

CHURCH PLANTING NATIONAL REPORT - 2015
A SURVEY OF CHURCH PLANTERS IN SEVENTEEN DENOMINATIONS

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.

An analysis was made of the 843 church plants of which United Methodist planters represented 11.5% of the responders. Several initial observations among the United Methodist church planters who completed the survey:

- 73% white/Caucasian; 19% Hispanic/Latino; 6% Asian/Pacific Islander; and 2% Black/African American
- 50% intentionally sought to reach a cross-cultural or multi-ethnic group of people
- 23% of the church plants surveyed are multi-ethnic
- 79% hold primary worship on Sundays; 21% on weekdays; 5% on varies week to week; 1% on Saturday
- 39% of the planters work on planting more than 60 hours a week; 42% work 40 to 59 hours a week; 9% work 20 to 39 hours a week; and 9% work less than 20 hours a week.

As we begin to unpack the survey, we are beginning to understand factors present in new churches that have: 1) the higher worship attendance; 2) witnessed more new decisions for Christ; 3) have a majority of unchurched in the congregation; 4) have reached financial self-sufficiency, and 5) have multiplied by starting another new church.

Below we will take a look at each of these five major benchmarks.

WHAT FACTORS ARE PRESENT IN NEW CHURCHES THAT HAVE HIGHER WORSHIP ATTENDANCE?

United Methodist new churches exceeded the average attendance of the typical new church in each of the first five years. In year one, UMC churches averaged 53, while the typical new church among the seventeen denominations averaged 51. By the 5th year, UMC churches averaged 175 while the typical church averaged 146 in worship.

Factors present in the survey that contributed to higher worship attendance included:

- **Highly public presence visible to community**
 1. Churches that met in public school average 187 in 4th year. Those who met elsewhere averaged 94 in 4th year.
 2. Churches that met in warehouse/industrial space average 238 in 4th year. Those who met elsewhere averaged 111 in 4th year.
 3. Use of mailers as one of top 3 forms of publicity average 173 in 4th yr. Those that didn't averaged 110 in 4th year.
 4. Use radio or television as one of the top 3 forms of publicity average 208 4th year. Those that didn't averaged 120 in 4th year.
- **Commitment to multiplication permeates their culture**
 1. Churches that planted a daughter church within first 5 years averaged 204 in 4th year. Those who did not birth another new church averaged 98 in the 4th year.
 2. Churches that financially contributed to other new church plants averaged 150 in 4th year. Those who do not averaged 80 in the 4th year.

3. Partnering with another organization to plant another church averaged 156 in 4th year. Those who do not averaged 94 in the 4th year.
 4. Leaders invest in or mentor other new church leaders at least quarterly avg. 167 in 4th yr. Those who do not averaged 85 in the 4th year.
- **Generous support of planter compensation from denomination whether its full, half or part-time**
 1. Churches who planting leaders received a min of a month-long training by their denomination averaged 247 in the 4th year. Those who did not receive training averaged 120 in the 4th year.
 2. Church planter receives financial compensation average 142 in the 4th year. Those who did not receive financial compensation averaged 59 in the 4th year.
 3. Church planter “feels” compensation adequately meets needs average 162 in 4th year. Those who do not, averaged 93 in 4th year.
 4. Health insurance provided for the planter averaged 155 in the 4th year. Those without health insurance averaged 104 in 4th year.
 5. Experience of planting meets expectations of the church planter averaged 146 in the 4th yr. Those who did not, averaged 102 in 4th year.
 - **Leadership Development**
 1. Planter received a minimum of a month-long training course averaged 247 in 4th year. Those who did not, averaged 120 in 4th year.
 2. Churches that have new member classes averaged 139 in 4th year. Those who did not hold new member classes averaged 98 in the 4th year.
 - **Rapid Financial self-sufficiency**
 1. Church being financially self-sufficient within three years averaged 138 in 4th year. Those who did not, averaged 85 in 4th year.

WHAT FACTORS ARE PRESENT IN THE NEW CHURCHES THAT WITNESSED MORE NEW DECISIONS FOR JESUS CHRIST?

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:

- **Highly public presence visible to community**
 1. Church uses public school, industrial or warehouse space as worship site had 23 new commitments in 4th year. Those not in public school had 14th new commitments in the 4th year.
 2. Church uses industrial or warehouse space as facility had 56 in 3rd year and 33 in 4th year. Those not in a industrial or warehouse had 15 new commitments in 4th year.
 3. Churches that use podcasts as a form of communication had 27 new commitments in 4th year. Those who do not use podcast had 14 new commitments in 4th year.
 4. Churches that use mailers as one of their top three forms of publicity had 28 in 4th year. Those who do not use mailers had 14 new commitments in the 4th year.
 5. Use contact management system as form of electronic communication had 24 in 4th year. Those who did not had

16 new commitments in the 4th year.

6. Use podcast as regular form of electronic communication had 27 new commitments in 4th year. Those who did not had 14 new commitments in the 4th year.
- **Intentional Outreach Activities and Programs**
 1. Conduct revival meetings as an outreach activity (predominately in ethnic churches)
 2. Regularly mails church invitations as outreach activity had 20 new commitments in 4th year. Those who did not, had 15 new commitments in 4th year.
 3. Churches using sports league as a form of outreach, had 23 new in commitments 4th year. Those who did not use sports had 15 new commitments in theirs.
 - **Intentionally Developing Lay Leaders – unleashing laity for ministry**
 1. Churches that offer a leadership development plan for lay members had 22 commitments in 3rd year and 19 commitments in the 4th year.
 2. Churches w/o leadership development plan had 11 and 12 commitments in the 3rd and 4th year.
 3. Church having a proactive stewardship development plan enabling the church to be financially self-sufficient had 20 new commitments in 4th year. Those who did not, had 12 new commitments in 4th year.
 - **Preparation for Multiplication**
 1. Church becomes financially self-sufficient within three years had a total of 62 new commitments by the 4th year. Those who do not, had a total of 55 new commitments by 4th year.
 2. Church provided financial compensation for church planter had 18 commitments in 4th year. Those who do not, had 12 new commitments in the 4th year.
 3. Church plants a daughter church within 1st five years had total of 106 new commitments by the 4th year. Those who do not plant another church, had a total of 46 new commitments by 4th year.
 4. Church staff invests (mentors, trains, interns, residency, coaches, etc.) in new or potential church planters at least once a quarter had 22 new commitments in the 4th year. Those who do not, had 11 new commitments in the 4th year.

WHAT FACTORS ARE PRESENT IN NEW CHURCHES WHO HAVE A MAJORITY OF UNCHURCHED ATTENDING WORSHIP?

United Methodist new churches outperformed the typical new church in reaching the previously unchurched and those who were 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.

- The survey indicates that churches that simply do something are more effective than churches who don't. It also indicates that churches who create opportunities for the message of Christ to be shared with unchurched people are the most effective in reaching the unchurched.
 1. 37% that use a community hall or recreation center as a facility have a majority unchurched attendees. 33% of those not using community hall have a majority unchurched attendees.
 2. 38% that use a contact management system as a regular form of electronic communication. 33% of those who

do not use contact management system have a majority unchurched.

3. 37% that use podcasts as a regular form of communication have majority unchurched attendees. 33% of those who do not use podcasts have majority unchurched attendees
- Have an intentional strategy to use techniques that lead to increased number of unchurched people engaging with the new church.
 1. 44% conduct revival meetings as an outreach activity (predominately ethnic churches). 33% of those who do not conduct revival meetings have majority unchurched attendees.
 2. 50% who launch affinity group meetings for people in the community (Bunco nights, Monday Night Football, Movie Nights, etc.) have majority unchurched attendees. 33% who don't launch affinity groups have majority unchurch attendees.
 3. 45% who use door hangers or flyers as a form of outreach, are majority unchurched. 31% of those who don't use door hangers have majority unchurched attendees.
 4. 45% who use door-to-door outreach as a primary strategy for launch, are majority unchurched. 33% of those who don't use door to door have majority unchurched attendees.
 5. 37% who use special events for kids as a primary form of outreach, are majority unchurched. 30% of those who don't have special kids events have majority unchurched.
 6. 38% who use prayer walking in preparation for their launch, are majority unchurched. 33% of those who don't use prayer walks have majority unchurched attendees.
 7. 38% who use outreach Bible studies as a form of outreach, are majority unchurched. 30% who don't use Bible studies for outreach are majority unchurched.
 8. 46% who use sports leagues as a primary form of outreach, are majority unchurched. 32% who don't use sports leagues have majority unchurch attendees.

WHAT FACTORS ARE PRESENT IN NEW CHURCHES WHO HAVE BECOME FINANCIALLY SELF-SUSTAINING BY YEAR FIVE?

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.

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

- **Prioritize a public presence**
 1. 71% of churches putting sermons online as a communication tool are self-sufficient within 1st 3 years. Those that don't, 57%.
 2. 74% of churches using school as a meeting space are self-sufficient within 1st 3 years. Meet elsewhere, 60%
 3. 75% Use newspaper or other print ads to communicate news of a new church in the community. Those that don't, 63%.
- **Focus on new member assimilation to develop leaders well**
 1. 71% of the churches holding a new members class are self-sufficient within 1st 3 years. Those that don't, 53%.
 2. 68% who develop a leadership training plan for their members are self-sufficient within 1st 3yr. Those that don't,

57%.

- **Handle money well**
 1. 72% of the churches that develop a proactive church stewardship to move the church to self sufficiency. Those that don't 53%.
 2. 71% of the churches that financially contribute to other church plants. Those that don't 54%.

This seems counterintuitive. This study seems to indicate that if the focus is not on self, but beyond self to create even more new disciples by starting more new churches, it leads to greater generosity among attenders.

- **Multiplication Focus**
 1. 72% of the churches who plant at least 1 daughter church within the first 3 years are self-sufficient within 1st 3 years. Those who don't, 62%.

This seems counterintuitive. This study seems to indicate that people give to vision. When pastor leads church to have a big vision for expansion and multiplication, and the church commits to that vision, churches are more likely to give sacrificially, increasing the likelihood they will reach financial self-sufficiency.

WHAT FACTORS ARE PRESENT IN CHURCHES THAT HAVE MULTIPLIED BY STARTING ANOTHER NEW CHURCH WITHIN THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF THEIR EXISTENCE?

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 1st 5 years. In United Methodist new churches, 13% have started a daughter church within 1st 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 multiply into other new churches; effectively working toward movement multiplication.

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**
 2. 27% Use a church building, industrial or warehouse as a facility, give birth with in the first 5 years. 20% of those who use different type facilities give birth within the first 5 years.
 3. 26% Use mailers to publicize the news of a new church in the community. 19% of those who don't use mailers
 4. 23% of those who promote new church using internet, websites and email blasts. 19% of those who don't use internet.
 5. 36% of those who post a blog as a regular form of electronic communication. 16% of those who don't blog
 6. 40% of those who use a contact management system as a regular form of electronic communication. 19% of those without such a system.
 7. 25% of those who post sermons online. 17% of those who do not post sermons.
 8. 40% of churches that utilize a podcast as a means of communication. 16% of those who do not utilize podcast.
- **Intentional Programs and Activities**
 1. 27% who conduct regular revival meetings give birth to another church within 5 years. 20% of those without revival meetings give birth to another church within 5 years.
 2. 34% who have sports league activities as an outreach. 19% of those without sports activities
- **Commitment to Discipleship, Member and Leadership Development**
 1. 26% of new churches that practice one-on-one discipleship. 14% of those who do not practice one-on-one

discipleship.

2. 26% of new churches that require a membership covenant for anyone joining the church. 16% of those who do not require a membership covenant.
 3. 24% who offer a new member's class. 16% of those who do not offer a new member's class.
 4. 24% who offer evangelism training including one-on-one training or a class or workshop 18% of those who do not offer evangelism training.
 5. 26% of new churches that have an intentional stewardship plan. 13% of those who do not have stewardship plan.
- **Plant and Planter Preparation**
 1. 25% of new churches receiving denominational funding will give birth within 1st 5 years. 12% of those who do not, will give birth to another church within 1st 5 years.
 2. 31% of new churches that receive outside funding from a sponsor or church. 10% of those who do not.
 3. 25% of churches that obtain demographic analysis and assessment of the community. 14% of those who do not.
 4. 32% of churches that receive demographic and or research expertise. 12% of those who do not.
 5. 29% whose planter attends conferences on church planting. 15% of those who do not.
 6. 26% of Planters assessed by a denomination or church planting network. 12% of those who are not.
 7. 26% of Planters who enlist several personal prayer partners prior to starting the new work and continuing to engage their prayer support during the 1st year of the new church work. 9% of those who do not.
 8. 26% of Planters actively engaged in a plan of personal spiritual formation during the duration of the new church start. 13% of those who do not.
 9. 29% of Planter's experience meeting their expectations. 13% of those who do not.
 - **Intentional about creating specific pathways to make multiplication happen**
 1. 35% of Church that partners with another organization to plant another new church. 8% of those who do not.
 2. 31% of churches that contribute financially to other church plants. 6% of those who do not.
 3. 32% of churches who regularly communicates to the whole congregation a commitment to start another new church. 11% of those who do not.
 4. 36% of Churches whose staff invests (mentors, trains, interns, residency, coach, etc.) in new or potential church planters at least once a quarter. 8% of those who don't.

IN SUMMARY, 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 YEAR; 2) WITNESSING MORE NEW DECISION 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 STUDY 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.