

EPA Conference Office of Congregational Development

The New Church Start Process

When considering a new church start the following process must occur. As you read, it may seem overwhelming; but our failure rate has been so high that we need to take such measures to insure a greater success rate. As always, we are aware that the Holy Spirit is the essential power and guiding force behind this process; and it can lead us to make adjustments accordingly.

[PATH 1](http://path1.org/) [<http://path1.org/>] says we should allow for 18 months from the start of the vision to the launch of the new ministry. Our best timeline estimate is 12 to 18 months.

The District Church Location and Building Committee must evaluate the area being viewed as a potential site. This is a UM Discipline mandate. We will need to help districts understand evaluation and train them to do it.

After the District recommends this site, the Conference [Congregational Development Team](https://www.epaumc.org/ministry/congregationaldevelopment) [<https://www.epaumc.org/ministry/congregationaldevelopment>] (CDT) must concur. Then the Conference Cabinet (Bishop and District Superintendents) must also concur.

A demographic analysis of the target area must be conducted. The District Committee should do this with the help of [MissionInSite](http://missioninsite.com/). [<http://missioninsite.com/>]

Other churches in the immediate area must be in conversation about this possibility. They should be notified once the site has been identified. Perhaps they will be willing to help in the development; but even if they resist a new church project, the process should continue.

A five-year ministry plan must be created, along with a five-year funding plan, showing expenses and income. A selection process to identify the right person--clergy, local pastor or lay--to lead the new church start will include the following:

- **Review of appointments or church employment** or involvement if a prospect has not previously been an appointed pastor.
- **Recommendations from each church** a prospect is serving or has served previously in any capacity. (The prospective new church pastor should seek and provide recommendations.)
- **Information on key indicators of performance or impact** during the prospect's current and/or previous church assignments:
 - ✓ Worship attendance before and after his or her assignment.
 - ✓ Professions of faiths gained during his or her assignment.
 - ✓ Total church budget before and after his or her assignment.
 - ✓ Mission budget before and after his or her assignment.
 - ✓ Payment of church apportionment and other conference fiscal obligations--i.e. health insurance, pension, property insurance

✓ Small groups: How many were active before and after his or her assignment?

- **Tests:** The CDT will administer various tests to determine if the prospect has the gifts necessary to effectively start a new church--for example, [DISC profile](https://www.discprofile.com/what-is-disc/overview/), [https://www.discprofile.com/what-is-disc/overview/] spiritual gifts assessment, etc.
- **Training:** The prospect may be required to undergo a new church start boot camp and other preparatory training experiences deemed necessary.
- **Interviews with the CDT:** The prospect will undergo a series of interviews, possibly with two to four people per interviews team. Each interview will address such matters as: conversion; call to ministry; experiences of receiving a vision and acting on it (and the results of such action); Christology; views about the Bible; etc. Each team can determine what key questions they wish to ask.
- **Spouse's support:** If married, the prospect's spouse will be interviewed to assess the spouse's level of support for the move to start a new church. (Such support is crucial. It is a difficult journey for a spouse to leave an existing church with an existing support structure and begin a new church start where nothing exists.)
- **Time commitment:** A commitment of 3 to 5 years by both the prospect and the Bishop's Cabinet is important to the new church start process. However, during the second year, a clear realization of the likelihood of failure may lead to termination of the new church start before the third year starts.