

# THE STATE OF UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PLANTING IN THE UNITED STATES

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The United Methodist Church

 **PATH1**  
NEW CHURCH STARTS AT  
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**WE ARE COMMITTED  
TO MAKING DISCIPLES  
OF JESUS CHRIST FOR  
THE TRANSFORMATION  
OF THE WORLD BY  
CREATING NEW PLACES  
FOR NEW PEOPLE.**

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# Introduction

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**Rev. Dr. Douglas Ruffle**  
*Associate Executive Director, Path 1/New Church Starts and  
General Editor of Wesleyan Church Planting Resources*

God is up to something new. God is breaking forth into our world like a mighty gust of wind and new life, new hope, and new possibilities spring forth. In the wilderness of our lives, God makes a way, turning dry, parched land into rivers. God is doing a new thing across the globe through the creation of new places for new people that are transforming lives, families, tribes, and nations. New faith communities are opening portals through which hundreds, thousands, even millions of people are coming to know the love of God in and through Jesus the Christ.

God is up to something new and it is our privilege and honor to share with you news from a small corner of God's marvelous creation where people called United Methodist, through the work of annual conferences, districts and local churches, have joined the Spirit's leading by forging new faith communities. We celebrate what God is doing in our midst as we seek to stay close to a movement fueled by God's Holy Spirit.

In this report we share with you how we define what a new church start looks like. We celebrate the myriad expressions of church that are emerging. We affirm the need of our denomination to become more diverse and celebrate God's image in all of us. We underscore the role that women as well as men play in church planting. We draw attention to ways of being church that are reaching younger people. We inform about new church planting globally. We highlight positive signals of what is going well for the United Methodist church planting movement as well as the challenges where we need to improve. And finally, we point to where we are heading as we continue to discern how best to follow what God is already doing in our midst.

God is up to something new. Our prayer is that this report will inform and inspire as we give a "State of Church Planting Report" at this time and age and encourage all to join the movement—to see and experience the fresh new ways God is at work.





**Rev. Junius B. Dotson**  
*General Secretary, Discipleship Ministries*

New churches remind us of our mission to reach new people. This is the heart of effective evangelism. People who claim no religious preference and may consider the church irrelevant are often attracted to the enthusiasm and unique missional focus generated by a new ministry. In order to reach a new generation of people we need spiritual start-ups designed to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ relevant for our unique time. New churches are effective in reaching new people in part because they are not afraid to try new things and take risks. Finally, new churches motivate existing churches to expand their outreach. Evangelism is contagious. Studies show that the enthusiasm generated by a new church benefits the existing churches in a given community. New churches can teach us what they have learned. I believe starting new churches is one of the most efficient ways to fulfill our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. We must help persons see the immeasurable value of new communities of faith in igniting a spark that can evangelize millions, alter destinies and literally change the world.

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**Bishop Mike Lowry**  
*Central Texas Annual Conference*

The Wesleyan model has the fullness of the Gospel both evangelically in sharing Christ as Lord and Savior, and in terms of social holiness in reaching out to others in love, justice, and mercy. The fullness of this model I would argue is inherently attractive. We've seen an explosion in the way new faith communities and new churches are starting now. One size no longer fits all. I believe this is a work of the Holy Spirit. Path 1 plays a critical role in helping us garner those learnings together in a way that can then be shared with the wider church. One of the worst things we can do as a church is send people out untrained to start new churches. Path 1 through its research and wide reach across the denomination pulls together various resources and training in a way that prepares both laypersons and clergy to live out our mission to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.





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# The State of United Methodist Church Planting in the United States

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# What is a UM New Faith Community?

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As Methodists our passion and commitment to discipleship is one of our distinguishing characteristics. We seek “to witness to Jesus Christ in the world, and to follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, devotion, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” (BOD ¶118 2a). Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We live out our mission by creating new places for new people within and beyond the bounds of our existing churches.

When creating new places for new people one size does not fit all. Established congregations, districts, and annual conferences can plant in a variety of ways, ranging from new missional communities to new ministry campuses to newly chartered congregations. Rather than describing planting strategies or quoting paragraphs from *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, we leave flexibility for the Holy Spirit to move. We prefer to describe characteristics. New congregations are organized places for new people that are committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ and seek to do the following:

- follow the theology of John Wesley
- gather frequently to worship
- celebrate the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion
- make disciples through small-group covenant, spiritual formation, and mission
- teach and practice biblical stewardship of money and time
- engage in mission and works of peace and justice aimed toward community transformation
- welcome and encourage new disciples
- celebrate lay and clergy involvement
- foster a culture of ministry multiplication and commit to planting other new congregations within three to five years
- remain connected and accountable to The United Methodist Church



**WHEN CREATING NEW  
PLACES FOR NEW  
PEOPLE, ONE SIZE  
DOES NOT FIT ALL.**

## Church Planting Strategies

While some people are attracted to fresh forms of church happening in coffee houses, diners, and other non-traditional spaces, others are drawn to more traditional forms of parish church. Many of the community-based groups that are forming on the front lines of mission are spiritual neighborhoods where mission, faith discovery, fellowship, and even worship can occur, but in a context short of the covenant-based relationships rather than traditional church membership. Many of the “new places for new people” that United Methodists are creating are simply spiritual neighborhoods in their early years.

Some of these groups and ministries will mature into full-fledged churches, while others will remain outreach ministries of existing churches, and still others will exist for a few years and then come to an end.

It may be helpful to think of church in three categories:

- **Spiritual Neighborhood**—many small groups, spiritual gatherings, and other forms of community where profession of faith in Christ is not necessary to belong, but where United Methodist followers of Christ convene the gatherings and bear witness to faith in Christ. These neighborhoods are reaching many unchurched persons.
- **Faith Communities**—these could range from intentional discipleship groups to multifaceted bodies that worship God, serve neighbors, disciple members, and enjoy Christian fellowship. These include both non-traditional ministries and campuses of pre-existing chartered churches. In faith communities, all the basic components of church may be in practice, as United Methodists understand church, but these communities aren’t “chartering” and some may never become what our system classifies as an official church. For example: many of our multi-site congregations are planting new campuses and establishing new United Methodist presence in zip codes currently underserved and yet the new churches are extensions of existing congregations. This is arguably one of the most effective strategies for church planting in America, and yet often it gets overlooked when we are counting new churches and measuring the scope of our work.
- **New Churches**—a people officially organize as a United Methodist church, with a new name, a GCFA number, and a covenant to join with thousands of other United Methodist churches to share resources in mission and to receive the pastors appointed by the area bishop.

As we are continuing to stretch and refine the ways we use the word church in United Methodism, it is ultimately the annual conference that must define

in their context the exact definitions for determining when a group or spiritual neighborhood becomes a faith community or a church in the fullest sense. Meanwhile, as we continue our goal of creating new places for new people, United Methodists will pursue the creation of new places in each of the above strategies as a way of making disciples who will bring about social holiness.

## Racial-Ethnic Church Planting

The United Methodist Church’s commitment to expanding ministries tailored to reach African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and multi-ethnic communities is part of our larger effort to create new places for new people. Jesus commissioned us to make disciples of all nations and peoples. Sadly, in many churches across America Sunday morning is still the most segregated time of the week. We believe, however, churches must reflect the vision of heaven as our faith brings different peoples and cultures together in fellowship. Here’s a look at how The UMC is becoming more diverse in the United States based on data collected by Path 1 from each annual conference.

### RACIAL/ETHNIC MAKEUP OF 2013-2015 PLANTS

Racial-Ethnic Audience	# of New Faith Communities	% of Overall Plants
African American	26	5%
Asian	27	5%
Hispanic/Latino	80	16%
Multi-Ethnic	88	17%
Native American	3	1%
Pacific Islander	9	2%
<b>Total Non-White</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>44%</b>
White	168	33%
Unidentified	114	22%



## Women in Church Planting

United Methodists have embraced female service and leadership at all levels of the church. Women serve as lay members, deaconesses, elders, district superintendents, and bishops within The UMC. Our denomination has been blessed by many women in church planting who are reaching new people for Christ. At Path 1 we are committed to resourcing more women to plant churches or serve on planting teams.

We are committed to justice and fairness for women in church planting so that the work of our planters is acknowledged, compensated, celebrated, and properly supported. We also celebrate women who support planting efforts in other ways as planting team members, volunteers, annual conference staff, coaches/mentors, and spouses and family members.

This past quadrennium we held a conference in Nashville and offered a workshop at Exponential East 2016 for women engaged in new ministries. We have identified a need for new resources and training opportunities geared specifically for women in church planting. As we enter the 2017-20 Quadrennium we will continue to expand on our support for women in new churches.



## Reaching Young People

Church attendance among millennials (persons born sometime between the early 1980s to early 2000s) is much lower than previous generations. Not only are more young adults leaving church today, but the number who grew up without being part of any religious tradition is higher. Young adults form a large portion of the “unchurched” in American society.

At the same time, millennials have been identified as being an altruistic and communal generation. These traits are also characteristic of strong disciples. To reach young adults, churches have to be committed to serving the poor, marginalized, and hurting in their area. Churches also need to exhibit strong bonds of fellowship and community. Millennials are a more skeptical generation who believe actions speak louder than words. Simply putting clever slogans like “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” on a sign won’t win them over, unless they can see the church really means it. Millennials can usually tell the difference between the sales pitch and the real thing. Honesty and authenticity goes a long way.

*“In my experience, young adults are fed up with being pawns for marketers, panderers, and other manipulators, because they’ve had to deal with that all their lives. Unfortunately, whenever the Church obsesses over what millennials want in a church, we send the same message that we want to offer you a product that you will buy. A little authenticity about who Jesus is, and who we are in him, goes a long way toward engaging young adults with the Gospel.”*

- Rev. Eric Huffman, The Story UMC

As many young people come in with predispositions against traditional church, new expressions of church speak to them. Many feel more comfortable going to church in a coffeehouse, a movie theater, or someone’s home. They’re comfortable with incorporating technology and media into worship. At the same time, many millennials find highly communal and timeless practices—such as Communion—deeply powerful. Others are drawn to new monastic and intentional communities that help them live out their values together. Just like with other generations, no one size fits all when it comes to reaching millennials. Some are looking for radically new forms of ministry and community while others are drawn to more traditional and liturgical expressions. New faith communities of all shapes and sizes will be needed to reach this generation.







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# What We Celebrate

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**WE HAVE A LOT TO CELEBRATE!** We're celebrating areas of ministry and mission where the UM new church starts are excelling. We also celebrate the growing diversity of our denomination in the United States and abroad as we seek to reach new people, new cultures, and the next generation. Recent research has revealed additional places where UM planters are ahead of the curve in developing new faith communities and reaching new people. As we continue our efforts, we explore new ways to plant churches and faith communities.

# Lifeway Study Results

In 2015, Path 1 participated in an ecumenical study of church planting across the United States and across church denominations and traditions. The study was developed and administered by Lifeway Christian Resources—a ministry of the Southern Baptist Convention. In the survey, Lifeway measured the stats listed below for each of the first five years of ministry. Over 200 United Methodist church planters participated in the study.

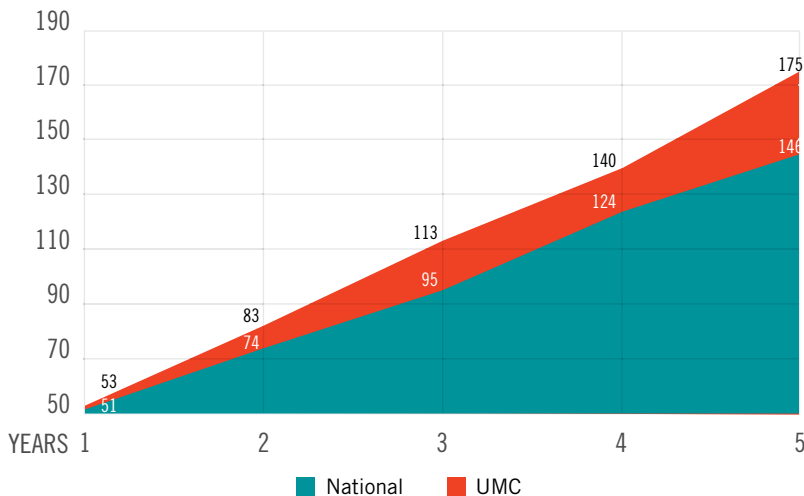
Among all survey respondents we exceeded the national average in three key areas:

- Worship attendance
- First-time commitments to Christ
- Reaching the unchurched

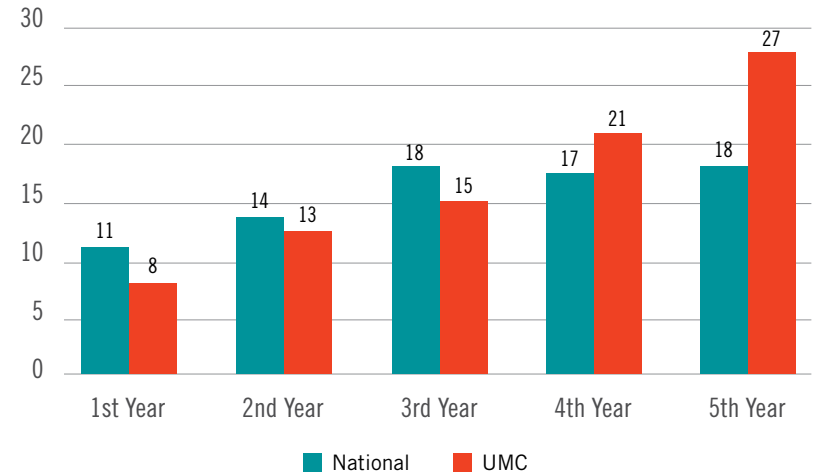
## HIGHER WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

Our planters exceeded the national average in worship attendance during the first 5 years following the church's birth. Additionally, United Methodist respondents averaged higher worship attendance within their church for each year. The overall growth rate for each year among United Methodists was also higher (25-30) than the national average, causing the gap in overall worship attendance to expand each year.

**AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE IN THE FIRST 5 YEARS<sup>1</sup>**



## MEAN FIRST-TIME COMMITMENTS TO CHRIST



## FIRST-TIME COMMITMENTS TO CHRIST

UM new church starts reached 10% more unchurched<sup>2</sup> people (52% to 42 %) than the other new church plants surveyed in the United States. UM planters exceeded the national average in receiving new commitments to Christ. While most new churches surveyed witnessed 78 new commitments in the first 5

years, UM plants witnessed 84 new commitments in the first 5 years.

A report in *United Methodist News* from 2012 recorded a 1% increase in new professions of faith within The United Methodist Church from the previous year. This was the first time in 12 years when the number of new professions rose from previous years.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Denominations included in the study: Assemblies of God, Baptist Missionary Association of America, Center for US Missions, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Converge Worldwide, Evangelical Free Church of America, Free Methodist Church USA, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod-Texas District, New Thing Network, North American Mission Board; United Methodist Church, Southern Baptists of Texas, Vineyard Church, and the Wesleyan Church.

<sup>2</sup> Lifeway defined unchurched as persons who have either never been affiliated with a church in any capacity or have remained outside the church for a significant period of time.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKewixqpn53-TNAhWESiYKHWRbBNiQFggeMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.umc.org%2Fnews-and-media%2Fchurch-vitality-professions-of-faith-rise&usq=AFQjCNH4F3CCpppHWINYJQcPR9dyJJAzf>

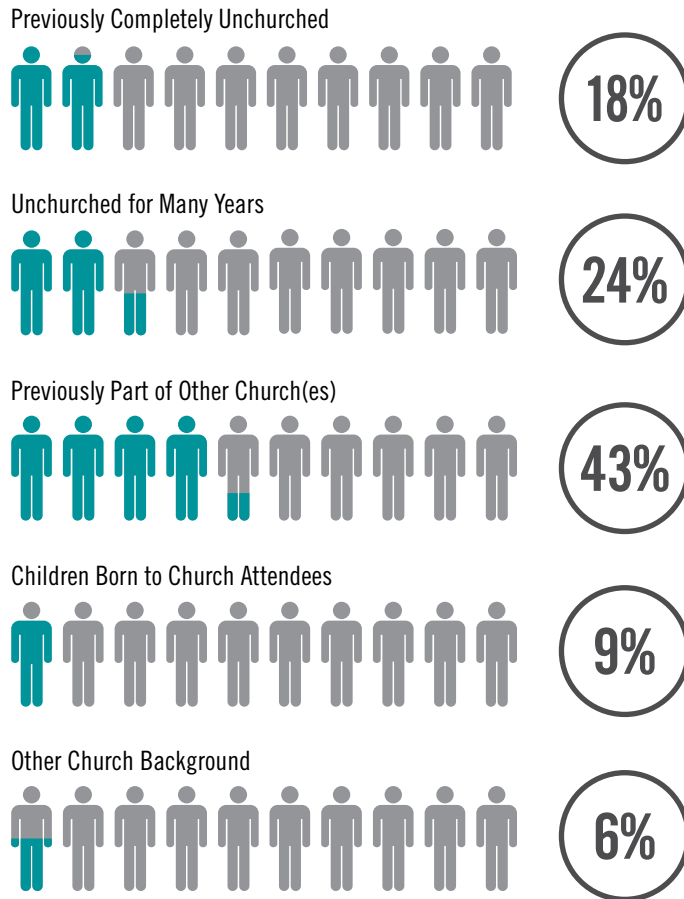


**REACHING MORE NON-RELIGIOUS OR UNCHURCHED**

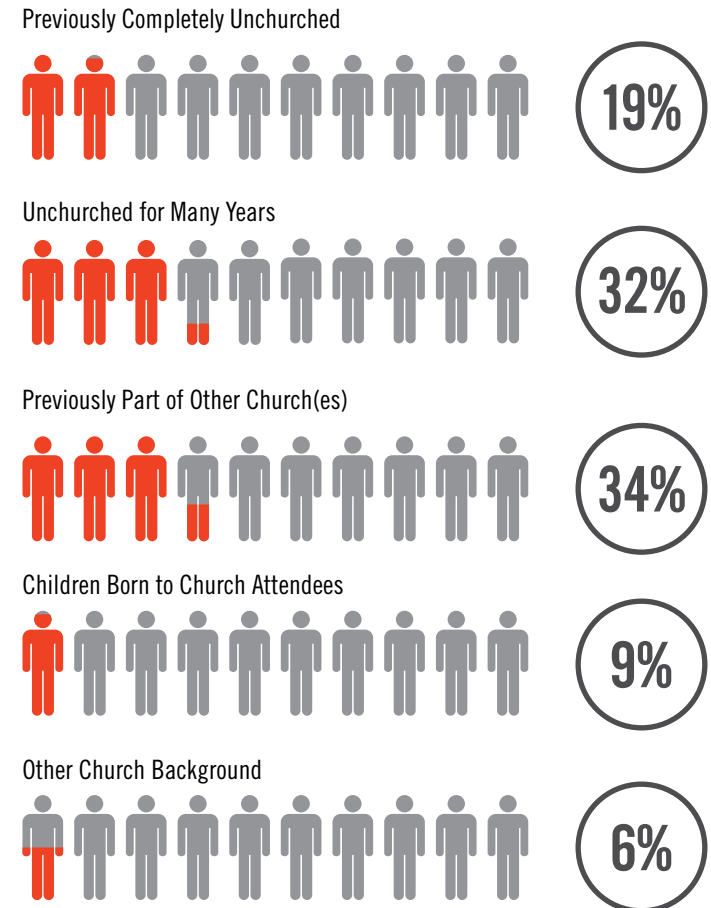
UM new churches outperformed the national sample in reaching those who previously did not belong to a church or had not attended a church for many

years. Among all churches surveyed, an average of 42% of worship attendees were completely unchurched or unchurched for many years. In comparison, the average was 52% within UM new churches.

**NATIONAL AVERAGE OF NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE**



**UMC AVERAGE OF NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE**



## Global Church Planting

The United Methodist Church is growing by leaps and bounds outside the United States. New churches and faith communities are blossoming in both the Central Conferences and in new mission areas in Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eurasia. Planters and ministry leaders overseas draw a distinction between full-fledged new churches and other types of new faith communities. Each conference and mission field has its own way of

classifying these, but generally they consider a new church to be a chartered community with an appointed pastor and clear lines of accountability with the conference. Faith communities take a variety of forms. They can be house churches, small groups that meet or operate in public places, or missional communities that depend on support from the conference or other churches for sustainability. Some of these new faith communities go on to become full-fledged churches while others retain their unique character.

BETWEEN 2013 AND 2015, **330 NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES WERE PLANTED** IN ASIA, AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA, AND EASTERN EUROPE.

Region	Country	2013	2014	2015	Totals
<b>Southeast Asia</b>	Vietnam	71	50	24	<b>145</b>
	Cambodia	13	3	10	<b>26</b>
	Laos	5	0	6	<b>11</b>
	Mongolia	0	2	5	<b>7</b>
	Thailand	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Africa</b>	Cameroon	1	0	4	<b>5</b>
	Senegal	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
	Malawi	11	12	0	<b>23</b>
<b>Latin America</b>	Honduras	33	13	41	<b>87</b>
<b>Eurasia Central</b>	Russia	6	5	0	<b>11</b>
<b>Asia &amp; Baltics</b>	Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan	2	3	2	<b>7</b>
	Latvia	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
	Lithuania	2	2	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Totals</b>		<b>145</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>330</b>

BETWEEN 2013 AND 2015 **1,885 NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES/MINISTRIES** WERE STARTED WITHIN THE CENTRAL CONFERENCES.

Central Confs.	Episcopal Area	New Churches	Other Faith Comms. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Africa</b>	East Africa	3	1
	Mozambique	8	41
	Western Angola	6	39
	Zimbabwe	46	56
	North Katanga	15	47
	South Congo	134	197
<b>West Africa</b>	Liberia	105	219
	Nigeria	31	0
	Sierra Leone	10	1
	Cote d'Ivoire	168	63
<b>Central &amp; Southern Europe</b>	Central & Southern Europe	4	7
	Germany	4	9
<b>Northern Europe</b>	Eurasia	6	14
	Nordic & Baltic	5	7
<b>Philippines</b>	Baguio	20	477
	Davao	1	10
	Manila	24	48
<b>Totals</b>		<b>601</b>	<b>1,284</b>

<sup>1</sup> One size does not fit all. Each central conference has its own definitions for what classifies as a new faith community.



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# Areas to Improve

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Even as we celebrate the areas where United Methodists are leading in reaching new people for Christ through church planting, we also acknowledge that there are areas for improvement. As Wesleyans, we believe our goal is to continue moving toward perfection, both in our individual walk with God and our corporate mission as the body of Christ. With that in mind, we are always trying to learn from our past mistakes and develop better resources and support systems for planters and new church leaders.

Along with revealing places where United Methodist planters excel, the Lifeway Study also reveals some areas where the denomination may want to direct more time and energy. United Methodist planters surveyed fell below the national average in financial self-sufficiency (ability to pay for all their ministries, staff, and mission expenses) and in multiplication (starting new faith communities) within the first five years.

In addition to this, Path 1 asked our jurisdictional strategists to look carefully at the unique character and opportunities within their jurisdiction and give us their insights and recommendations on what The UMC can do to encourage and support greater new church development and disciple-making.



# Lifeway Study Results

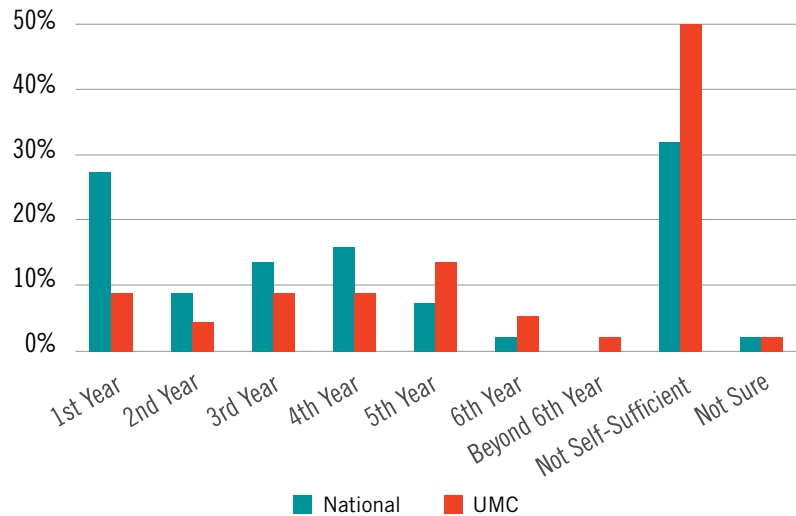
## WHAT UNITED METHODISTS CAN LEARN ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

In the Lifeway report, 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, UM new churches were less likely to become self-sustaining or able to pay all their ministry-related expenses, within five years. In the typical new church, 64% were financially self-sufficient by year 5. In UM 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.

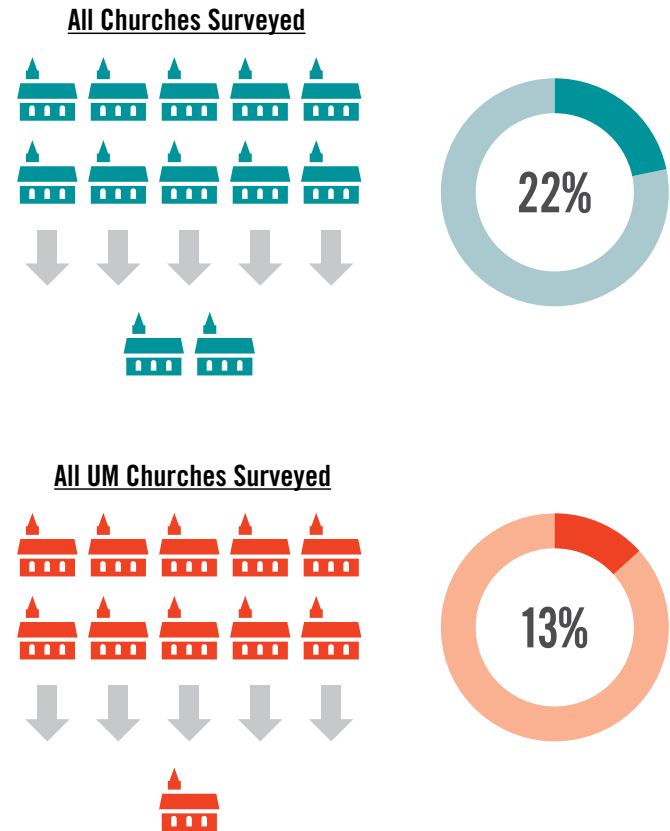
It should be noted that 74% of those churches surveyed had a fulltime elder from day one. As Path 1 continues its work across the country, we are learning that many new church contexts cannot sustain a full-time elder and that sometimes a part-time lay pastor is the better way to go. We need to expand our horizon in the area of leadership to embrace lay or part-time ministers as a strategy for sustainability.

Among **All Churches Surveyed** that were started in 2012 or earlier, 42% were self-sufficient by year 5.



## WHAT UNITED METHODISTS CAN LEARN ABOUT MULTIPLICATION<sup>1</sup>

Another area that challenges United Methodists is church multiplication—starting or helping to start another new church within the first 5 years. UM new churches under perform in this area when compared to the average new church surveyed. In the overall survey, **22% of new churches 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**. This too might be reversed through empowering lay pioneers to plant and multiply churches.



<sup>1</sup> Lifeway did not include multi-site plants in their final report. Therefore, campus planting was not taken into account in these results.

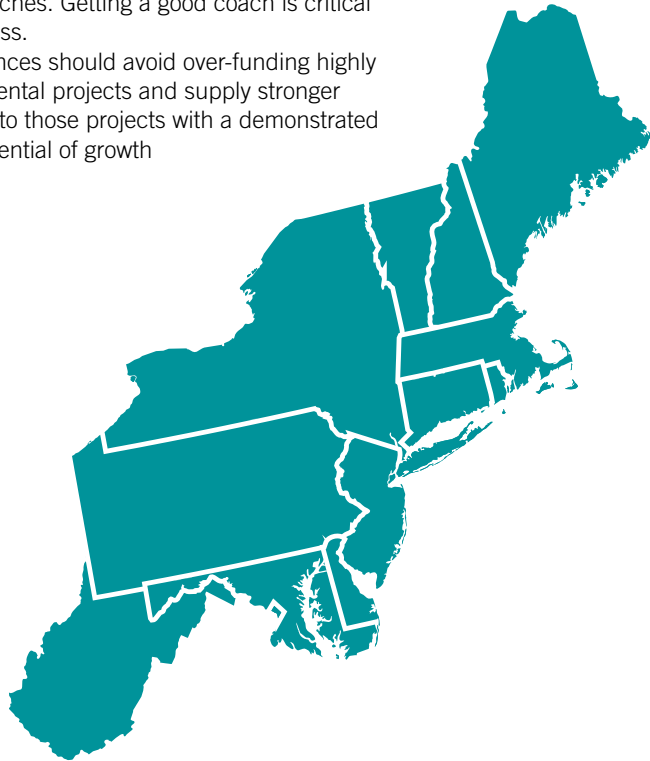


## Jurisdictional Recommendations

Path 1 provides regional strategists who equip annual conferences to better create new places for new people in particular contexts. Here are their insights.

### FROM THE **NORTHEAST**

- There's definitely been a rise in the overall number of faith communities in this jurisdiction. Conferences, such as Upper New York, are also serving as laboratories for new types of faith communities.
- It is taking more time to get a faith community to a level of sustainability than in the past. It is now standard expectation that two years of local relationship building is required before many plants and/or fresh expressions faith communities can begin to take root.
- Few Northeastern Jurisdictional planters work with coaches. Getting a good coach is critical to success.
- Conferences should avoid over-funding highly experimental projects and supply stronger funding to those projects with a demonstrated high potential of growth

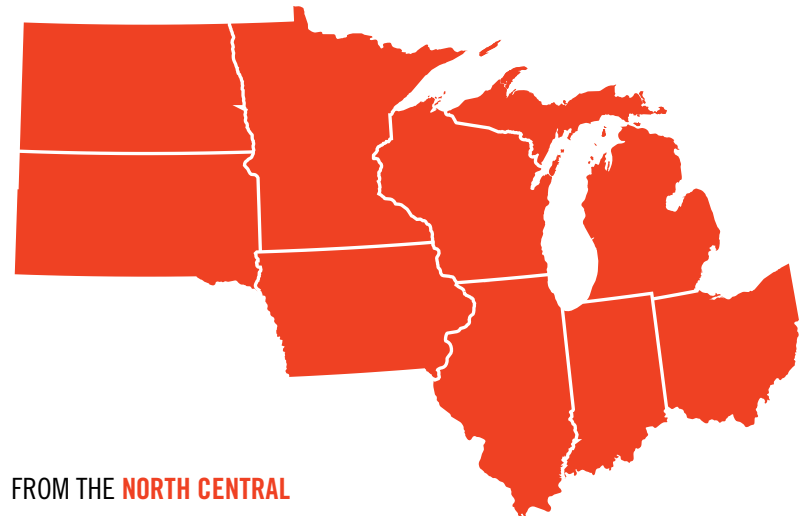


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*"Chicago is teeming with thousands of hard working, thoughtful young adults that are asking questions of identity and purpose and belonging. At UVC we stand decidedly at the intersection of Christ and culture meeting people where they are and casting a vision for a life that is so much more. We are at once evangelical and inclusive, contemporary and sacramental, focusing on personal piety and social holiness all as a means to undergo the process of salvation."*

- Rev. Brittany Isaac, Urban Village UMC, Chicago, IL

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### FROM THE **NORTH CENTRAL**

- Praise and celebration for two of the fastest growing churches in America: Embrace in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Cornerstone in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Like in many church denominations today, there's tension between traditional church plants that tend to obtain greater sustainability and new creative models that are reaching the unchurched more easily. We need to think of these different approaches in "both/and" terms rather than "either/or".
- We encourage annual conferences to leverage assets from discontinued churches to plant new ministries and to set up a Church Planting Endowment with assets from closed churches and draw upon the interest from these funds to fuel new church planting projects. Spend more on program than property.




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*“Impact is a multicultural community with a rich and deep history. We seek to do church differently by connecting God’s eternal truth through showing grace, inspiring innovation, and offering extreme hospitality.”*

- Rev. Olu Brown, Impact UMC, East Point, GA

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## FROM SOUTHEASTERN

- Multi-site plants (where one church creates multiple campuses to serve different communities) are the most sustainable, cost effective, and consistent of new church strategies in the SEJ conferences.
- However, most multi-sites are majority Anglo and depend on the support of strong parent churches. Other models may be better at reaching non-Anglo minorities and under-served communities.
- New Church Academies and new church covenant groups have been established in several conferences as best practices in preparing planters. These are yielding positive fruit.
- The systems of church planting need to be orchestrated throughout the SEJ so that they can share resources including equipping and reaching new people based on unique communities that require unique ministry gifting
- All planters should participate in a residency by working in very healthy and fruitful ministry systems before being deployed to plant a new church themselves

## FROM SOUTH CENTRAL

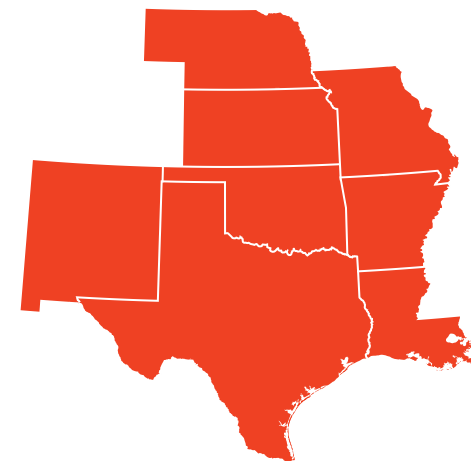
- Several conferences are experiencing new energy and great results through the Elijah/Elisha model (closing churches and giving new life by restarting a new church in the empty building)
- Tremendous population growth in five Texas mission fields offers great opportunities. Texas has three of the top five US cities with the largest percentage growth (San Marcos, Frisco, and Cedar Park) and two of the top numeric increases (Houston and San Antonio).<sup>1</sup>
- Conferences are doing a better job at setting new church starts up for financial sustainability and taking a closer look at the financial abilities in each mission field while working to deploy pastors with appropriate levels of compensation packages and launch spaces that are cost appropriate. Hopefully, other jurisdictions will learn from the SCJ in this regard.
- In the rush to start more new churches, we still have to remember that it is critically important to assess the church planter, have interviews, DISC profiles, talk with folks who know them, psychological testing, and complete background checks
- We recommend developing leadership from within: Healthy churches planting other healthy churches by identifying lay leaders (and pastors) from within the congregation.

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*“Within a few miles of our original site there are working class people, a world-class university, hipsters, single young adults, and wealthy professionals. The Gathering started with a vision of creating a Christian community that is compelling for new generations in St. Louis. Ten years later and with four sites around St. Louis, we continue to respond to the rapidly changing nature of our city and seek to share the gospel with the people living in it.”*

- Rev. Matt Miofsky, The Gathering UMC, St. Louis, MS

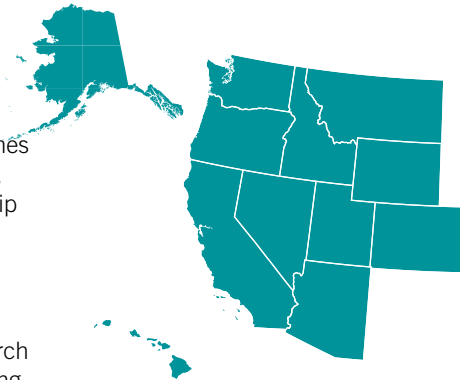
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<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Cities of 50,000 or more from 2012 to 2013.

## FROM WEST

- Each of the eight annual conferences in the Western Jurisdiction has an active initiative to start new churches and new faith communities, including funding, leadership teams, and staffing.
- Western Jurisdiction United Methodists are actively experimenting and evolving creative expressions of church as they adapt to the changing religious climate of their mission field. Older institutional and programmatic expressions of church are increasingly ineffective in reaching the unchurched in the more secular region of the country. Western Jurisdiction United Methodists are creatively trying new ways to form spiritual community that are more meaningful to people unfamiliar with established church habits and culture.
- Western Jurisdiction United Methodists lead the United States UMC in per-person church planting efficiency and commitment
- The “default model” of a suburban, program-sized, single-point charge for a United Methodist local church is increasingly financially unsustainable in this jurisdiction
- The percentage of new churches/faith communities that are multi-ethnic or majority non-Anglo is higher here than in any other jurisdiction
- We recommend that Conferences grant less up-front funding to allow longer times for experimentation and exploration of contextually relevant planting methods. This will mean fewer full-time planters on day one, increased deployment of bi-vocational and volunteer planters, and longer time before launching worship or attractional ministries.




*“We spend the majority of our time in conversation with a wide variety of people who have loved and left the church. Spirituality is a vital part of life here but Christian spirituality has been represented by a small and fairly conservative group... until recently. There is a deep desire to understand Jesus as the Blessed Outcast and the Compassionate Creator God as an advocate for the lost and least. To serve in our context we have to leave behind the church buildings or a traditional liturgy in favor of community festivals and art space, yoga studios, protest marches in our clerical collars and conversations at coffee shops.”*

- Rev. Abigail Vizcarra Perez,  
Create Commons UMC,  
Tacoma, WA

## Recommendations at Large

- Avoid over-funding new plants and channel finances smartly to support projects with the best potential to succeed.
- Teach planters good fund-raising practices.
- Support and promote planting residencies at vital churches as a way to train new leaders.
- Encourage planters to hire a coach.
- Continue supporting new traditional churches along with new, experimental faith communities and projects. No one size fits all!
- Multisite are by far the most popular and least risky way to plant, but they depend on the presence and oversight of strong existing churches, which means they may not be the best way to reach non-Anglo communities.
- Quality intercultural communication training for all—pastors, staff, and lay leadership.
- Advocacy for intentionally planting ethnically diverse faith communities.
- Hiring more diverse pastors and staff at all levels of The United Methodist church.
- Strategic planning for churches that are surrounded by ethnic diversity.
- Training for existing churches seeking to grow ethnic diversity.
- Use of intercultural proficiency assessment tools such as Individual Development Inventory, intercultural Effectiveness Scale, and Cultural Intelligence Center for all leaders.
- Celebrate gains in ethnic diversity at all levels.





**WE WANT TO RECLAIM  
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## **Where Are We Going?**

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United Methodism was once the fastest-growing and most innovative Christian tradition in the United States. We want to reclaim the habit of planting a church a day in the United States and return to our legacy as innovators and pathfinders for Christ. The scope of our work ranges from working with new faith communities that may become chartered churches, multi-site campuses, church within churches, and new fresh expressions of faith. We are equipping both laity and clergy to start new faith communities. Path 1 will continue to convene conversations with various constituencies to encourage collaboration and shared learning.

We will see more of an impact from millennials, multi-ethnic communities, and bi-vocational leaders in this new quadrennium. We will resource the spectrum of strategies and models, paying special attention to fan the flames where the Holy Spirit is already at work.

**2017-2020 FRAMEWORK FOR MAKING DISCIPLES THROUGH CREATING NEW PLACES FOR NEW PEOPLE**

As we’ve watched exciting new ministries emerge that are attracting new people into the United Methodist Church, we realize that one size does not fit all. While some are attracted to new forms of “weird church” happening in coffee houses, diners, and other non-traditional spaces, others are still drawn to more traditional forms of parish church. Some people are becoming attached to small fellowship groups with as few as a couple dozen members that might not fit the conventional definition of church but are still making disciples. Not only are we being challenged to expand our definition of “church”, we’re being asked to move beyond it. We think it’s best to identify and celebrate Christian fellowship and discipleship happening at the most basic level.

Think of new places for new people in the categories of group, faith community, and church. **Groups** are the most basic unit of fellowship, consisting of smaller and more closely bound circles. These can be discipleship groups within or outside a larger faith community or church. **Faith communities** are larger and more organized fellowships (usually consisting of several different groups) and have some of the components of a church such as regular worship experiences, but may never charter and take on all the responsibilities and characteristics of the church. While we’re continuing to stretch the definition of church in light of new realities, we believe it’s best for annual conferences to decide for themselves when a ministry goes from being a group or faith community to being a church in the true sense. To continue in our goal of creating new places for new people we will need to identify and nurture new discipling ministries great and small, traditional and unconventional.

Beyond these three categories are a range of planting practices and models that can be applied to starting a group, faith community, or new church.

**First Twelve**—A new program Path 1 has developed designed to help potential planters find and grow their initial team of people to start new places for new people, including communities of faith and chartered churches. This initial group sets the tone and vision for the new ministry.

**New Monastic Communities**—These are intentional communities bound together by covenantal relationships and shared missions within the larger community. Because the groups are by nature small or cellular, they tend to remain either groups or faith communities without every becoming full-sized churches.

**Missional Ministries**—Members of missional ministries see themselves primarily as servant disciples engaged in outward evangelism and service to the community. Rather than focus on programs and activities to attract members, they offer direct outlets for Christians to offer the gospel. Because of their focus on outward mission over internal development, they don’t often become full-sized chartered churches.

**Fresh Expressions**—Developed in Britain and imported to the US, Fresh Expressions is a catch-all term for groups, communities, and churches designed specifically to reach the unchurched, to focus on discipleship as their first priority, and to experiment and redefine what church looks like in contemporary society. A fresh expression can overlap with some of the other models such as missional or new monastic communities.<sup>1</sup>

**Multisites**—The most popular form of planting is churches planting new faith communities that remain closely connected and accountable to the parent church. These campuses may have their own meeting space, members, and pastor/staff with the intention of becoming full-sized churches themselves within a relationship of ongoing accountability and shared mission with the parent church.

**Traditional/Attractional Ministries**—Traditional or attractional ministries begin like most churches in the past with the conference appointing someone to start new ministry intended to become a traditional chartered church that is sustainable and fruitful in its ministries.<sup>2</sup>

	New Groups for New People (12+)	New Faith Communities for New People (50+)	New Churches for New People (determined by AC)
First Twelve	0		
New Monastic	0	0	
Missional (Hirsh, Breen, et al)	▶	0	
Fresh Expressions USA	0	0	0
Multisite/Parish	▶	▶	0
Traditional Attractional	▶	▶	0

<sup>1</sup> To learn more about Fresh Expressions go to [www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk)  
<sup>2</sup> For more information on attractional ministries we recommend Adam Hamilton’s “Leading Beyond the Walls.” Available at Cokesbury ([www.cokesbury.com/forms/DynamicContent.aspx?id=276&pageid=1077](http://www.cokesbury.com/forms/DynamicContent.aspx?id=276&pageid=1077))

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# Contacts & Resources

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## Resources

- Characteristics of New United Methodist Churches
- Lay Missionary Planting Network Bilingual Flyer
- Information about the 7 Seasons of Church Planting
- Common Planting Strategies currently used within the UM denomination
- Best Practices for church planting in a United Methodist context
- High-Potential Traits for new church planters
- Recruiting Pastors from Other Denominations or Christian Traditions
- Multiplication Dynamics for new and local United Methodist churches

All resources available to download for free at

[www.UMcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/planting](http://www.UMcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/planting)