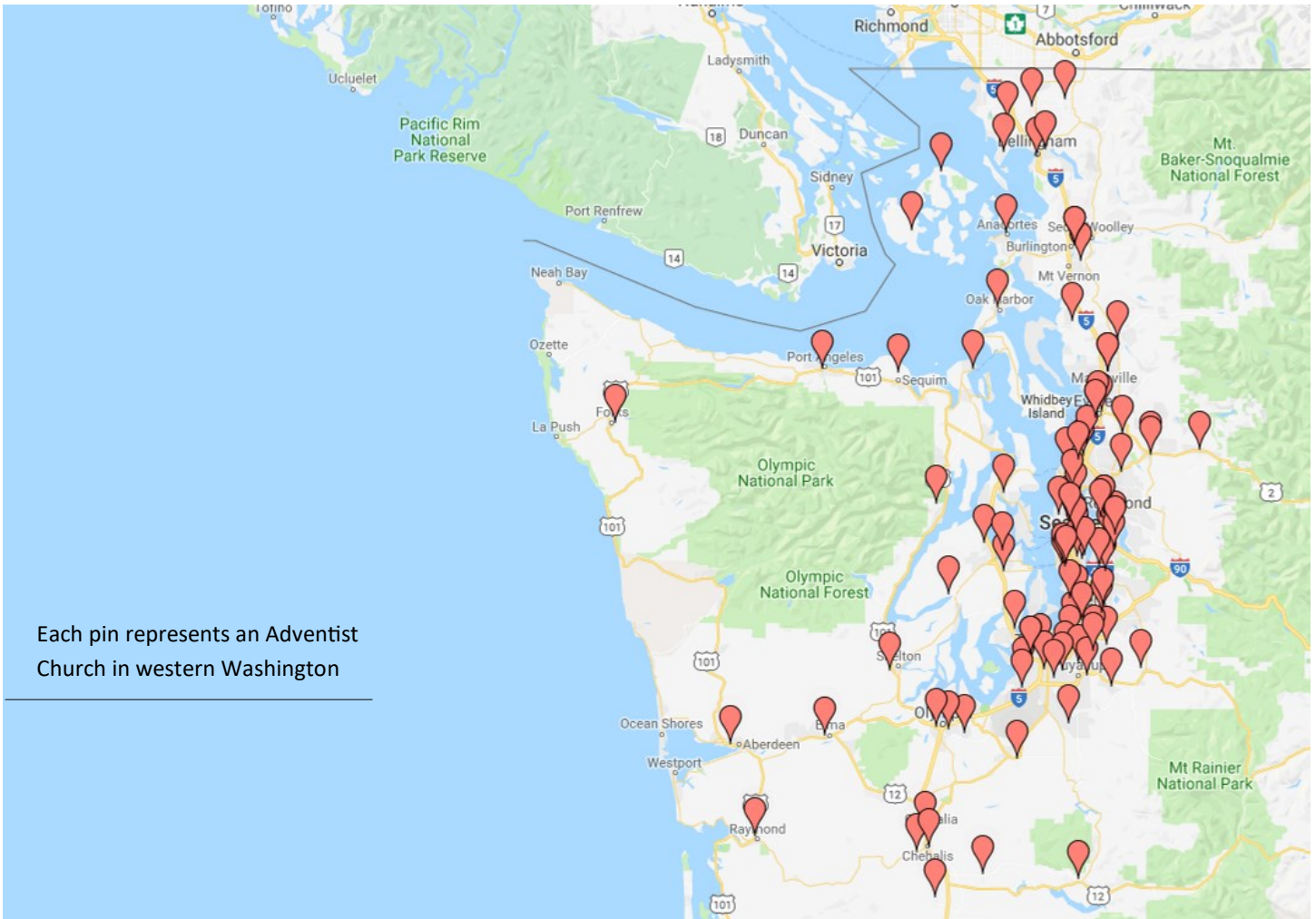




CHURCH PLANTING LAUNCH PLAN

*Your “big picture” guide to launching
a Seventh-day Adventist church plant
in western Washington!*





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Developed by Tyler Long and the Washington Conference Church Planting Team with insights from Evangelism Bootcamp & eHuddle. ©2018—Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 32229 Weyerhaeuser Way S, Federal Way, WA 98001



PRAYER PLANTING

Prayer Strategy for Church Planting

"To men [and women] who think praying is their main business . . . does God commit the keys of His kingdom, and by them does He work His spiritual wonders in this world." - E.M. Bounds

Why Prayer Planting?

The church is a spiritual organism that thrives on spiritual fuel. Prayer is the fuel that powers the Christian walk. The church was born in a 10-day prayer meeting that culminated on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4). Prayer was also foundational to the infant church, along with the apostles' teaching, fellowship, and communion (Acts 2:42). Because prayer was the "mother's milk" of the Holy Spirit-planted church of Christ, it would be foolish and even dangerous to plant new churches without it.

Those contemplating planting a church would be wise to do as the disciples were told by Jesus, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses," (Acts 1:4,8). A church planting version of this might be, "Do not start church planting until you wait on the Lord for the promised Holy Spirit power; and then you will be my witnesses where I direct you to go."

Therefore, at the inception of the vision to plant a church, a prayer movement should be planted. Prayer is the "womb" in which the embryonic church is conceived and develops.

First Steps

Once the “Why” of church prayer planting is answered, the next crucial questions are: Where is the new church to be planted? Who will this new church serve? What are the needs in the new community?

How do we proceed? The “How” involves crafting a vision and launch document, establishing a core team, and more. But planting prayer should be the first step.

Those whom the Lord has given the vision to plant a new church should immediately begin to pray over the above concerns, and implement an intercession strategy.

Intercession Strategy

- Recruit advance intercessory teams to research new ministry areas and lay the groundwork of prayer in those areas.
- Intercessors will pray for the “pioneer” teams who will start the work of outreach in those areas. (“Pioneers” may refer to lay leaders, pastors, Bible workers, evangelists, etc.)
- Intercessors will prayer-walk (“Pray on-sight with insight”) the targeted neighborhoods.
- Teams of two will pray and search for a “person of peace” (Luke 10:5-7), someone whom God has already begun preparing to bridge the message of Jesus into that community.
- Teams will take prayer requests and minister to people from door-to-door.
- Teams will conclude their prayer ministry at the door with a needs assessment survey. (“Before we go, what would you say are the greatest needs in this community?”)
- Intercessors have regular weekly prayer and fasting days and invest time every day in prayer and studying God’s Word—especially during the core team development process and writing of launch document.

Intercession Goals

Intercessors accomplish several things at the same time—1) serving the people in prayer ministry, 2) developing an intercessory prayer list from within the target area, 3) searching for/finding God’s person of peace, and 4) gathering needs assessment data from survey results.

The prayer plant will establish the soil in which the new church plant will flourish.

*“We need to have far less confidence in what man can do, and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. **He longs to have you expect great things from Him.**” - Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, p. 262*



WHY CHURCH PLANTING?

The Gospel calls us to plant churches.

The church that you have been attending at one time was a church plant. All of our churches started as a prayer and a vision. The Great Commission calls us to make disciples and baptize. Church planting provides the framework that focuses on both making disciples and baptizing.

When we follow the example given in the book of Acts, we see that the church was growing daily and God was raising new churches throughout the known world. If we follow the progression of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we see church planting is in our DNA, and as a result, the number of churches grew exponentially. When planting declines, so does our conversion growth and commitment to the Great Commission.

The local church is the hope of the world. Church planting is one of the fastest and most effective forms of evangelism as it reaches new generations, new residents, and new people groups. New churches grow faster than older churches. New churches gain 60-80 percent of members from people that are not attending an Adventist Church. Older churches gain 80-90 percent of their new members by transfers from other congregations.

Why plant new churches instead of focusing on the churches that are struggling?

"We should focus on helping our current churches instead of planting new ones," is like saying, "Let's not have babies because grandma is sick!" If churches are dying, it's good to have a few babies to replace them. Churches do not die because of church planting; in fact, on average it takes 6-12 months for the mother church to recover.

Current trends show that 4,000 churches close their doors every year in the United States with only 2,500 new churches starting. This gap becomes even more disparaging when you factor in that the un-churched population has increased by 93 percent over the past 13 years. It is easy to see that if those trends continue the church will be ill-equipped to meet the spiritual needs of the un-churched in this country.

If new churches, passionately pursuing Christ, do not come into existence, the number of unchurched people will continue to escalate, and lives will be lost. The church will also continue to lose social relevance within the US because of its lack of concern for social justice and the wellbeing of others. You are right to ask, "Why start another church?" When you realize what's at stake, the answer is easy to see.

Why community-oriented Adventist churches?

The definition of a church plant is a newly recognized mission group, less than five years old, that serves the community and worships regularly with the goal of becoming an organized church. A church that does not grow beyond its four walls is not a church, but a club.

With our church plants, we are not looking to have another church in the community, but a church with and for the community. There is a need in Washington Conference for churches to grow in quantity and quality. People love Jesus because Jesus loved people! Our goal is to plant churches that love people regardless of their baggage. All of us carry baggage, and we all need Jesus.





TYPES OF CHURCH PLANTS

Every church, and every church plant, is unique.

We should expect God, the Creator of a wildly diverse universe, to grow churches of diverse styles. This variety adds to the excitement of the church planting experience.

Not only is God moving in a direction that is fresh and uncertain, but God is doing something special. He has a specific church plant vision that is custom designed for the gifts of the planters and culture of the community they are reaching. Not all church plants will look the same, and that is a good thing!

Here are **three general models** that can be helpful to you as you seek to better understand the specific kind of church plant God has planned for you.

1. **Model 1** — Launch Small, Stay Small
2. **Model 2** — Launch Small, Grow Bigger
3. **Model 3** — Launch Big, Grow Bigger

Model 1: Launch Small, Stay Small

This model aims to launch as a house church and intentionally stay that way. It is committed to planting another house church as growth exceeds the desired size.

Launch Plan

- Connect with a dozen or so other people who want to grow spiritually
- Define how the group “does church” (How is the time spent? What is done for worship, teaching, serving...?)
- Choose a house location and set a start date
- Keep it simple

Strengths

- Naturally relational and intimate
- Easy to invite others to
- Appeals to some who would not attend church in a church building
- Develops leaders quickly
- Minimal expenses
- Good environment for discipleship

Challenges

- Difficult to ensure that leadership is organized and accountable
- Singing and teaching tend to be lower quality
- Limited ministry funds
- Less opportunity for involvement in various ministries and programs
- Less organized kids’ programming or supervision



Model 2: Launch Small, Grow Bigger

This model aims to develop into an established large church after launching with a small group.

Launch Plan

- Ministry presence in community before worship presence
- Launch with small core team as a house church or meeting in small rented space
- Grow intentionally and naturally until achieving the necessary attendance and funding to move into a church building

Strengths

- Growth in size corresponds to time of church existence
- Natural growth as God leads
- Creates a culture of buy-in for the growth of the church

Challenges

- Much change in growth process
- Church culture changes as size changes
- Difficult to provide strong leadership through changes



Model 3: Launch Big, Grow Bigger

This model aims for a grand opening with a large attendance, an established leadership, and a fully developed worship service all in an established location.

Launch Plan

- Develop large core team (30-70 people)
- Clearly defined vision
- Community engagement (seminars, events, socials, practice/preview services) leading up to a grand opening
- Develop leadership team/staff
- Secure worship facility (before launch)

Strengths

- Well received in current culture
- Quick growth
- Clearly set vision and culture
- A new and active start up church appeals to unchurched

Challenges

- Requires significant funding — rental site (or purchased facility), equipment, staff, community events, and marketing)
- Follow up to launch over next 4-6 weeks is crucial and difficult
- Possible high turn-over rate at start
- Difficult to implement functional structure in large church that is also a baby church

How to choose the model that is right for you

God doesn't start with how, but what. Abraham was given a promise, but the details of how the promise would come to pass were a mystery to him for many years. Moses was called to lead the people out of Egypt before God revealed how it would happen.

God gives the vision first, then the leads us into the how. We don't start with choosing a church planting model, we start with a vision to reach people for God and then we adopt a model that best carries out that vision. We must be careful not to fall in love with a church planting model more than we fall in love with the specific people God has called us to reach.

As you consider the cultural of the community you are reaching, the gifts of the church planters, and the vision God has put on your heart, you will grow in clarity as to which model you should adopt.





BUILDING YOUR CORE TEAM

One of the first steps in planting a church is building your core team.

You have to be very intentional with building your team. Having a strong team will save you many headaches down the road. When building the team, you are creating the very fabric of the church.

Church plants need to have a vision and core values. Draft the vision and core values of your church plant and share it with your core team. This document should be no more than one-page and you will use it to interview potential core members of the new church. You can also use it for fundraising.

It is recommended that you meet with each member of your core team individually and interview them. The vision of the church plant should set them on fire. If it doesn't, then do not have them as a part of your core team. Remember, your core team will be the DNA of your church plant.

When you meet with your core team, ask them the following questions:

- Will you pray about this new church?
- Do you know anyone else that would be excited about this? Network!
- What is your passion for ministry? Remember, everyone needs to be in a ministry.



COMMUNITY NEEDS

When it comes to church planting, you need to ask yourself the question: Who am I trying to reach?

As a church, we are the heart, eyes, hands, and the feet of Jesus in our communities. In Matthew 9:36, when Jesus saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion. What if we had the same compassion?

God does not call our ministers to pastor a church, but a whole community. A church that does not grow beyond its four walls is not a church, but a club. We are looking to create and plant a church that is for and with a local community.

Why did people love and follow Jesus?

- Was it because of the way He dressed?
- Did they follow Him because of his diet? Was He even vegetarian?
- Because of His taste of music?
- Because He was perfect?

People loved Jesus because Jesus loved people!

Church plants need to pray that God would give them such a love for their community in which they serve. We don't just want to reach people that look, talk, and act like us. We also want to reach people that are different. We talk about reaching Millennials, but what about additional unreached groups? What about single moms, Generation Z, or emerging immigrant groups? Planting immigrant churches is just as important as planting American-born churches.

Start by getting to know the core values of the community where you want to plant. Request a demographic study from the Washington Conference church planting coordinator. Talk to a minimum of 100-200 people in the community. Get to know the people. Who are you targeting? Your target audience will help you to know what the needs are, the style of service, language, and other valuable information that will help the church to become one with the community. Look for trends and needs.

The church plant leadership should represent the community. Church plants need to value and affirm the culture(s) in their community. Have each ministry in the church plant share how their ministry will serve the community. Every member of the church plant needs to be involved in at least one ministry. Our goal is not how we can be the best church in our community, but how can we be the best church for our community.

If you are going to plant a church that doesn't love all sinners, that doesn't care about what happens outside the walls of the building, and whose only purpose is to change the religion of people and judge their behavior, then don't plant a church. But if you are going to plant a church, center it on the salvation of God and the compassion of Jesus, a church that will be an agent of transformation in the community, then don't plant one church, plant 1,000 churches.

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world." - Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 1



MISSIONAL CHURCH

The Book of Acts reveals that fact that ministry must accompany the gospel presentations and in fact, almost always precedes it. Just as rain softens and prepares the soil for work, so ministry prepares and open the heart to hear the presentation of the gospel. It makes the good news believable because in some way people have already witnessed or experienced it firsthand.

See the first six chapters in the Book of Acts to examine this close relationship between “signs and service” and the message proclaimed.

A ministry-based church plant will seek engage in the following:

1. **Prayer** — First, last, and always.
2. **Know the target audience** — Obtain all the information one can on the social, economic, ethnic and spiritual fabric of the community they want to reach, paying special attention to needs and trends. Seek information from the library, Chamber of Commerce, and local government councils, while conducting an area survey (primary research) of your own.
3. **Planning and Self-assessment** — What is realistic for the group with the resources of time, talent, and accessibility?

What follows are various ideas that can aid a church planting in both the preparation of the community to hear the message of the gospel as well as the ongoing nurture and further “softening effect” that loving ministry can produce.

These are in no particular order or preference, but given to foster a church planting community to discuss, dream, plan and implement the call to take the good news and make disciples for the Kingdom of Heaven. A survey of the community in which one desires to plant a church can guide in the selection of ministry.

1. **Good Eats Socials:** If the group has people who have exceptional culinary skills or access to others who would help, plan a quarterly meeting [more often if desired and able] where people can invite their friends, neighbors, community to come and sample good tasting food [preferably on the healthy side though not always a must].

The goal is to gather around tables and partake of samples sharing what and why they like it. Have recipes available. It can be themed in many ways to ethnicity, or specific parts of a meal, ease of preparation for families, or other ideas. It may be a dessert theme or entrée. There are no limits except budget and imagination. The setting around a table is the most intimate of fellowships. *See Acts 2:42-47.* Also make sure the manner in which it is conducted be inclusive of all. *See Acts 6:1.*

2. **Monthly VBS Birthday Party:** This ministry event is already based on the well-proven method for outreach that has the priority of child as the target audience. Parents follow happy children and are more likely to go to places that contribute to their attempts to raise well-rounded happy children. The only variation of this model is the time and frequency which it is conducted. It should be held on Saturday afternoons, because that is the social time when the desired audience would be mostly likely to come in western cultures.

The best place to hold these meetings is in the target zone of the church plant. Invite all the neighborhood children and their families to attend. By having it only on a monthly basis, it allows the church plant volunteers to pace their ministry and energies. This has positive long term implications. If funds are available, make sure each child leaves with 1) an attendance bag, and 2) children with birthdays in that month receive a special extra gift and also qualify for a drawing for a new bike [suggestion is to have a gift certificate to a local Walmart to purchase a gender specific and age appropriate bicycle].

- 3) **Day of Service:** In the church plant target area, have a day dedicated to clean, repair, paint, help, etc., a specific neighborhood with home and lawn ministries. Beauty is something most people appreciate and respond to positively. This ministry helps others realize the presence of the people who have come to make their community a better place. Example: Union College's "Project Impact" annual day of service has grown from simple ministries to over 700 annual participants, touching over 50 identified community areas of need — from senior centers, special needs, public school system, and more.

- 4) **Single Mom's Ministry:** Put together baby clothes and supplies to give single moms who are financially struggling. Love is the language they need to hear right now. Offer a community safe refuge childcare for single moms for a couple hours so they can shop, refresh, or even fellowship. This, of course, is done with background screening, etc., in place and referenced in advertising. Time, a location, and compassion are the main resources needed for operation. Also one could plan a quarterly baby shower by contacting a local pregnancy center, HHS office or WIC Clinic — advertise at places where they are.

- 5) **LEGO Night:** Melissa was inspired by her six-year-old son to host a Lego Night at their local church. They invited the community and were pleased when 25 church members and 50 people in the community joined their family-friendly game and movie night. Take an interest area, and create a community meet-up night!

- 6) **Community Survey:** A great place to get a grasp on the community needs would also be local social services — inquire where they see needs. This is easy, especially around the holidays. Create food and gift baskets to give to targeted families with an invitation to a holiday social. Again, Saturday afternoon fits most western cultural agendas. Want to take this online? Join Facebook community groups and local Buy Nothing networks for interaction within a local community. You will see community needs on a regular basis!

- 7) **More Service Ideas:** Sometimes just prayerfully reviewing what others have done can inspire a church plant group with ways to minister and spread the gospel. Here are a couple links to get you started:
 - www.factsandtrends.net/2014/01/06/52-ideas-for-your-church-in-2014/
 - www.chuckwarnockblog.wordpress.com/2008/11/24/101-outreach-ideas-for-small-churches/





CHURCH PLANTING GUIDELINES

Washington Conference is committed to proclaiming the Good News of God's offer of salvation.

Churches or individuals who are interested in planting a church must submit a Church Planting Proposal to the Washington Conference Church Planting Committee. Churches start as a Mission Group and then move into Company Status before reaching Church Status. Below describes the process. Please include the following:

1. **Leadership** – Who will be the leader of this group?
2. **Purpose and Mission** – In what ways will this plant contribute to the overall mission of Washington Conference? Is there something that will make this group unique?
3. **Type of Plant** – Sponsored or unsponsored. If sponsored, what “mother church” has agreed to sponsor this plant? How will the mother church support the plant?
4. **Core Group** – Initial size and recruiting strategy of the core group.
5. **Location** – Where will the church exist? Please provide a map showing nearby existing Adventist Churches.



6. **Launch Date** – When will the plant start holding services?
7. **Meeting Space** – Where will the plant meet and will there be meeting space available outside of Sabbath hours for other activities such as small groups, evangelism, and socials?
8. **Pre-Launch Activities** – Provide a list of initially planned pre-launch activities.
9. **Evangelism Plan** – Provide an evangelism plan for the first three years. What is the projected growth for the first three years?
10. **Budget** – Provide a budget for the first three years. Please include building and meeting costs, ministry expenses, evangelism, etc.

When the Washington Conference church planting coordinator receives the proposal, the church plant will be added to the Global Mission website. Once added to the website, the church plant is in line to start receiving additional funding.

- Church planting proposals must meet demographic viability before being approved. If you need help with this, please contact our conference church planting coordinator.
- All church plants should receive voted support of a sponsoring “mother church.”
- Each church plant will have a pastor assigned as the leader. In case of a lay-led church plant, a pastor coach will need to be assigned.
- If the church plant is lay-led, the leader must receive a recommendation from the pastor where they hold church membership.
- It is beneficial for the sponsoring church to go through Natural Church Development (NCD) to make sure it is healthy enough for a church plant.
- The mother church will manage financial giving for all groups. A separate line item is set up for donations made by group members toward their planting project. The funds are available to the group as needs arise.

Mission Group

The factors considered to reach group status:

1. **Membership** – A projection of attendance for the first year.
2. **Financial** – If using the “Mother-Daughter” or the evangelistic model, a copy of the last month’s treasurer’s report, along with a schedule for the previous 12-months listing the parent church’s tithe income, church budget income, and conference offerings income.
3. **Budget** – A proposed budget for the first year of the new group.
4. **Support** – Adequate statement drafted by parent organization indicating proof of ability to provide adequate financial support for the new group.
5. **Physical Facilities** – If the church is renting a facility, please provide proof that the facility has been inspected and meets local fire, health, and safety codes. Please provide proof of insurance.

Company Status

After meeting for about a year, the mission group will be evaluated by the six qualifications listed below. A vote of the group's members to request the Washington Conference Executive Committee to authorize church organization should be communicated to the conference church planting coordinator by the assigned pastor of the group. It is the Washington Conference Executive Committee who authorizes the organization of the new company. Reaching company status is a time of celebration, and it is to be conducted by an ordained minister and one or more of the conference officers.

Six qualifications to reach company status:

1. **Membership** – There are no firm guidelines for a membership number, but it is recommended to have at least 25-30 members.
2. **Leadership** – Solid leadership is important. We would like to see how your company will be organized. How do you intend to grow and what are your evangelistic plans? It should be demonstrated that the major offices in the typical nominating committee list could be filled from the skills and gifts found among the members of the intended new company.
3. **Tithe** – The amount of annual tithe will be considered as this is a good gauge of the spiritual health of the congregation. A general guideline is a range of \$30,000 - \$50,000 of tithe per year. Offerings will also be considered because the group needs operating funds. Expenses such as rent, utilities, Sabbath School materials, and outreach are paid from local church offerings.
4. **Potential Growth** – How much growth has the group experienced since they first started and what is their projected continual growth?
5. **Mission Area** – It is important to consider the size of the population the new group intends to reach. Request an updated demographic study from our conference church planting coordinator.
6. **Good Fellowship** – It is vital the members of the intended new “company” have good fellowship and are in support of each other. It is also important to have a good relationship with the sisterhood of Washington Conference.

Church Status

There is no set amount of time to reach church status. Every group is different, but a general guideline is around five years. The new “church” will be evaluated based on the six qualifications listed below. A vote of the group’s members to request the Washington Conference Executive Committee to authorize church status should be communicated to the conference church planting coordinator by the assigned pastor of the group. It is the Washington Conference Executive Committee who authorizes the organization of the new church. This is a time of celebration, and it is to be conducted by an ordained minister and one or more of the conference officers.

Six qualifications to reach church status:

1. **Membership** – There are no firm guidelines for a membership number, but it is recommended to have at least 50 members.
2. **Leadership** – It should be demonstrated that the major offices in the typical nominating committee list could be filled from the skills and gifts found among the members of the intended new church.
3. **Tithe** – Because the new church will need to be put under the responsibility of a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, the amount of annual tithe will be considered. A general guideline in this conference is that if an annual tithe is in the range of \$100,000 - \$135,000 per year, a full-time pastor can be considered. Offerings should also be considered because the group needs operating funds. Expenses such as rent, utilities, Sabbath School materials, and outreach are paid from local church offerings.
4. **Potential Growth** – The application for a new church should be accompanied by a report of growth since the new “company” were established and a projection of the potential growth of the “church” membership.
5. **Mission Area** – It is important to consider the size of the population the new group intends to reach. Request an updated demographic study from our conference church planting coordinator.
6. **Good Fellowship** – It is vital the members of the intended new “church” have good fellowship and are in support of each other. It is also important to have a good relationship with the sisterhood of Washington Conference.

This great work allows our pastors and laypersons who are deeply committed to the Adventist mission and message to work more closely together.



RESOURCES PAGE

Visit www.nadei.org, click on “Resource Center,” select “Categories,” on the left side of the page, then click on “**Church Planting.**” Here you will find a number of helpful books and resources on church planting. Please note: church planting is an inter-discipline activity so a lot of books that are really helpful don't necessarily have the words “church planting” in them. Below are some books and websites that we recommend you start reading.

Books

- **Church Planting Manual by Tom Evans.** This is a must-read book. This manual goes through basic stages of church planting with questions that a core group can use.
- **Planting Missional Churches by Ed Stetzer.** A classic overview of church planting with a recently updated edition. This book can also be found on Amazon.
- **Church Planting Thresholds by Clint Clifton.** This book has short, inspirational, and practical tips on building a team, creating a budget, and empowering leaders.

Websites

- **cpexchange.net** – A church planter's website provided by the General Conference.
- **exponential.org** – A resource for free or inexpensive e-books.
- **biblestudyoffer.com** – Utilize this online program for local Bible study leads.
- **online.afcoe.org** – Amazing Facts online evangelism training school.
- **truthlink.org** – Light Bearers online Bible study course.



WHERE IS GOD CALLING YOU TO PLANT A CHURCH?

