

New Worshipping Community Commission Rationale

In their book, *Lost in America*, Clegg and Bird state, “The unchurched population in the US is so extensive that, if it were a nation it would be the 5th most populated nation on the planet... Thus, our un-churched population is the largest mission field in the English speaking world and the 5th largest globally.” It is clear that there is an enormous need in post-Christian America to start various types of churches, worshipping communities, and ministries that will precipitate the mission of God reaching people in new and different ways. Tim Keller states, “Planting new churches has always been the best evangelistic strategy and remains so in the 21st Century

60-80% of people who join new churches were previously un-churched or de-churched whereas 80% of people who join established churches come from letters of transfer” (Lyle Shaller, in MGavran and Hunter, *Church Growth: Strategies that Work*, p. 100).

There was a time in which it seemed the Spirit was working within our “typical” model of a chartered church with a Teaching Elder/Pastor and a functioning session. In that time we might have seen new projects that worked outside traditional bounds as odd or problematic, yet in our ever reforming Church, responding to our always missional God (John 20:21-22) it is exactly these types of ministries that the Spirit seems to be using to lead the Church into a new day.

Over the past two years CPR has become acquainted with two projects started as New Worshipping Communities in Heartland Presbytery that have ceased to fulfill their hoped for potential. Through this past year of study, learning, and conversation with other presbyteries, it has become apparent that we need to rethink not just our creative models of church planting, but our model of presbytery itself, to become a place where new ministries can thrive and expand.

In conversation with other presbyteries being lifted up for their success in creating and sustaining New Worshipping Communities (namely Pittsburgh Presbytery, San Fernando, and Giddings Love Joy), one common theme is a COM-like body that oversees all New Worshipping Community projects. This body nurtures the leadership of NWC pastors/leaders with coaching and assessments, oversees the 1001 New Worshipping Community grant process, and tracks with communities to maintain progress and continued success. At such a point when a community is ready to charter as a new PCUSA congregation, this body works with COM to bring it into being. At such a point when a community realizes isn't not working in the ways the Spirit intended, this body helps it come to an end. Knowing the world of NWC is specific and not explicitly intuitive, service on a body like this requires experience and particular training. And as a NWC takes on average, 5 - 7 years to reach sustainability, this body requires longer periods of service.

From our vantage point, we can see at least six potential NWC's taking shape in Heartland Presbytery (The Open Table, Centerfield, Cherith Brook, The Open Table resident projects, The Harvest Table, Korean Church project). It's our hope to build this new body in order to journey with these new projects and all those yet to be seen, to relieve COM of having to manage this kind of nuanced oversight in the midst of a full schedule, and to keep tilling the soil in order that Heartland Presbytery might be a place where new ideas can take root, testify to new growth, and spread energy to all those around.

New Worshipping Community Commission (Approved from CPR 10.5.18)

In keeping with G-3.0109 b*, Heartland Presbytery's New Worshipping Community Commission will serve to initiate and support new and emerging leaders and congregations. The Commission will begin with 5 members, nominated with input from commission. Members will have experience, knowledge, or expertise in the area of New Worshipping Communities. Initial members will have term limits of 5 years, with the ability to renew for 2 more years. (In order to properly oversee NWC's, who need an average of 5 - 7 years to reach stability). Subsequent members will agree to serve for 3 years with the ability to renew for two additional 3 year terms pending majority vote by the commission. The commission size can be increased as needed with unanimous vote of the commission. New members who do not have extensive experience in New Worshipping Communities will be willing to undergo intentional training. The chair and 51% of the commission is quorum.

Powers and Responsibilities:

1. Establish, oversee, and dissolve all New Worshipping Communities and Fellowships, and their Leadership Teams.
 1. Definitions:
 1. New Worshipping Community: All new congregations begin as new worshipping communities but not all new worshipping communities will become congregations. NWC's must be:
 1. New: Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ, while taking on varied forms of church for our changing culture.
 1. Can be connected to an established church, but will have distinct leadership, funding, and future.
 2. Worshipping: Gathered by the Spirit to meet Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament, and sent by the Spirit to join God's mission for the transformation of the world.
 3. Community: Practicing mutual care and accountability, while developing sustainability in leadership and finances.
 2. Fellowship: Fellowships are stand-alone ministries operating under the umbrella of Heartland Presbytery. Leadership and funding are similar to NWC requirements, without long-term sustainability requirements. Fellowships are often small in community size, and give expression to the Spirit's diversity and creativity.
 2. Each New Worshipping Community and Fellowship will be governed by a Leadership Team authorized by the commission.
 1. The Leadership Team shall have responsibility and authority similar to that of a church session and appropriate to the context as determined by the commission including the calling of a leader.
2. Strategize the overall continued growth of new worshipping communities within the bounds of Heartland Presbytery.
3. Encourage and coordinate congregational efforts to engage in local or multi-congregational new worshipping community experimentation
4. Pursuant to G-3.0109 b*, provide examination for leadership utilizing the approved terms of call, and dissolve the relationships of leaders of New Worshipping Communities and Fellowships.
5. Distribute presbytery allocated resources in support of New Worshipping Communities and Fellowships.
6. Monitor and evaluate the progress of New Worshipping Communities and Fellowships.

7. Authorize the administration of the sacraments in New Worshipping Communities and Fellowships.
8. Communicate regarding New Worshipping Communities and Fellowships, and report the commission's actions on behalf of the presbytery.
9. Recommend that presbytery charter a New Church when appropriate, in consultation with COM.

**G-3.0101 b. Administrative commissions are designated to consider and conclude matters not involving ecclesiastical judicial process, except that in the discharge of their assigned responsibilities they may discover and report to the designating council matters that may require judicial action by the council.*

Functions that may be entrusted to administrative commissions include, but are not limited to: (1) (by sessions) ordaining and installing ruling elders and deacons, receiving and dismissing members, and visiting organizations within the congregation to settle differences therein; (2) (by presbyteries) ordaining and installing ministers of the Word and Sacrament; (3) (by presbyteries) examining and receiving into membership ministers of the Word and Sacrament seeking admission to presbytery, including approval of terms of call and commissions for ordination and installation; and receiving candidates under care; (4) (by presbyteries) developing immigrant fellowships, organizing new congregations, merging congregations, or forming union or federated congregations (G-5.05).