reduced price.
- Developing a Contact List is essential in a Pioneer Church Plant. A Contact List is simply a name and a way to contact them. The more people that hear about the church from the planter or the team members, the more people who will express interest, and when you have a way to contact them, they become a part of the Contact List. This Contact List is used to let people know about Splash Events, worship services, and groups they may be interested in. For example, a planter may set a goal of adding 10 new people a week to the Contact List. Within one year there would be 500 people on the contact list.
- The best Runway for starting a Pioneer Church Plant is planning to worship before the Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter. Splash Events are held in the summer and fall letting the community know that a new church is being started soon. Then worship services are held in mid-November (or the season of Advent) and continues through Christmas. Additional Splash Events are held after the first of the year and worship services are held during the weeks preceding Easter (or the season of Lent). These are the times of the year that people are most likely to attend worship services.
- A Pioneer Church Planter will ask people, churches, districts, and other groups for financial support. The Planter will receive offerings from participants at each worship service. Since sustainability is needed within a relatively short time frame the Planter needs to be upfront about the financial needs of the new church.
- A Pioneer Church Planter may also ask supporting churches to send lay people to help either on an ongoing basis for a set amount of time (for example, 6 months, 12 months or 18 months) or for help for special events such as Splash Events, canvassing the neighborhood, or Launch Sunday.

Pioneer Church Models

The following models can be used for other church plants that have more than 25 people involved. However, Pioneer Churches are based upon the factor that there are **not** 25 or more people who can serve as a launch team. These models help a church plant to reach sustainability when there are less people initially. A Pioneer Church is likely to need a longer runway in order to build a launch team of 25 or more people for weekly worship. These models help the church plant to move more quickly towards launch and sustainability.

1. Bi-Vocational Model

In this model the church planter works part time or full time outside the church to support themselves. The Apostle Paul, along with Aquila and Priscilla, were tentmakers in Corinth. They worked at this trade during the week and then on the sabbath they would go to the synagogue and try to convince both Jews and Greeks about Jesus (Acts 18:1-4). This model allows for a lower overhead for the church plant as the amount paid for the pastor's salary is lower or at no cost. As the church increases in size and financial capability the pastor's salary can be raised accordingly. There will likely need to be a need for a longer preparation period (or runway) to establish weekly worship services as the church planter needs to establish partnerships for support of this church plant and build the contact list of prospective participants in the church. During this time discipleship formation is beginning as one or more small groups, class meetings, or band meetings are established. A "soft launch" of informal worship or seasonal gatherings during Advent or Lent can help form the group which will become the Launch Team. Regular weekly worship is established when there is a sufficient amount of people (more than 25 participants) and sufficient financial partners to support the church plant.

2. Mother-Daughter Model

In this model the sending church selects a community within reasonable proximity to the mother church. The launch team members covenant to attend, give, serve and invite others for a set period of time (usually 12-18 months). At the end of this time the launch team members can return to the mother church or may choose to stay with the daughter church. Leadership development of newcomers who participate in the church plant is vital, especially if the expectation is that the launch team members will return to the mother church. The mother church gives oversight and financial support during the launch and may continue in the early years of the church plant. A covenant or memorandum of understanding is developed to define the arrangement between the mother church and the daughter church. For example, the financial support of the mother church may include a clause that if launch team members choose to stay with the daughter church, then their financial gifts are transferred to the new church. After a period of training for the launch

team weekly worship can begin. A ‘soft launch’ may be included in the runway for starting this type of church.

3. Satellite to Autonomy Model

In this model a new location for a worshipping community is chosen by the sending church. The **stated expectation** is that the new worshipping community will operate as a satellite campus of the sending church until the new community becomes sustainable. Until that time the new community uses the sending church’s administrative systems, financial systems, resources and branding. Weekly worship can begin quickly with the support of the sending church, particularly in providing staff or volunteers such as a pastor and worship team. During this time the new church is contextualizing its approach to the nearby community with its ministry style, outreach and discipleship. New leadership is identified and trained. When the new church has developed leadership, established financial sustainability, and has chosen a pastor, then legal and financial arrangements such as establishing separate legal paperwork can occur.

4. House Church Network Model

In this model there is usually 3 or more house churches that have been established in a town or community who wish to worship together in a public place on a weekly basis. The basis for this is to reach new people who would rather meet in a public place for worship and to have more opportunities for programming for children, youth and other ministry groups by having a facility that can host such gatherings. During the time that the house church network has been established the number of people who are committed to this possibility has been reached and a financial base is in place which will allow this new church to begin. The house churches will likely continue to meet during the week as a pathway for discipleship. Legal and financial arrangements such as registering as a nonprofit in your state will need to be made.

5. Partnership Plant in a Public Space Model

In this model a church planter has established a relationship with a “Person of Peace” in the community which allows the new church to meet in its building. This public space is usually more visible in the community and those who are unchurched and those who are looking for a new church are more likely to come. Community engagement is high and relationships are built. A Partnership Agreement to secure space and clarify terms with the owner of the property is recommended. It is likely that the group may begin meeting on a monthly basis or every other week until there are sufficient people to move to a weekly gathering. Partnerships with other churches in the vicinity are encouraged to support this new community financially and with people to help when needed. When the church plant is financially sustainable then legal and financial arrangements can be made such as registering as a non-profit in your state.

Types of Partners

There are three types of partners in a Pioneer Church Model:

1. **Funding Partners**

Most funding partners want to only give grants, one-time gifts, or ongoing gifts. One popular way of raising money from individuals is to have a “Family and Friends” emphasis at the beginning of the plant. Most will be one-time gifts, but when given an option some will give on an ongoing basis. A district or interested churches may also give a one-time gift, but some may place the new church in their mission budget to provide continuing support for a period of time.

2. **Ministry partners**

Ministry partners are those who help to plant the new church by providing lay people to serve. This service may be for one-time events or may serve on an ongoing basis for a set period of time.

3. **Oversight Partner**

The Oversight Partner is the one who takes on the responsibility of overseeing the new church plant as a whole. In contrast to the other types of partners that may include many funding partners or many ministry partners there is only one oversight partner. One of the things that can cause confusion and conflict is when there are several partners who think they are in charge. The words of Jesus give some guidance for this: *“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.”* (Matthew 6:24) The Oversight Partner may be a Conference Team, a District Team, a Lead Church, or a Core Team of people who guide the new church and the church planter.

Partnership Covenant

A covenant with a Pioneer Church Plant may include the following:

1. To continually lift up the Pioneer Church Planter and the participants in the new church.
2. To be present, if possible, to help with visitation, Splash Events and special times of worship (such as Launch Sunday). Or to send committed laity to serve on an ongoing basis for a set amount of time.
3. To fulfill the financial commitment made to the Pioneer Church Plant in a timely manner.
4. To engage in mission opportunities, if possible, of the new church.
5. To invite friends and family in that community to come to events and worship services of the new church and to ask if they may be put on the Contact List.
6. These items are recommended, but can include other items to fit the circumstances.

Financial Matters

If this new church is a separate organization, then separate legal paperwork needs to be set up. Good financial practices such as having two people (not related to one another) count the offering and two people involved in writing checks are expected to be set up.

The Pioneer Church Plant will be highly dependent at the beginning upon the grants received from the Conference and other groups. For example, if the planter is an Asbury Seminary graduate, then Asbury Seminary provides a \$20,000 grant. These grants are given to support this ministry for a limited time until the new church can underwrite more of its own ministry. Gifts from other churches, individuals and the district will also help. These grants and gifts should be used only for the new church.

The offering by the participants of the new church can be set aside using percentages as a basis for distribution. For example, at the beginning it may include just these two items:

1. Ministries in the community that minister to those in need – 10%
2. Current expenses of the Pioneer Church Plant and future expansion needs – 90%

Once a church is chartered then another expense to build into the budget is:

3. The Connectional Church Ministry – 4% (which lowers the percentage for current expenses to 86%)

For example, the new church receives a grant of \$30,000 from the Conference, \$10,000 from other financial partners and \$20,000 from the participants of the new church in the first year for a total of \$60,000. There would be:

1. \$2,000 for ministries for those in need (based upon \$20,000 given by participants)
2. \$58,000 for the current expenses of the church and future expansion

To keep up this level of financial support in future years the offering from the participants and the gifts from partners need to increase to cover the grant amount which will no longer be received.

Conclusion

The Pioneer Church Model is helpful when there is not a strong GMC presence in a community because there is not a church close enough, interested in, or have the needed strength to start a House Church or Satellite Campus. Or there may be an opportunity to reach a different ethnic group because there is an ethnic planter identified and currently available. To have a sustainable Pioneer Church Plant then partnerships must be sought out and encouraged.

A Plan for Funding New Church Starts

Introduction

At the 2025 Annual Conference in Claremore, Oklahoma a great deal of discussion was generated by a motion to place an additional \$150,000 in the budget for the coming year for new churches. This budget request would be supported by using money from the Conference reserves as needed. While this motion did not pass it did cause another motion to have a group come up with a strategy for church planting in the Heartland Conference and also implied having a plan for funding this strategy. This section of the document will provide a plan for funding new churches. It will include matching funds from the Conference level based upon funds raised from the local church, districts, and church planters.

Responding to the Holy Spirit

In Acts 13:2-3 it states, *“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”* Responding to the Holy Spirit’s leading the church at Antioch sent two of their leaders at the direction of the Holy Spirit to a new work. Eventually this led to planting four new churches in Galatia.

Paul and Barnabas will eventually report back to the church at Antioch what God had done with them and how God had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles. Later Paul and Silas go back and check on these new churches. After checking up on the churches they began to seek where they should go next. They thought of several places to go, but they were constrained by the Spirit that they were not to go there. Finally, one night Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” They left at once to go to Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:9-10) Paul’s response to this call resulted in more new churches being planted.

These two examples from the scriptures gives the Heartland Conference a Biblical model for planting new churches as planters and churches respond to the call to “Come over and help us.”

1. First, it is important to note the prominence of the Holy Spirit leading churches and planters to establish new churches in new places.
2. Second, local churches respond to the Holy Spirit’s leading to send some of their best leaders to plant new churches.
3. Third, church planters seek to go where the Holy Spirit leads them to plant new churches.

The Heartland Conference seeks to follow this Biblical model to rely upon the Holy Spirit's guidance to support local churches and church planters who are responding to the call to "Come over here and help us."

The Role of the Local Church

In the Heartland Conference the local church has the primary role in planting new churches. The models of church planting that are most likely to be used are: House Churches, Satellite Campuses and Pioneer Churches.

For House Churches the local church will be expected to identify nearby communities where they can send a team of people (usually numbering 6-12 people) to launch a new House Church. House Churches will not require much financial support. However, grants of up to \$500 will be considered on a matching basis from the Heartland Conference **as funds are available**.

For Satellite Campuses the local church will be expected to identify 25 or more people who will faithfully support the new Satellite Campus. The Satellite Campus is intended to remain a part of the sending church. The expenses of the Satellite Campus are greater because of the costs of personnel and a facility to meet in. Grants of up to \$20,000 will be considered on a matching basis from the Heartland Conference **as funds are available**.

For Pioneer Churches the local church is not able to send 25 or more people to be involved in the church plant. However, they have identified one or more of their leaders as being able and available to start a new church in a new place. These potential church planters are assessed and trained as church planters through the process established by the Heartland Conference. Pioneer Churches are most often an independent church start. Grants of up to \$30,000 will be considered on a matching basis from the Heartland Conference **as funds are available**.

The Role of the Church Planter

For House Churches and Satellite Campuses the leaders of these models are identified by the local church for this ministry. House Churches are mostly led by lay people. Satellite Campuses are often led by church staff or an Associate Pastor. These leaders may be assessed and trained by the Heartland Conference, or a partnering organization, as church planters if this seems best for this particular setting. A Pioneer Church is most often led by someone who has received a calling to be a church planter and has been approved by the Heartland Conference for this type of ministry. In a Pioneer Church model, the Church Planter will often need to raise funds through a "Friends and Family" campaign. The Church Planter may likely be expected to raise funds from local churches that are able and willing to support this ministry. The funds raised by a Friends and Family campaign or from local churches by the Church Planter can be a part of the funds matched by the Heartland Conference **as funds are available**.

The Role of the District

If a church within a district is starting a Satellite Campus or if a Pioneer Church is being started within the district boundaries the Presiding Elder of the district may ask churches within the district to contribute to this new church plant. The funds raised can be a part of the funds needed for a matching grant. The district may also lift up the need for new churches to be started in communities that do not have a strong GMC presence. The Presiding Elder may encourage churches that are able and willing to consider the possibilities of establishing House Churches, Satellite Campuses, and Pioneer Churches.

The Role of the Conference

The primary role of the Conference is to encourage local churches to plant House Churches, Satellite Campuses, and Pioneer Churches. The Conference will identify, assess, and train individuals who are called to the work of being church planters. As these individuals start new churches, they will receive coaching and support for this ministry from the Conference.

The Conference will establish a process for raising funds from churches and individuals across the Conference. The Conference will also establish a process for applying for the funds available and establish guidelines for the approval of grants.

The Conference may identify areas that the presence of the GMC is not strong. There are currently several large cities within the boundaries of the Heartland Conference that do not have a Global Methodist Church or are underserved by the present number of churches and their relative strength. There are also many communities that are near a GMC church that could be reached by a House Church or Satellite Campus.

Special Offering

A special offering can be a part of a yearly effort to raise funds and awareness for church planting. This offering could be supported by churches and individuals who appreciate the effort to plant new churches. This offering could also be done on a “call basis” when funds are needed to plant new churches.

The intent of the funds being raised is that, **as funds are available**, the amount raised in response to the call may be matched by the Conference- either through a budgeted amount for new church plants or from Conference reserves. If the offering exceeds the amount available in the annual budget, **a match from Conference reserves may be considered, but only up to the amount that has been pre-approved and is available.** For example, if the Leadership Council has approved \$25,000 from reserves for matching purposes, and the offering brings in \$50,000, only \$25,000 can be matched – regardless of the amount raised. This ensures that our matching commitments remain sustainable and transparent. Any use of Conference reserves for matching purposes must

be approved in advance by the Conference Leadership Council and designated accordingly. The total amount from both the annual budget and the Conference reserves becomes a Challenge Grant for the churches and individuals to match.

For example, if the offering raises \$50,000 across the Conference this can be matched by the Conference Leadership Council. So, if the budget had \$25,000 for church plants and \$50,000 were raised then \$25,000 would be matched by the budgeted amount first, and then supplemented by \$25,000 from Conference reserves. The \$50,000 offering when matched by the Conference allows the Conference to have \$100,000 available to assist churches who are able and willing to plant a new church.

A Second Match from Churches

In addition, the funds raised through a special offering are designed to be a matching fund. When a church makes a request to the Conference to help fund a new church the money they have raised and set aside can be matched by the Heartland Conference up to a specified amount. House Churches can receive up to \$500; Satellite Campuses can receive up to \$20,000; and Pioneer Churches can receive up to \$30,000. The overall result is that the special offering amount is matched twice – once by the Conference and once by the church who plants a House Church, Satellite Campus, or Pioneer Church. In the above example the \$50,000 offering is matched by the Conference and becomes \$100,000. This \$100,000 is then matched by churches which results in as much as \$200,000 being spent to plant new churches.

Conclusion

It is common for organizations to use a Matching Fund approach to raising funds needed for a project. It is common because it works. People love to give to matching funds. This strategy for raising funds for new churches is actually a Multiplication Strategy. Every dollar given by an individual or church will result in four dollars in the local setting that a new church is planted in. A \$250 gift becomes \$1,000. The principle of multiplication works well for planting new churches!