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## Starting New Churches

The church approaches its task of spreading the gospel of Christ through diligent outreach motivated by a desire to extend the Kingdom of God in the lives of individuals and society. Starting new churches is a vital means of outreach for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as it has been from the beginning of the Christian movement. Church planting is regarded as the most effective evangelistic methodology today, and indeed it was the method chosen by the apostles. A denomination which aspires to be faithful to the Great Commission must start new congregations. While there are many ways to be obedient to Christ's Great Commission, developing new Christian congregations is an essential and fundamental one.

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For many persons, the call of Christ is heard for the first time through a new church. The new congregation is compelled to go where the people are, rather than wait for the people to come. As Christ came to seek and save, so the new church reaches out. New congregations also offer the opportunity of a fresh start to persons who have lapsed into church inactivity, or who have little previous church experience as adults. Unhampered by rigorous traditions which often seem irrelevant to the unchurched, developing congregations can provide "new skins" for the "new wine" of the gospel. It is not uncommon for up to seventy percent of the constituency of new congregations to come from unchurched or nominal Christian backgrounds. The developing congregation provides an avenue for church leadership and sharing of spiritual gifts among mature Christians as well. They are frequently the core group of an emerging church, and by their faithfulness, openness, and dedicated witness they can set a winsome example to attract new believers.

Yet "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." [Psalm 127:1] Christ builds his church upon the rock of human faith and testimony, as the Lord's response to Peter's confession affirms. [Matthew 16:18] The Savior calls his followers to share his desire to seek and find the lost, and indeed to be co-workers in his building of the church to the glory of God. [1 Corinthians 3:9]

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So new church development is not fundamentally a human enterprise, but is a response to the divine initiative of grace, inspired and empowered by the Spirit. It is the church's attempt to relate in culturally specific ways, without capitulating to the culture's values as contrasted with those of the gospel. New church development stands as a witness to the Kingdom of God and as such must resist in its fellowship those attitudes, practices, prejudices, and loyalties which characterize the world in its estrangement from God. In this sense new church development has a special role to play in assisting the covenant community's response to the call to be, as Christ's representative in the world, a "light to the nations."

[Fellowship Steering Committee Guidelines](#)

[Resources for New Church Development](#)