

**CHURCH PLANTING POLICY
OF THE OHIO PRESBYTERY MISSIONS COMMITTEE**

**Adopted by the Ohio Presbytery
October 6, 2018**

Section 1 OUR VISION & MISSION

By God's grace, in the power of His Holy Spirit, and for the glory of Jesus Christ—we long to see the Gospel advance throughout Ohio and beyond as we plant and renew churches that are faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed Faith, and obedient to the Great Commission.

As a missions committee, we exist to assist the Ohio Presbytery—through the cooperative prayers and efforts of her churches and members—in planting and renewing Gospel-advancing churches throughout Ohio and beyond.

***“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ . . .
standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side
for the faith of the Gospel . . .”***

–Philippians 1:27

Section 2 OUR CORE COMMITMENTS

1. **CORE COMMITMENTS OF OUR CHURCH PLANTS:** Church plants initiated or supported by the Missions Committee (MC) of the Ohio Presbytery (OP) should exhibit the following biblical and Reformed characteristics:
 - a. Commitment to the Glory of God: The ultimate purpose for church planting is the glory of God in Christ. Our concern for the lost is only a God-centered motivation in church planting when we see their worth as image-bearers of God and pursue their saving joy in and for His glory.
 - b. Commitment to the Gospel: There is no greater display of God's glory than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We cannot pursue the glory of God in church planting without pursuing our passion for Christ in the Gospel.
 - c. Commitment to the Joy of All Peoples in Christ: We cannot pursue the glory of God in church planting without also pursuing the joy of all peoples in Christ. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism reminds us, “*Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.*” Pursuit of God's glory and man's joy in church planting constitute one end and not two, because in church planting we call people to glorify God by enjoying Him through the Gospel.
 - d. Commitment to the Marks of the Church: The faithful preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and exercise of church discipline are essential marks of a true church. Every church plant must be committed to preserving and promoting the purity of these marks by way of Christ-centered expository preaching, joyous and regular celebration at the Lord's Table, and faithful elders who shepherd the flock willingly and eagerly.
 - e. Commitment to the Mission of the Church: The mission of the church, simply put, is the Great Commission—gathering new believers by evangelism, nurturing and equipping them by discipleship, and sending them to evangelize and disciple others. This is the all-encompassing mission which determines, defines, and directs every ministry initiative the church undertakes.

- f. Commitment to the Ordinary Means of Grace: Success in church planting is not marked primarily by the number of new disciples, but by fidelity to and reliance upon the Gospel of Christ. It is not the circumstances or manner by which the means of grace are presented that carry the power of God to salvation. It is Christ, as He is prayerfully held forth in the Word and sacraments, who saves sinners.
- g. Commitment to Evangelism: Evangelism—the verbal communication of the Gospel in reliance upon the Holy Spirit—is not only the responsibility of the ordained clergy, but of every believer in Christ. Simply put, to be a disciple is to be a disciple maker. The church’s elders must equip believers in this work, and must labor to cultivate a Great Commission mindset/ethos in the church so that members delight to join them in the spread of the Gospel.
- h. Commitment to Discipleship: The Great Commission calls us to make disciples, not just decisions. The church must be committed growing not only in breadth, but also in depth. As Westminster Confession 25:3 states, our mission consists of both “*the gathering [evangelism] and perfecting [discipleship] of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world.*” Members must be taught, encouraged, and equipped to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and to serve Him with gladness.
- i. Commitment to Holistic Ministry: As we declare the Gospel with words, we must also adorn the Gospel with deeds of love and mercy. Holistic ministry involves meeting the needs of the whole person—spiritual as well as physical. This is not only the responsibility of the diaconate, but of every believer in Christ. By ministering in this way to those inside and outside the church, we not only fulfill the Great Commandments, we also enhance our fulfilling of the Great Commission.
- j. Commitment to Contextualization: When the Apostle Paul calls us, for the sake of the Gospel, to become “*all things to all people, so that by all means we might save some*” (1 Cor 9:22), he is calling us to contextualize. That is, we must prayerfully discern whom God has called us to reach for Christ and how we can communicate to them the Christian faith in a way that is intelligible and accessible, uncompromising in message and method, and balanced in both cultural confrontation and cultural sensitivity. By prioritizing biblical principles over personal and cultural preferences, we will be more likely to serve others above ourselves, accommodate them in matters of indifference, and remove unnecessary obstacles to their understanding of and growth in the Gospel.
- k. Commitment to Gospel-Centered Community: The Gospel creates, shapes, and guides how we must live together in Christian community. It is the basis for our mutual love, mercy, and unity as the family of God. Without this Gospel-centered community, the church cannot fulfill her mission.
- l. Commitment to Diversity: The Gospel is for all people, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic class, *etc.* This is not only the clear teaching of Scripture, but also of the Reformed understanding of the image of God and the Doctrines of Grace. We desire to see and celebrate the diversity of the Kingdom represented in the makeup of our churches.
- m. Commitment to Prayer: We express our delight in and dependence upon the sovereignty of God in church planting by prioritizing prayer. We recognize that only the Holy Spirit can (1) enable churches to fulfill the Great Commission faithfully, and (2) enable lost people to repent and believe the Gospel. Our inabilities and God’s adequacies magnify His glory and provide us hope in church planting.
- n. Commitment to the Constitution of the PCA: As a presbytery of the PCA, we are committed to planting Reformed churches that adhere, in faith and practice, to the subordinate standards that make up our constitution—the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter catechisms, and our Book of Church Order.
- o. Commitment to the OP: Biblical church government is interconnected and mutually supporting. As the OP is committed to the support of church plants, they in turn must be committed to the support of, cooperation with, and accountability to the OP.

Section 3

PHILOSOPHY FOR CHURCH PLANTING

1. **WHEN TO PLANT A CHURCH:** Among the many considerations for determining when/where to plant a church, two are outstanding:
 - a. Defining the Purpose: Lost, unconverted sheep—whether they be unchurched, dechurched, or otherwise—must be the primary target group for new church plants. The Apostle Paul made it his ambition “*to preach the Gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation*” (Rom 15:20; *c.f.* 2 Cor 10:13-18). Secondly, they also target converted, but malnourished sheep who can grow under their ministry and join them in their mission to reach the lost. This is not to prioritize evangelism over discipleship. Those whom the church gathers, they also perfect (WFC 25:3). It does, however, emphasize that discipleship equips believers to be active contributors in the church’s mission, not merely passive consumers of the church’s ministry (Eph 4:12).
 - b. Identifying the Need: Notwithstanding our commitment to plant PCA churches, we recognize that the PCA is not the only true and healthy church. Therefore, when assessing the need for a new church in a given area, the first question to consider is not, “Does this area lack our denomination?” but rather, “Does this area lack a sufficient number of healthy evangelical churches that are faithfully saturating the community with the Gospel and effectively multiplying?” Using this criteria, there is clearly a need for new churches throughout our boundaries in a variety of settings—urban, suburban, exurban, and rural. We desire to see churches planted in all settings.
2. **VARIOUS MODELS:** There are several biblical and viable approaches for planting new churches. The most common models include:
 - a. Church Planter Initiated: Sometimes called a “parachute” model. The planter gathers his own core group with a vision to planting in a particular area. Primary oversight may come from the MC, a local church, or a combination thereof.
 - b. Core Group Initiated: When a core group has formed organically with a vision to planting in their area, they may initiate the process by requesting oversight from the MC, a local church, or a combination thereof.
 - c. Presbytery Initiated: Either the MC or another ad hoc segment of the OP initiates the process by bringing a recommendation to the OP, who then calls a planter. There may be an existing core group, or the planter may be called to form his own. Primary oversight comes from the MC or the initiating segment of the OP.
 - d. Local Church Initiated: Sometimes called a “Mother/Daughter” model. A local church with a vision to planting in a particular area initiates the process and calls an assistant pastor to be their planter. The local church may do so alone, in cooperation with a sister congregation, the MC, a church planting network, or a combination thereof. A core group may come from the mother church, or the planter may be called to form his own. Primary oversight comes from the mother church, or from joint oversight with the MC.
 - e. Other: While church planting is the primary means of establishing new PCA churches, it is not the only means. New PCA churches may begin by way of vital mergers, replants, multi-sites, existing churches joining the PCA, *etc.* Sources of primary oversight may differ with each.

3. **TRANSPARENCY:** In the spirit of Matthew 7:12 (“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”) the OP desires transparency in its church planting efforts with affected PCA, NAPARC, and other like-minded churches. This includes:
 - a. Before initiating a new plant, feedback should be sought from PCA, NAPARC, and other like-minded churches in the affected geographical area (e.g. within the same and adjacent zip codes) along with approval from the OP through the MC. Clear, open lines of communication with sister congregations and presbyteries will help to avoid the perception of “sheep-stealing” and will strengthen our partnerships and cooperation for the advance of the Gospel.
 - b. Carefully selecting site locations for church plants to minimize geographical overlapping or infringing of existing PCA, NAPARC, and other like-minded churches seeking to reach the same area with the Gospel.
4. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Regardless of the church planting model used, the MC, under the authority of the OP (see OP Bylaws Article 5, 5-5, 2), is responsible for each PCA church plant within our geographical boundaries. This includes:
 - a. Regular reporting to the MC on church planting efforts, including an account of church planting funds. It is especially important that new plants inform the MC if they are struggling. This affords us the opportunity to proactively increase our support (e.g. prayer, resources, etc.) for the success of the plant. This also helps us learn from church plants that do not particularize on how we might avoid those struggles in future plants.
 - b. In addition to reports during each Presbytery meeting, we will make regular contact with every church plant or church planter to get a fair and accurate assessment of the church plant, including problems and difficulties that could hinder or close the work.
5. **ASKINGS:** We believe that every church in our Presbytery should contribute to church planting in our Presbytery through the recommended askings reflected in our Presbytery budget. Without this support, we will not be effective at recruiting new planters, starting new plants, and supporting existing plants. We realize such gifts are voluntary and require transparency from the MC. Adequate funding is built upon trust. Our goal is 100% participation of the OP churches.
6. **FUNDING NEW PLANTS:** The MC will receive requests from church plants and planters for presbytery funding and evaluate those requests in accordance with this policy. Committee recommendations—whether for or against funding—will be brought to the OP for final approval. Funding guidelines are as follows:
 - a. Those church plants requesting funding from the MC must be in agreement with our core commitments and philosophy of planting. Given the high correlation between assessed planters and successful plants (see appendices A and B), MNA Assessment or some other church planting training/experience approved by the MC will also be required of the planter. The MC will also assist planters with the costs thereof.
 - b. In addition to designated givings, the MC may recommend funding up to \$15,000 per year for up to three years per church plant.
 - c. Realizing that the Presbytery cannot fully fund a church plant or planter, we will work with each to identify other sources of funding, as well as ways to quickly become financially independent.
 - d. The MC will oversee a church planting budget, and provide proper accounting of church planting funds for Presbytery’s review.
 - e. The MC will be equitable with its funding recommendations for every church plant of the OP.

Appendix A

THE VALUE OF CHURCH PLANTER ASSESSMENT AND BOOT CAMPS

Ed Stetzer

Planting a church is hard enough. It is more difficult when the planter doesn't have solid support and resources. And we're not talking about money here. Church planter development is a crucial element to giving new churches a real chance to succeed.

I'm a big believer in facts and figures, not because they tell the whole story, but because they help the story make sense. Several years ago, I did a study to find out what successful church planters had in common. I surveyed over 600 seminary graduates who went on to plant churches. One of the most interesting things I found in this study had to do with the success rate among those who had extended training beyond seminary.

Everyone in my study had finished a three-year 90-credit hour Masters in Divinity. At the end of that, they could either participate in a three-day boot camp or not. About half did, and half did not. Four years later, those who did were leading churches that were substantially larger than those who did not.¹

So, yes, three days of church planting training made a huge difference after three years of seminary training.

Church planters greatly benefit from focused training

We can't say that a boot camp is everything, but we can say that the difference between the groups was not theological schooling. Rather, it was focused training. What we discover from anecdotal experience is that people who go through some sort of boot camp find it to be an exceedingly helpful part of their process. Why? Because such training includes intensified instruction in areas that are more specific to church planters.

Years ago, as we were doing research to develop training, we identified seven challenges faced by most church planters. These seven areas are:

1. Leadership development and reproducing culture
2. Financial self-sufficiency and viability
3. Team development and volunteer mobilization
4. Systems, processes, and cultures
5. Vision casting and avoiding mission drift
6. Evangelism and discipleship
7. Spiritual, physical, and mental health of planter and family

We aren't saying that these issues aren't present in established churches, but they don't exist in the same way. In established churches, you usually have systems, processes, and cultures. Discipleship is happening in some way. There is a reproducing culture of some sort. Whether or not these exist in a healthy state in an established church may be a good question, but they are already present at some level. For the church plant, these things need to be created, requiring a specific set of skills and tools.

Boot camps have been created to provide training in these areas. Planters should not leave one of these training experiences simply with ideas, but with a notebook full of tools to help them deal with issues that will

¹ Ed Stetzer is not arguing for an inextricable connection between biblical fidelity and large churches. Indeed, he elsewhere writes, "*Many American Christians have this idea that if a church is big, it must be better. Not necessarily. Our obsession with "bigness" can be a reflection of American values, rather than biblical ones. Too often we pull our cultural values into our grid for measuring church success. Size is not necessarily the best measurement for church health.*" (see <https://edstetzer.com/2017/11/should-our-smaller-church-be-growing>). Rather, he's arguing that, in many cases, church plants fail to grow for reasons that church planter training may help avoid (e.g. inadequate core team development, neglect of evangelism, church planter burnout, etc.).

arise in their work. What a planter gains in one of these intensives is ongoing resources to which they can refer back as they encounter the various challenges.

I believe in this level of training so much that if I were to combine two elements together and encourage you to make a higher level of investment in your vocational planters, I would suggest taking church planter assessment to the next level, and put the planters through a three-day boot camp. This is about finding the best people for the mission, and better equipping those people. We aren't trying to replace the Holy Spirit by creating these systems. We are trying to be good stewards of the mission and people God has given us.

As far as better assessment, there should be a process. That process has several steps—and they should not be skipped. However, increasingly, groups are seeing that the last step (for vocational planters) needs to be an intensive retreat.

I'm talking about moving from one-on-one assessment interviews to actually having a weekend-like assessment process they walk through that will reveal more about where the candidate is.

Boot camps equip planters for the task ahead

When we talk about a boot camp or intensive training weekend, we are talking about depositing into planters those specific tools and resources that will give them a better chance of success in their specific calling. A boot camp situation is not a pep rally. It is a concentration of training. It gives you a chance to bring together like-minded people with a shared calling to build a team that you lead through a process. This isn't just an opportunity to talk about what everyone knows in regards to church planting. The participants should walk away with notebooks full of stuff they can open up months later to help them figure out the next step in whatever issue they are dealing with.

This is why those who go through a boot camp have such an advantage when it comes to succeeding over those who did not have such an experience. Because it is specific, it is more likely to be received and retained by the participants. Not only will they remember it because of the relevance, but they will also forge working relationships in the church planting network, which is another piece to the endurance puzzle. Camaraderie is built into this group training.

This is all about giving church planters a better chance to succeed. Taking the time to assess and provide intense training will help you identify, inform, and inspire a generation of planters. This doesn't take the place of theological training. But it gives a leg up to those who may normally be going into the field with a limited view of what to expect.

Appendix B

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN MNA ASSESSEMNT AND CHURCH PLANTING SUCCESS RATES*

Ted Powers

The overall success rate for church planting across denominations for years has been 25%. Those who do assessment can go as high as 80%. MNA's is 91% which is one reason Ed Stetzer says it's the best in the world and has demonstrated the strongest correlation to successful church planting. That's why we get observers coming from many denominations and from around the world to learn what we do (this next Assessment the Acts 29 Director of their Assessment will be there from England; others have come from Germany, Australia, China and other places). It's just good stewardship, of money and people, and thus many churches and donors who have historically supported church planting will no longer help fund someone who hasn't been assessed.

But Assessment, as is MNA, only serves the Church/PCA. We have no authority. We are just an agency of the Church. Thus it is up to the courts of the church to decide if it will be required of those planting within their bounds.

*This information was provided via email from Ted Powers on January 19, 2018.