

# **PARACHUTE DROP NEW CHURCH GUIDELINES**

## **POLICIES FOR LAUNCHING A NEW UNITED METHODIST CONGREGATION: PARACHUTE DROP**

A 'Parachute Model' springs from the WWI metaphor of a soldier being dropped by parachute into a targeted mission field of combat, and found himself there alone! This model of planting dominated UMC strategy for many years. Today the parachute model (sometimes referred to as "Conference or District sponsored") is used when:

1. A particularly gifted entrepreneurial Planter has an affinity with, and passion for a specific mission field and her/his skill set and approach to planting may not require a mother church;
2. There is not an established, healthy United Methodist Church in the target area.

The Parachute Model has a long history and at times has proven to be quite viable. In today's more secular, 'post-Christian era', it is much harder to plant a church than it was in the 50's and 60's. Consequently, the parachute approach is typically less successful than the more desirable Mother/Daughter Model, and therefore is used sparingly and with diligent caution and supervision.

A Parachute Model New Church is considered when a potential Planter, the DS, or the director of the CNCD sees a mission field need and can cast a vision and make a compelling case that a New Church has a high degree of probability for success.

Before any new congregation, mission, or community of faith is launched in the North Texas Annual Conference, an application must be submitted to the CNCD. The parachute model application (appendix 10) must be completed by the Planter. It is strongly recommended that a substantial majority of the following guidelines be satisfied. To the extent not satisfied, the prospective pastor shall submit explanation.

The primary purpose of these guidelines is to communicate to the District, Cabinet, prospective New Church pastor and others, those principles of New Church development which will guide the CNCD as it decides whether to recommend approval to the Cabinet starting a new parachute launch.

The role of the CNCD in this process is:

- a. To help facilitate the process by guiding the Potential Planter through a thorough assessment, training, and preparation process;
- b. To provide appropriate funding for the Parachute Model project through an approved grant;
- c. To support a healthy relationship between the Planting Pastor and her/his launch team as it develops.
- d. To help guide the project, in conjunction with the DS, through the process of Launching and maturing all the way to Chartering.

## **FINANCES**

1. **Financial Plans**- As part of the application, the CNCD shall provide a 4-year financial plan which shall be refined in consultation with the appointed pastor. Such plans shall set forth the expectation of giving from the new congregation and the anticipated support from the District and Conference. (appendix 15) The plan will set forth the expectation of giving from the new congregation, voluntary missional giving, District and Conference support and provide detailed income and expense estimates and calculations for the project. Chart of Accounts line items may be modified for the particular new start. Using this financial plan, the CNCD should evaluate its financial resources to be certain that it can financially support a New Church Start. In submitting an application for a New Church Start, the CNCD assumes the responsibility for underwriting all unfunded budgeted expenditures.
2. **Missional Giving**- Each new start is expected to give 10% of its offerings each month to mission projects beyond itself. Of the required 10% of the congregational giving for missions, 5% is to be given to the Conference New Church Development apportionment and 5% to missions chosen by the congregation. Participation in global mission is encouraged to be through the United Methodist Church. This giving will be reported on the monthly Missional Vital Signs report. (appendix 32)
3. **District Support**- District financial support of the New Church Start should be carefully determined with the intent on encouraging churches within the district to financially and/or otherwise support the New Church plant ('baby-shower', volunteers, short term missionaries to help open public worship, prayer partners, etc.)
4. **Sources of Support**
  1. Contributions from the new congregation.
  2. Pledged support from nearby and other District churches.
  3. "Family & Friends" of the pastor and launch team members
  4. Startup grant from the CNCD

## **STAFF**

1. **Adding Staff**- The addition of staff should be carefully approached in light of the overall strategic plan; timing of developing ministry areas of evangelism, discipleship, nurture, and ministry; budgetary considerations; and the pastor's strengths and weaknesses. Well thought out position descriptions must be provided to the DS and the CNCD, prior to searching for or hiring staff. The issues of benefits, part-time moving to full-time with increasing responsibilities and employer fiscal responsibilities should be carefully considered. The CNCD acts as the new start Staff Parish Relations Committee. All employees must fill out a W-4 form for the IRS (appendix 35).
2. **Part-Time/Occasional Staff**- Part time or occasional staff who work for short periods on a weekly basis or on an as required basis are subject to FICA and Medicare and must be reported as employees and not sub-contractors (appendix 35)

## **LOCATION & LAND ISSUES**

1. **Location**- A new start shall be located in underserved ministry areas. In most instances a New Church site should be at least five miles from an existing United Methodist Church. The only time this criterion is to be disregarded is when there is a natural barrier dividing the community or when other United Methodist Churches in the area are not prepared or equipped to serve a new, growing, and/or changing area.
2. **Minimum Requirements**

1. **Temporary Venue (school, theater, retail space, etc.):** Suitable for worship, child care, and if possible, Sunday school class rooms. Should be able to accommodate at least 300 in multiple services. Must be approved by District Board of Church Location.
2. **Permanent Venue:**
  - *Size:* A minimum of ten buildable acres is strongly recommended.
  - *Site Evaluation Worksheet:* The site evaluation worksheet must be completed and submitted to the CNCD before land is purchased. (appendix 18)
3. **Population**- The District must secure current demographic information regarding present and future population in order to justify and support the location of a new congregation. A resource for the demographic information is MissionInsite, and the Conference New Church Development office.
4. **Tax Exemption Application**- The Planter and/or the DS should apply to the county tax collector's office for regulations regarding this property being placed on the tax exempt rolls. Follow-through on this item is crucial so the North Texas Conference does not pay property taxes on this site (appendix 36).