

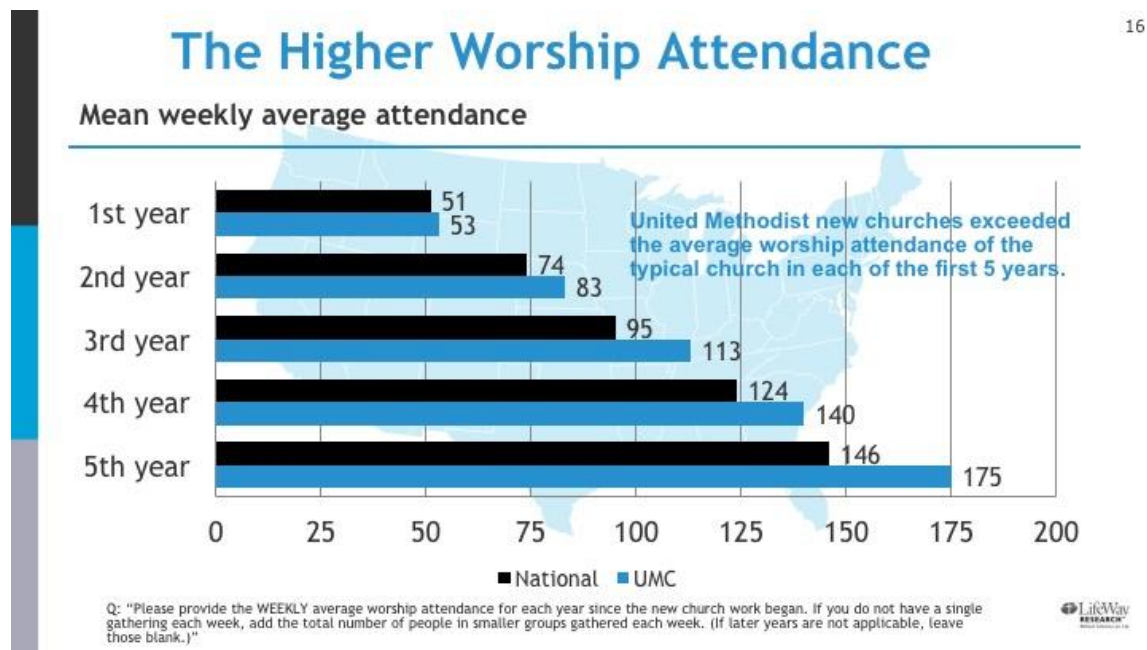
*What United Methodists Can Learn and Affirm Executive Summary (by Path 1)*

We have exciting news to share with you about United Methodist results in a national research project on new church development. Between May and August of 2015, an invitation was extended to 12,000 new churches that started since 2008 in seventeen participating denominations. Twelve hundred planters completed the survey, of which 843 fit the criteria of being planted between 2007 and 2015, and still open today. United Methodists represented 11.5% of the responders who completed the survey. We want to share with you through this executive summary report some highlights of what we have learned so far. We say “so far” because ongoing analysis of the research will yield more detailed information.

We want to emphasize that we are reporting on national numbers. Some of our regional mission fields for church planting will differ from national averages. Also, we highlight here *factors* that contribute to a given finding. We cannot assert a *causation* (i.e. if you do *this* then you will get *these* results). We can only point to common factors that contributed to a certain finding.

**Worship**

One of the surprising findings is that the UMC exceeded the average worship attendance of the typical new church start in the US in each of the first 5 years of the plant. Many of us who work in the area of new church development assumed that United Methodists would trail denominations such as Pentecostal churches or Baptist churches in average attendance.



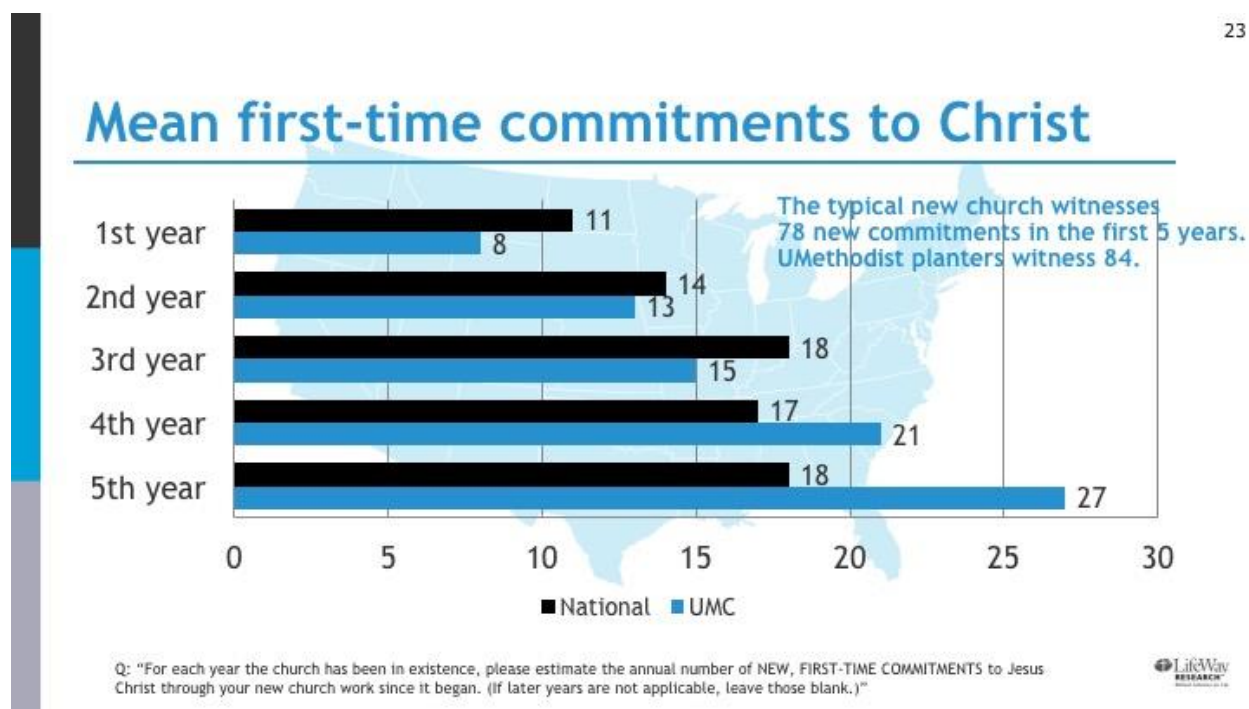
*Factors present yielding higher attendance for new church starts*

We learned about some of the factors that led to higher worship attendance. For instance:

- **Non-churchy spaces:** New churches that met in a public school venue or in a warehouse/industrial space tended to average more in worship than those that met in some other place.
- **Publicity:** Those that used mailers as part of their publicity tended to average more in worship than those who did not.
- **Broadcast:** Those that used radio or television as one of their top 3 forms of publicity averaged more than those that did not.
- **Multiplication:** Those that planted a daughter church or donated funds to help start a new church or partnered to birth a new church within their first five years tended to have higher average worship attendance than those that did not do these things.
- **Leadership Training:** training church planter for more than a month and offering new membership classes led to higher worship attendance.
- **Taking Care of the Planter:** Planters that received an adequate salary and health insurance were factors in increased worship attendance.
- **Healthy Finances:** Churches that became self-sufficient financially by their fourth year tended to have higher worship attendance.

### *New Professions of Faith*

United Methodist new church starts reached 10% more “unchurched” people (52% to 42%) than the typical new church plant in the United States.



United Methodist planters exceeded the typical new church in the reception of new decisions for Christ. While the typical new church witnesses 78 new commitments in the first 5 years, United Methodist planters witness 84 new commitments in the first 5 years. There are several factors present in new churches that witnessed more new decisions for Jesus Christ, including:

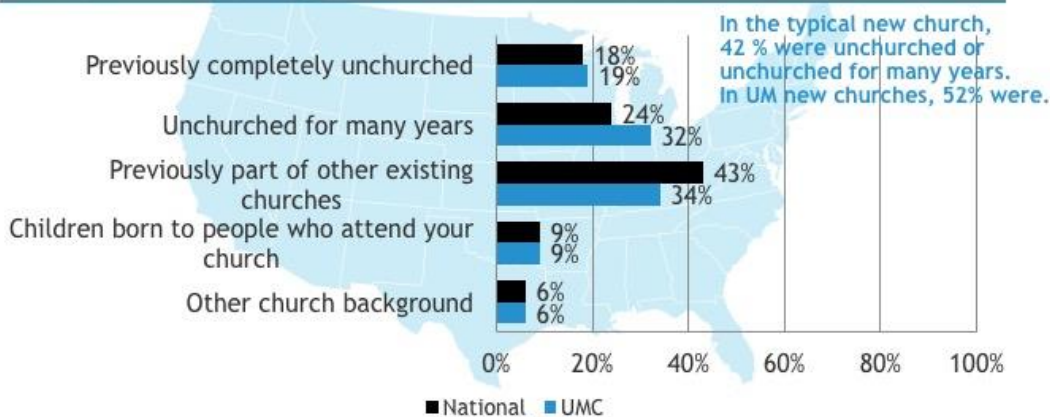
- **High public visibility** in the community through the use of podcasts, mailers, choosing a worship venue in a public space (i.e. school or industrial space), and use of a contact management system for electronic communication (yielding an “email blast”).
- **Intentional Outreach** by conducting highly public gatherings (i.e. revival meetings), mailing invitations or by hosting sports leagues.
- **Well-defined Discipleship system** that trained laity to be leaders, including pro-active stewardship development.
- **Multiplied churches** (that plant or support the planting of another church within the first five years) and who invest time, energy and mentoring in potential church planters.

*Reaching the Non-Religious and Nominally Religious*

United Methodist new churches outperformed the typical new church in reaching those who previously did not belong to a church or had not attended a church for many years. The language the survey used for this was “unchurched” or “unchurched for many years.” In the typical new church, 42% of worship attendees were unchurched or unchurched for many years. In United Methodist new churches, 52% of worship attendees were unchurched or unchurched for many years. In the typical new church, 43% of attendees were previously part of other existing churches, while in United Methodist new churches only 34% of attendees were previously part of other existing churches.

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**On average, 52% of attendees in UM plants were completely unchurched or unchurched for many years**



Q: “Among the people who have attended this new church work since it began, please estimate the percentage from each of the following church backgrounds. (If no one belongs to a particular group in your church, please mark 0%. Total percentages should add to 100%.”



Many of the same factors that contributed to higher average worship attendance and to higher percentage of new commitments to Christ also contributed to reaching more unchurched or unchurched for many years:

- **Non-churchy spaces:** New churches that met in a public school venue or in a warehouse/industrial space tended to do slightly better than those in more traditionally religious venues.
- **High public visibility** in the community through the use of podcasts, mailers, choosing a worship venue in a public space (i.e. school or industrial space), and use of a contact management system for electronic communication.

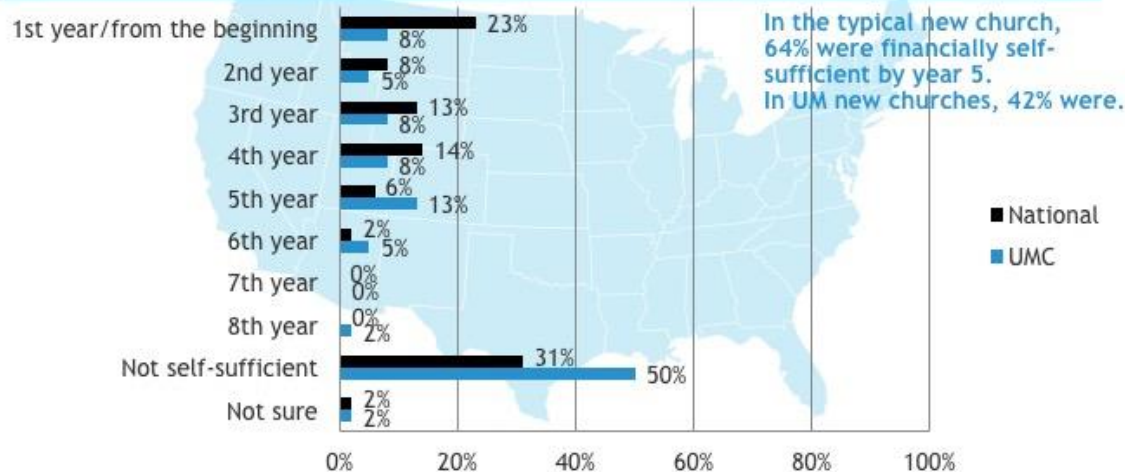
Other factors included:

- **Being intentional** (doing *something*) to reach non-religious and nominally religious persons, including
  1. Revival meetings as an outreach activity (predominantly among ethnic churches)
  2. holding affinity group meetings, such as “Bunco Nights,” “Monday Night Football,” “Movie Nights” etc.
  3. Using door hangers or flyers to announce the launch of new worship or activity
  4. Door-to-door visits
  5. Sponsoring special events for children
  6. Organizing “Prayer Walks” in anticipation of launching something new
  7. Offering Bible Study as a form of outreach
  8. Organizing sports leagues as a primary form of outreach

### ***What United Methodists Can Learn about Sustainability***

There are other important findings both affirming and challenging that we at Discipleship Ministries (Path 1 New Church Starts) would like to share. For instance, United Methodist new churches were less likely to become self sustaining within five years. In the typical new church, 64% were financially self-sufficient by year 5. While in United Methodist new churches, 42% were financially self-sufficient by year 5. The survey also clearly indicates that if a church does not become financially self-sufficient by year 5, it is UNLIKELY that it will ever become financially sustainable.

## Among those started in 2012 or earlier, 42% were self-sufficient by year 5.



Q: "During which year (if at all) did the church become financially self-sufficient, meaning no financial support is being received from outside sources."



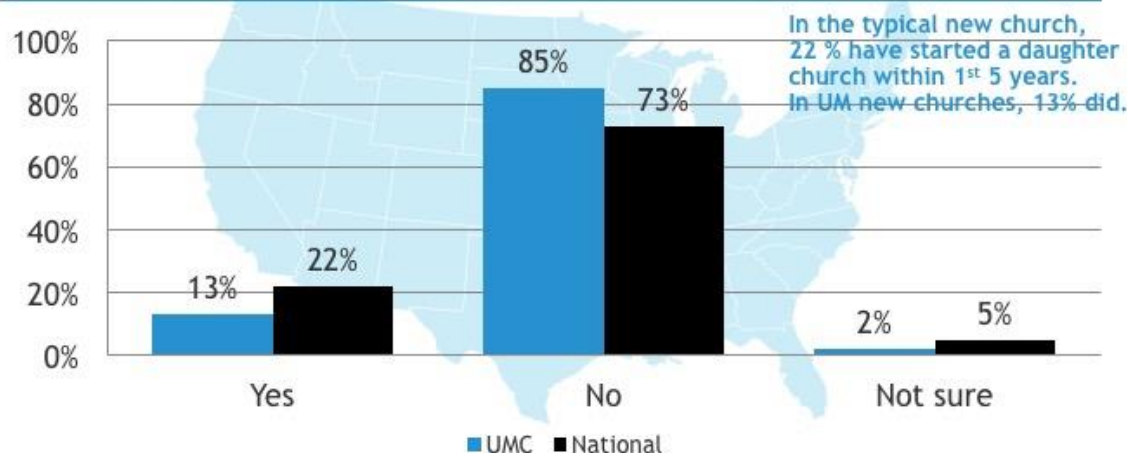
Factors that contribute to a new church becoming self-sustaining in the first five years include:

- **Prioritizing a Public Presence** by putting sermons online; meeting in a school; using newspaper and other print advertising to communicate news to the community.
- **Focusing on new member assimilation to develop leaders** by holding new member classes and developing a leadership training plan.
- **Financially Sound Practices** by using a stewardship plan and by giving missionally (contributing to other church plants) thereby generating a culture of generosity.

### *What United Methodists Can Learn about Multiplication*

Another area that challenges United Methodists deals with church multiplication—starting or helping to start another new church within the first five years. United Methodist new churches underperform in this area when compared to the typical new church. In the typical new church, 22 % have started a daughter church within the first 5 years. In United Methodist new churches, 13% have started a daughter church within the first 5 years. Churches that give birth and start another new church within the first five years prepare, plan, and execute their strategy to not only see a new church begin, but to give birth to additional new churches.

## Among those started in 2012 or earlier, 13% started at least one daughter church within 5 years of existence



Q: "Please indicate whether the activity below occurred in the church since the start of the new church work. (Select one response for each activity): The church started at least one daughter church within 5 years of existence"



Factors that contribute to a new church giving birth to another new church in the first five years include:

- **Very visible, both publically and digitally** by meeting in a school or industrial space; publicizing news of the new church in the community through mailers, internet, a contact management system for electronic communication (i.e. email blast), blogs, posting sermons online, and producing podcasts.
- **Intentional Programs and Activities** such as revival meetings and sponsoring sports leagues.
- **Commitment to Discipleship** including one-on-one discipleship; requiring a membership covenant for those joining the church; offering a new member class; offering evangelism training; and having an intentional stewardship plan.
- **Commitment to Multiplication** by partnering with the denomination or other organization to plant a new church; contributing financially to another new church start; staff that invests (mentors, trains, hosts interns or residents, coaches etc.) in a new ore potential church planter.

### Conclusions

United Methodist new church starts were more vital and fruitful than the typical new church in several areas including: 1) having a higher average worship attendance every year of the first five years; 2) witnessing more new decisions for Christ; and 3) having more unchurched attending worship.

United Methodist new churches under-performed, when compared to the typical new church in two areas: 1) reaching financial self-sufficiency within the first five years, and 2) multiplying by giving birth to start another new church within the first five years.

This executive summary identified significant factors with correlation, not causation, to reaching these benchmarks. In other words, churches that reached these benchmarks had these factors in place – however, simply adding several of these factors to a struggling church’s activities will not necessarily cause that struggling new church to automatically reach the benchmark. The reality is that cause and effect can be indirect and due to a third factor such as the vision, heart, passion or motivation behind the use of the activity itself.

We are just beginning to unpack the results of this survey. There is more to come as we dig deeper into this research.