

Western District Conference - Church Planting Commission

ESSENTIAL PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH PLANTING

Introduction

The WDC Bylaws describe the Church Planting Commission (CPC) as follows:

Role of the Church Planting Commission

The WDC Church Planting Commission provides leadership and resources for church planting initiatives and fosters relationships with emerging Anabaptist/Mennonite groups.

The Church Planting Commission helps emerging groups and their leaders connect with the congregations, resources, staff, and structure of Western District Conference.

Church Planting Commission Duties

Seek out and encourage Anabaptist/Mennonite emerging groups such as church plants, fellowships, and churches seeking affiliation with the Mennonite Church.

Encourage existing Western District Conference congregations to be alert to God's activity in their locations that may signal an emerging group. Invite congregations to understand that creating new congregations is an essential and natural activity of every healthy church.

- Offer practical resources to emerging groups.
- Discover and assess potential church planting leaders.
- Provide ongoing support, training, coaching and accountability for church planters.
- Develop effective patterns and appropriate policies for the fruitful development of new churches.
- Generate and allocate funding for church planting activities.
- Establish networks of support among emerging groups and connect them with established congregations.
- Network with Western District church planting staff and resources of Mennonite Church USA.

We understand that we are called to the Great Commission (Matthew 20:18-20), to respond to this call (John 20:19-23, 1 Peter 2:9-10), to call people to repent from sin (Matthew 4:11), to invite people into the reign of God and to become followers of Jesus Christ, to equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12) and to share the good news with the world (Acts 1:8).

Therefore, we commit to form new communities of disciples called and sent by God to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit as they share God's grace and love. It is our desire to plant new congregations that will commit to God's calling, and will equip, train, and commission the saints. New emerging congregations are a sign of the new creation in the local context and beyond. They are disciple-making communities.

To carry out its work, the WDC Church Planting Commission offers these *Essential Procedures for Church Planting in WDC* (the groups/persons responsible for each step are listed in parentheses):

- A. Discover and assess prospective church planters (CPC/staff). CPC members and WDC staff will actively pursue prospective church planters. It will be the responsibility of the WDC staff to guide the prospect through the process of assessment, developing a church planter profile, prayer, and equipping.
- B. Introduce denominational/conference structure, accountability, and Anabaptist theology (WDC staff). It is important that the potential church planter understands the congregation, conference, denominational structure of the MC USA, as well as the basis of Anabaptist theology and history.
- C. Establish a relationship between the CPC and the prospective church planter (CPC, WDC staff, church planter). At this point, WDC staff will introduce the prospective church planter to the CPC to get acquainted.
- D. Develop a church plant project (church planter/ WDC staff). After discerning and assessing the gifts of the church planter and location for the new church plant, WDC staff will lead the preparation of the strategic plan for the church plant in coordination with other supporting partners.
- E. Establish credentials and accountability (WDC staff/Ministerial Leadership Commission/Executive Board). In consultation with WDC staff, the emerging church plant or church plant support group will request credentials for the church planter. WDC staff will provide ongoing equipping, mentoring, and peer groups for church planters.
- F. Establish networks of support among emerging church plants and connect them with established congregations and denominational resources (WDC staff/ CPC). Assist in establishing a Support Group for the church planter and the emerging church plant until the new church is self-sustainable. The Support Group will include the church planter, WDC staff and representatives of other supporting partners. Assist in establishing Sister Church Relationships and/or Partnership Relationships for the church plant with other WDC congregations.
- G. Launch the church plant (CPC/Executive Board/ WDC staff). CPC will recommend to the Executive Board that the emerging church plant be certified. (See WDC Constitution, Article III. Membership). The emerging church plant will be announced and celebrated, inviting spiritual and other meaningful support from the conference and other denominational bodies.
- H. Provide ongoing support, training, coaching and accountability for church planters (WDC staff, supporting partners). As long as all parties agree, the church plant and church planter will receive support from partners (conference, sister congregations, CPC, and others).
- I. Apply for membership as an established congregation of WDC. (See WDC Constitution, Article III. Membership)

This Essential Procedures for Church Planting will provide guidelines for church planting in WDC.

Approved May 2021 by Church Planting Commission