

GUIDELINES FOR NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The purpose of the Church is always to bring alive the basic meaning of life as revealed in Jesus Christ. "That men may have life and have it in all its fullness."

Within the complexities of contemporary city life in Metropolitan Toronto where active Christians are a minority, this purpose is expressed and experienced by people in congregations. New Church Development is a process designed to multiply the number of local opportunities for men, women and children to discover fullness of life through Jesus Christ.

The fostering of new and renewed congregations is undertaken to enable people to make four responses to the Incarnation: to worship, to be nurtured, to witness, and to serve.

Worshipping is our acknowledgement of the love and power of God who, in his grace, reaches out to pardon, redeem and empower us, through Jesus Christ. True worship involves joyous celebration and the offering of our lives in some specific form of commitment.

Nurturing is the process and program through which the Church assists people to increase their knowledge of the faith, to share Christian experience and to receive support in their pilgrimage towards a maturing faith.

Witnessing is the giving of testimony to the truth of the Gospel as revealed in Jesus Christ. The Church witnesses not only by proclaiming Jesus Christ but also by listening to him and ordering its life in obedience to him.

Serving affirms that to be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as his reconciling community. This community, the Church, is sent to heal the enmities which separate persons from God and from each other, to be sensitive to the sufferings of mankind and work for every form of human well-being.

In an increasingly secular, post-Christian society, establishing and enabling congregations to undertake this four-fold response is a major challenge. We cannot assume that people will become active Christians because we provide a minister or a building. The current situation is going to require the United Church to be creative, persistent and risk-taking in the work of congregational development. New Church Development is a commitment to evangelism and community building. It is a process by which we invite people to confess that "Jesus is Lord" and to join together in celebration, learning and service.

Through the process of New Church Development we propose:

Guideline I United Church Presence

To provide a Christian presence in developing areas which is an expression of the mission, characteristics and programs of the United Church.

I (a) United Church ministries in developing areas are designed to develop communities of faithful people gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the purpose of worship, nurture, fellowship and service.

I (b) New United Church ministries will be initiated by and related to the Presbytery and Zone. Emphases, strategies and programs of the regional United Church will be considered in the development of the new ministries.

Guideline II Development

To examine municipal development plans in order to speak intelligently and prophetically to issues implicit in the plans and to decide on United Church space and location needs in new developments.

II (a) Proposed Official plans and secondary plans will be examined critically by a committee of Presbytery or by the Council in order to make informed comments to Government on issues such as provision of housing for low and moderate income families, of parks and recreation facilities, and of church sites.

II (b) Through the Inter Church Regional Planning Association, the Presbytery will plan for the provision of appropriate church sites and the sharing of those sites.

Guideline III Ecumenical and Inter Church Cooperation

To provide a United Church presence in developing areas which complements the work of other denominations and whenever possible to work cooperatively and ecumenically.

III (a) The United Church will act in New Church Development situations on the basis of the Lund Principle. Here is the key statement from that World Council of Churches Principle:

We would, therefore, earnestly request our Churches to consider whether they are doing all they ought to do to manifest the oneness of the people of God. Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other Churches and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?

III (b) Negotiations will take place between the United Church and other denominations to ensure that there is a minimum of duplication and competition and that the relationships are creative and visionary.

III (c) In situations in which two or more denominations decide to share land and facilities or to cooperate in ministry, the reasons for such joint development will be clearly stated, a covenant or contract of cooperation will be entered into and ratified by the appropriate denominational bodies.

Guideline IV Staffing

To staff the New Church Development situation with a trained and experienced person who is willing to share leadership with local people and representatives of the Presbytery, understands the institutional Church and is optimistic about its future, is capable of facing problems and working toward goals, is mature and self-motivating.

IV (a) Presbytery and local community representatives will prepare a preliminary Mission Design setting out basic background information, initial goals for the new staff person and the supervision and evaluation process.

IV (b) New Church Development staff will be guaranteed financial support for three years and Block Grant funding requirements will be estimated and guaranteed for that period before the work begins.

IV (c) Salary, accommodation arrangements and benefits will be as favourable as the minister's years service, and block grant regulations allow.

Guideline V Style of Ministry

To create a style of New Church Development ministry which provides opportunities for evangelism, Christian education and the establishing of congregations and small groups focused on worship, learning, fellowship and service.

V (a) Educational work with adults will be a primary dimension of the ministry because fewer people are currently participating in any church and because an effective way of influencing children is by building Christian families.

V (b) Small groups are an effective method of bringing people together for celebrating, learning and serving and significant small group participation will be fostered in New Church Development congregations.

V (c) Persistent and regular visitation for definite reasons by trained visitors will be an important aspect of the congregation's work.

V (d) An effective stewardship strategy will be part of the preliminary Mission Design and the New Church Development congregation will share in the wider church's ministry through gifts to the M & S Fund.

Guideline VI

Community Centred Congregations

To establish community centred congregations which are intimately related to the needs of people in the developing area.

VI (a) Design of the New Church Development ministry will be based on research into the make-up and needs of the community to be served.

VI (b) The United Church in developing areas will be involved in significant projects which relate staff and members of the congregation to people of a wide variety of backgrounds and to community needs.

VI (c) United Church congregations will strive in words and deeds to express a concern for the whole community and to speak to issues that affect people whatever their backgrounds.

Guideline VII

Providing Facilities

To provide space through purchase, lease or rental which will be suitable for initiating the work and to make arrangements for additional space as the shape of the ministry develops.

VII (a) The Toronto United Church Council will plan to provide space in developing areas for the ministry to begin and for the erection of facilities (e.g. church or multi-purpose facilities) at a later point in the development of the community.

VII (b) The Presbytery and Council will explore the possibility of joint land purchase and development or lease/rent arrangements with a variety of bodies as well as with other denominations.

VII (c) Space will be acquired near the centre of the developing area, well served by the road network and accessible from all parts of the community.

Guideline VIII

Financing

To provide funding for new ministries in developing areas in order that the work will receive adequate support in the initial phases.

VIII (a) The Toronto United Church Council is responsible for purchasing land in areas where Presbytery believes that ministries should be initiated.

VIII (b) Conference Block Grant Funds are the source of monies for staff deployed in developing areas.

VIII (c) The Toronto United Church Council will provide limited program and equipment monies not provided by other sources to facilitate the ministry in its early stages.

VIII (d) United Church ministries in developing areas will be self-supporting within five to seven years in terms of staff salary, program expenses, staff accommodation and maintenance and rental costs, unless the Presbytery decides that this is a special situation that requires support for a longer or indefinite period.

VIII (e) The Presbytery and the Council will attempt to minimize land and building costs through cooperation and sharing with other denominations or organizations.

VIII (f) Source of funds for capital expenditures (e.g. land and buildings) will be arrived at through negotiations between the Presbytery, the Council and representatives of the local New Church Development ministry. A Capital Costs Feasibility Study will be undertaken in each case to ascertain the annual portion of capital costs that the local ministry can realistically assume. Ministry should not be undermined by capital debt charges.

Guideline IX The Process

To define the appropriate course to be followed in establishing United Church ministries in developing areas.

IX (a) The Presbytery is responsible for defining the guidelines for new ministries within its bounds.

IX (b) The role of the Toronto United Church Council is to assist the Presbytery to develop guidelines and then to act on these guidelines once they have been adopted.

IX (c) United Church ministries in developing areas will normally be initiated by the Toronto United Church Council through discussions with the Presbytery, Zone and interested local people.

IX (d) The following steps will normally be followed:

1. A Feasibility Study for the new ministry will be prepared by the Council, taking into consideration the goals of the Presbytery, its mission strategy and the nature and needs of the community in which the ministry is to be undertaken.
2. The proposal will be presented to the Zone and Presbytery for discussion, modification and approval.
3. The Presbytery will then decide on the appropriate starting point and the staff requirements and seek Block Grant funds to provide salary and accommodation for the staff. At this point a Preliminary Mission Design will be prepared.
(See IV (a)).
4. The Presbytery or Zone will appoint or designate a committee made up of representatives of the Presbytery and residents in the local community to interview, employ and provide support and accountability for the new ministry staff.
5. There will be an evaluation of the ministry at the end of the first and third year based on the Preliminary Mission Design and the experience to that point. The original Design will be modified by the New Church Development congregation and the Presbytery in the light of the evaluation.

6. The Toronto United Church Council will work, in a consultative capacity, with the Presbytery and new ministry staff.
7. Timing for formal constitution of the congregation will be decided upon through consultation between representatives of the local congregation, the Zone and Toronto Area Presbytery.

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