

...4 Church Vitality & New Churches



Just as our ancestors began the congregations that we currently belong to, we know that God continues to call us to begin new congregations. In some places, there are growing communities where we have no churches. In other places, there is a constituency that is not being served, such as an ethnic or minority community whose culture and perhaps language are different than ours. In still other places, we need to gather new congregations in order to meet the faith needs of another generation---one attuned to a different sense of spirituality or longing for a different form of worship or music.

Our New Church Team is working extraordinarily hard right now to learn about how the most successful new congregations are being planted. We know that we will need the cooperation of all of our existing congregations, large and small, as we reach into new communities. In many cases, a core group will be gathered who might meet in one of our churches or in a library or fire hall or perhaps even in a local restaurant, coffee bar or pub. As that core group gets acquainted and begins activities such as bible study, prayer and community service, they will decide when it is time for them to call a pastor. But we will need to provide support in a variety of ways, such as identifying coaches, church planters, and appropriate facilities.

Here are a few models new congregations are using:

The Branch Office---a single congregation which is strong and growing identifies a new to begin a related congregation to expand their potential for ministry.

The Nested Church---one or more congregations identify an ethnic or other underserved constituency and begin to gather a core group that meets in an existing UCC church.

The Mall Church---one or several congregations identifies that there is an unchurched population that requires a different approach from our traditional congregations. They come together to provide initial support and identify an empty shop in a strip mall or other location which can be the permanent home of a new and growing group of seekers.

No matter which model [and there are many others] we estimate that each new church planted will need at least \$100,000 of initial support.

- In addition to planting new churches, the Campaign will also support revitalization efforts in our existing churches. There will be multiple opportunities for churches to engage in vital church practices and to participate in a three year program, using UCC resources, that will enable our churches
- to become more passionate about sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in their communities,
 - to be ready to receive newcomers with an extravagant welcome,
 - to pass on the faith through prayer and spiritual nurture and formation,
 - and to involve their communities through actions which promote the justice of God.

\$1,500,000 of the funds raised by the [4 Our Churches](#) Campaign will support new and revitalized churches.