

A New Community Church

**A MANUAL FOR
CHURCH PLANTERS
AND OTHER VISIONARIES**



International Council of Community Churches

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY CHURCHES

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Starting A New Community Church

Some areas of the world are "over-churched" with more church buildings and church organizations than the population can justify. Many more areas of the world are "under-churched" with large populations not served by any church. Under-churched and over-churched areas can exist in the same metropolitan area, especially in times of population growth. And even in areas that appear to be over-churched, there may be economic, ethnic, linguistic or recent immigrant groups consistently underserved or ignored by existing churches.

What is the situation in your area? Is there a segment of the population not being served by any existing church? Is there a shortage of churches? If there were to be a new church, what would its membership look like? Realistically, what size would or could the new congregation be? What would be its style of worship? What kinds of music would be heard and sung in its worship services? In what ways would the congregation serve its community and the world? You may have some preliminary answers to these questions. But there are other factors to consider.

The Church Planter

No congregation is founded by a single person. A number of talents, interests and aptitudes are needed to launch the life of a new church. Still, there is a need for one individual who will coordinate the effort, motivate others to join the enterprise, and affirm without ceasing the vision of a vibrant community of faith. Whatever formal title the new congregation may bestow upon that individual, she/he will be referred to in this work as a church planter.

A church planter is a special kind of person. First, she or he is a person of deep personal faith. An existing church can depend on the shared faith of the congregation to sustain those who are in spiritual crisis, but in a start-up situation, the conviction and commitment of the church planter (sometimes referred to as the founding pastor) must be strong.

A church planter is an entrepreneur and a salesperson. Such a person is inventive, forward looking and always on duty. Whether it's in the local market, financial institution, community center or wherever, the successful church planter is always on the alert for opportunities to build the new congregation and its ministry and mission. The successful church planter confronts each opportunity in an appropriate manner, and can tell the difference between opportunities for a "quick sale," and those that require longer-term cultivation.

A church planter is a networker. It is possible to start a congregation that places the pastor on a pedestal and that centers its being on a single personality. Such congregations rarely survive the retirement or death of the founding pastor. A networker by contrast builds a church rather than an ego structure. He or she includes, involves, and inspires the newborn and growing congregation to become a supportive community of faith. Leadership and authority are shared; the "inner circle" is kept open for expansion. The pastor keeps reminding both self and congregation that the church is not "mine" or "ours." It is God's, and we serve God together in and through the church.

Finally, a church planter has a genuine sense of call to this particular ministry. Starting a new church can be uplifting and exhilarating. It is also frustrating, infuriating and often discouraging. If you don't feel that God is summoning you to this kind of enterprise, don't begin it because neither you nor the enterprise will succeed.

While an individual may have all the personal qualities and traits needed to be a church planter, there are additional matters to be considered. Launching a new church is a time-intensive project. While it may be possible to do the work of a church planter while simultaneously pursuing another career, those two demands are nearly all-consuming. If one's family is at a stage of life that also requires a great deal of time, or if there are other life issues that are pressing, the work of church development may need to be postponed for a while. Remember: God saves the world; you don't. If you are thinking about a church launch, be sure that you can manage the time and energy it will demand.

Questions to Consider

1. *Do you fit the description of a church planter?*
2. *What particular skills and life experiences do you possess that support your conclusion?*
3. *Do friends and colleagues affirm that you have the needed skills for launching a church?*
4. *Will other life demands allow you the time and energy a church launch requires?*
5. *Do you possess a sense of call to the task of developing a new congregation?*

The Start-Up Team

It is not possible for one individual to do everything that's needed to get a new church started. Successful church starts involve a team. Such a team should consist of individuals who have skills in as many of these areas as are needed for your own start-up (listed alphabetically rather than by priority):

- Education
- Finance
- Language translation
- Music
- Property management
- Publicity and marketing
- Sales
- Video
- Other – as applicable to your particular situation

The team will need to see itself as a team: mutually accountable and supportive. The team will need to meet on a regular basis to develop strategies and tactics, to hear progress reports on various projects related to the church start, to pray together, and to hear one another's concerns and burdens. Since there will be no payroll, team members will be volunteers. And since most will probably be gainfully employed, this suggests that team meetings may have to be held in the evenings and/or on weekends.

The team's goal will be the development of a viable, healthy congregation. All of the task-oriented activities of the team will be directed by and toward the goal. If the team is functioning well, it will also become the nucleus of the congregation, modeling behaviors of openness, sharing and compassion. One of the challenges that will face the team is that of opening its ranks to newcomers as the fledgling congregation begins to expand its ministries. The team will face the same challenge the congregation does: expanding the circle of Christian love and giving recent arrivals equal caring and respect for their ideas, insights and persons.

Team members will need to covenant together to relinquish whatever status or authority accompanies their positions, when the church elects boards or committees to assume their duties. While the church may ask the team members to serve on such bodies, that outcome should not be assumed. At an appropriate time, no later than sixty days after elected boards and committees begin to function, the start-up team should conclude its activities and deliver all useful documents and materials to those bodies to assist them in their work.

The specific tasks of the team are suggested by the subsequent sections in this work. However your team should not feel limited thereby. The only consistent self-imposed requirement for team tasks should be that each task advances the central goal of launching a viable new congregation.

Questions to Consider

1. *Who are the most talented people you know who could assist with a church launch?*
2. *When and how will you enlist each of these individuals to the enterprise?*
3. *What talents does your church launch need in addition to those possessed by the people you've already decided to recruit?*
4. *What date and time will you establish for your first team meeting, and what will be your agenda?*
5. *What will you team do to assure that your new congregation addresses real needs of real people?*

Demographics

In the United States and Canada, few people will travel more than twenty minutes in order to attend worship. The exceptions are those who have a long-standing family connection to a particular church; since yours is a new congregation you won't see any of those for the foreseeable future. If you are considering a new-church start in an area outside the US or Canada, you will want to determine the distance or travel time that locates the realistic limits of your outreach.

To begin to locate your potential site for worship and your potential congregation, try the following exercise:

- Locate a neighborhood in which you want your first worship site to be located.
- Use an area map and draw "parish boundaries" that are twenty minutes' travel time from your chosen location.
- Use the same area map and mark the locations of all existing churches of all denominations.
- Ask the Reference Department of your local public library to assist you in locating census data on your chosen area. Or, take advantage of the on-line information available from many governments. Canadian census data may be found at <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/home/index.cfm>. US census data may be found at www.census.gov. (The website information was accurate at the time of publication, but please confirm that this information has not been replaced by a website containing more recent data.)
- If you intend to "target" a particular ethnic, linguistic or recent immigrant group, the local library's Reference Department may be able to provide locally generated statistics in addition to those available through the census data. Another source of information may be the local Chamber of Commerce or other business association that will be targeting the same group for their own purposes.
- If possible, survey the existing local churches to assure yourself that you will not be competing for a population segment that is already well-served. An internet search of church websites will make this research easier.

It may be necessary to relocate your intended worship site in order to serve the largest population – particularly if you will be targeting a particular ethnic, linguistic or recent-immigrant population. Don't hesitate to repeat the above exercise as many times as needed to determine the most favorable neighborhood for your first worship site.

A word about demographic targeting: presumably you are considering outreach to a particular group because they are ill-served. There is nothing wrong with that. However, as you

begin your new congregation you will want to issue an open invitation to all who wish to attend and become a part of the growing church. Exclusivity and church are incompatible terms.

Questions to Consider

1. *Do you have a mental image of what the new congregation will look like?*
2. *Does your first thought about a target audience match the profile of the geographic area you are considering?*
3. *What other demographic groups are present in the area you have surveyed, and are these under-served?*
4. *Do the demographic data suggest particular pastoral or material needs in the community?*

Location

Some church planters might imagine that a church could be started in any location. In this era of zoning regulations and traffic control laws, that's not necessarily the case. Even a gathering in a private home may run afoul of condominium covenants or local ordinances. You already know the general neighborhood in which you want to start your new church. Now rather than later is the time to visit the appropriate offices (municipal, county, condominium, etc.) to discover any limitations on your search for a meeting site.

It may be possible for you to rent space in an existing church building. In this case be prepared to meet for worship at a time that is earlier or later than whatever is fashionable in your area. If you choose this option, you will want to negotiate the specific limits on time and spaces that may be available to you. Do you want to have an after-worship fellowship time, serving hot beverages and pastries? Do you want to hold committee or Bible study meetings in the building other than during your contracted time for worship? Do you need space for programming for children or youth? What about Christmas eve or Easter sunrise worship services? What about other special events? You and the host church will need to develop a contract or letter of understanding that is clear on all these items. Before you begin discussions with a possible host church, use a calendar and note every single occasion on which you would want to use building space. If it's not in the contract, the space is not available to you.

Also consider the term of the contract, the number of weeks or months of advance notice each party must supply in order to terminate the contract, and what sort of landlord-tenant committee will meet regularly in order to assure that the relationship between the two congregations remains cordial. Cost and frequency of payments will need to be specified, but these are items to be finalized only after all other details are negotiated.

A meeting space in a private home may be a possibility for your worship services, at least for a while. Donated space in somebody's living room is inexpensive, but unless your borrowed room is located in a mansion, the amount of space for worship attendees will be severely limited. Whatever gear you need for worship (keyboard, hymnals or song sheets, materials for the celebration of Holy Communion) will need to be stored on or off-site. What would you plan to do if one of the members of your host family were to be ill? How would you manage if your host family were to travel out of town for a week or two? Certainly you can start worship services by meeting in a home, but consider this to be a temporary arrangement. Parking may be an issue; in this case you will want to negotiate arrangements for parking with nearby property owners and notify your attendees about what properties are or are not available for parking during worship hours.

Rental space in a commercial hall, fraternal organization building, a restaurant's private dining room or other location may be a possibility for your church's meeting space. An advantage to such locations is that most have adequate parking facilities. Disadvantages include that in most cases worship gear will need to be stored off-site; tables and chairs may

require re-arrangement each week to facilitate worship; and worshippers may need to enter the worship space via a restaurant dining room. If you are in an area that sees seasonal snowstorms, be sure to verify that the facility's parking lot will be plowed in timely fashion and/or include in the rental contract a provision that you are to arrange for plowing for your events.

As a church, your needs for space are unusual but not unique. If you have a good relationship with a licensed real estate agent, discuss your situation with her/him. Real estate agents – even those who specialize in residential property – are familiar with the area in which they do business and may be able to assist you in locating a suitable property for rent or purchase.

Questions to Consider

1. *What specific spaces do you already have in mind as possible locations?*
2. *What other spaces might be available?*
3. *What options do you have for storing worship gear at times when it is not being used?*
4. *What additional spaces might be available to you for church activities other than worship?*

Organizational and Governmental Matters

You will need to establish an organizational format for your fledgling congregation. A simple constitution and bylaws would provide for a single board elected by the congregation with a basic leadership team. Sample documents appear as an appendix to this work. You will want to adapt the suggested organizational form to meet local needs. Be sure that as the fledgling congregation grows, its bylaws allow for the development of ministries with appropriate lay involvement and direction.

Your new church may not be of this world, but it certainly is in this world. You will not be able to avoid dealings with governmental regulations and agencies. A summary of several nations' governmental regulations appears as an appendix to this work. Since weddings are a church function in which the government also has an interest, there are legal requirements for such ceremonies. Be sure to consult with an attorney and/or local governmental officials before your church hosts or any one of your pastoral staff officiates at a wedding. Please note that those who have compiled this document are not attorneys. The information in this document should not be interpreted to be legal advice. Government regulations change from time to time; the information found here may be out-of-date by the time you read it.

It is possible to fulfill all the varied governmental requirements related to incorporation, real estate ownership, weddings and more without assistance from an attorney. This is not advised, since failure to comply with government regulations can be damaging to your new church's finances and reputation. You may be able to obtain professional services at a reduced rate or without fee. Does someone on your start-up team know a professional who might be willing to provide "pro bono" services? Don't be afraid to ask.

Questions to Consider

1. *What kind of board/committee structure will be best to encourage a growing church?*
2. *Does the church start team include or know professionals who can help in these areas?*
3. *Who will be included in the list of incorporators of the new congregation?*
4. *What specific tasks need to be performed to meet government requirements related to the establishment of a new church, and who will take responsibility for their completion?*

Finances

Money may have been condemned as “the root of all evil,” but it is an inescapable factor in church operations. There will be some expenses for your fledgling congregation even before its first gathering for worship. Incorporation and other governmental regulations; the rental of a worship space; publicity related to your first gatherings: all these involve money. Items your start-up team will want to consider in its planning include how to raise the needed funds and how much to raise. Early in the start-up phase of the church’s life, gifts may not be tax-deductible to donors since the church will not yet have governmental recognition as a charity.

One tactic to consider is a public fund-raising event that also serves to publicize the launch of a new congregation. If you hold such an event, be sure to obtain any needed governmental permits. And, give thought to what message you will convey by the nature of the event.

Beginning with the new congregation’s first gifts and expenditures, keep and publish meticulous records of income and outlays. In so doing you will not only reassure future donors that their gifts will be dealt with responsibly and ethically; you will also be announcing to the wider community that your church values transparency and openness.

As a fellowship that handles money and acquires varied sorts of possessions (everything from worship gear to land for a future building site) you will need to consider the purchase of insurance. Don’t wait until you build the structure before you insure the real estate; you need to anticipate “slip and fall” accidents on your vacant property that could be followed by lawsuits. If you are renting space you may need tenant insurance; a conversation with your landlord and her/his insurance agent will identify what you need to cover. Do you want to bond your church treasurer? What about malpractice insurance or its equivalent for your pastor and other leaders? Generally speaking the more far-fetched the possibility of loss, the lower the insurance cost is. Don’t hesitate to ask about rates; an inquiry does not obligate you to buy. And do get competitive quotes from at least two or three insurance carriers.

Questions to Consider

1. *Have you compiled a budget for anticipated expenses prior to the first worship gathering of the new church?*
2. *Have you identified individuals who will assist with expenses prior to the church launch?*
3. *What kinds of fundraising events, programs and activities would be possible and appropriate for your new church?*
4. *What insurance needs and costs do you anticipate during your first year of operation?*

Financial Controls

You will want to establish some basic financial controls before your congregation’s first worship service and offering. Two people should count each offering and sign or initial the report of deposit before delivering the funds to a financial institution. This of course assumes that you have established an account with a financial institution, which can be done with a minimal amount of money. Beginning with the first month of operations, a monthly report of income and disbursements should be published and made available to the congregation. In part this is to assure that those who are joining the fledgling congregation feel at ease that the church’s funds are being handled in a responsible manner. It is also a protection for those individuals who are handling the church’s money, protecting them against unjustified accusations of fraud or theft.

Three or Four-Part Budget

You should make provisions from the start of church operations for a three or four-part budget. **The first part** is current operations – everything from paying your rent or mortgage payment to purchasing candles for a Christmas eve worship service.

The second part is benevolence or missions activity. Many congregations urge their members to consider a tithe – giving at least one tenth of one's income to charitable causes beyond the needs and desires of one's self and one's immediate family. Likewise, a church should tithe, giving at least one tenth of its income to mission agencies and causes beyond the bounds of its membership. The International Council of Community Churches can provide you with a list of its endorsed mission agencies. These are all worthy in their aims, ecumenical in scope and responsible in their handling of finances.

The third part of the budget is capital funds – monies set aside for the purchase or construction of facilities for the work of the church. Whatever the location for your initial meetings for worship, you will almost certainly want to plan for permanent quarters. This part of the budget will provide funds to bring your plans to fruition. Gifts specified for capital projects should be deposited in a separate account at your bank or credit union. Such monies are not available for expenditure for general operations.

The final part of the budget is endowment – assembling permanent funds whose corpus or principal will never be invaded, but whose interest and other income can help sustain the church's ministries for generations to come. It may be that for a few years, your congregation will not feel able to include an allocation of income out of general offerings for this part of the budget. In many if not most cases this is a valid judgment. However, you should keep this part of the budget in your printed reports and other documents. If nothing is allocated for endowment income, simply indicate that fact followed by a notation that special gifts are welcome. Members of your new congregation who are engaged in estate planning will be pleased that this opportunity is available to them.

Before you begin church operations, you need not make plans for handling income specified for endowment. But by the end of your second year of operations, such plans should be developed. You will want to specify at what monetary level a "named" fund will be established, with the understanding that gifts of a lesser amount will be placed in a general endowment fund. You will want to consider where the monies are to be invested. Many churches do not feel competent to invest such monies themselves. Consider a local "community foundation" as a repository for your local church's endowment funds. Generally, community foundations will administer your funds for a small fee, provided that you include in the instruments establishing the fund a provision that if you church goes out of existence, the endowment will continue to reside with the foundation with income being used for purposes similar to those of your congregation's. The International Council of Community Churches can provide you with a list of other firms with whom you can invest endowment monies. None of the investment firms on the Council's list are connected to the Council, and the Council receives no fees of any kind for including a company on the list.

Questions to Consider

1. *With what financial institution will the new church begin a relationship, and why?*
2. *What will be the most effective ways of demonstrating financial transparency?*
3. *What mission agencies will you recommend for support and why?*
4. *Is there a community foundation in your area and what arrangements does it have for designated endowments?*

Worship Style

Some churches think of themselves as highly liturgical. Others perceive themselves as not liturgical at all. In fact, every worship service has a liturgy – an arrangement of prayers, hymns and other worship elements. What differentiates varying patterns of worship is not the presence or absence of liturgy, but its style.

Some liturgies are mostly verbal and (at least for the congregation) stationary. While the congregation may move about in a minimal way (standing while singing hymns), the majority of time spent in worship is in listening to verbal content from the worship leader and preacher. Some liturgies try to involve all the senses, using incense (smell); Holy Communion (taste); instrumental music from a variety of instruments (hearing); and varieties of postures including sitting, standing and kneeling (touch). Some worship styles incorporate sacred dance, while yet others use video presentations on a large projection screen. While there have been attempts in the past to connect particular styles of worship to theological orthodoxy, the reality is that styles of worship have much more to do with cultural influences and the personal preferences of those who have responsibility for organizing the liturgy.

Worship styles are influenced in part by technology. Prayer books and hymnals were rare before the moveable type and printing became common. More recently, electronic projection of text and images onto large screens has become routine for many churches. Offerings were once all cash. In offering plates today, checks are being joined by credit card receipts issued from ATM machines as a confirmation that monies have been deposited into the church's bank or credit union account. What the future will bring in the way of technological influences on liturgy remains to be seen; the only certainty is that there will be change.

It's a fact that no matter what liturgical choices you make, you will automatically exclude some people from the list of likely worshippers because they dislike the chosen style or styles. Some churches choose to host more than one worship service on a given day, reserving each service for a particular liturgical style, or in some cases for a particular language used in worship. One potential problem with this approach is that it can result in two very separate congregations who are only incidentally connected to a single corporate body. There is no perfect answer to a question about what will be the worship style of your new congregation. The only unchanging reality is that over time both worship style and other areas of the congregation's life will change.

Questions to Consider

1. *What is your preferred worship style?*
2. *Does your "target" population have a preferred worship style, and if so what is it?*
3. *In what ways could a variety of worship styles be incorporated into the life of the new church?*
4. *In what ways could a worship service of the church involve more than one leader?*
5. *What specific parts of your preferred liturgy could be led by laity, and how could you enlist and "rehearse" with such leaders?*

Music

You will need to make some decisions about music for your new congregation rather early. Do you want traditional western church music (largely a pastiche of European and North American lyrics and tunes from the last few centuries)? Do you want something more in the style of national/ethnic music favored by an immigrant group; folk music; rock or reggae; or something else? As with your choice of liturgical style, it's a fact that no matter what choice you make, you will automatically exclude some from the list of likely worshippers because they dislike the chosen style.

Having made your choice, you'll then need to enlist a musical leader -- most likely someone who can play the instrument(s) your choice implies. In the opinion of some observers, the choice of a musician is as important as the choice of a pastor/preacher. Preachers can forget where they are in the sermon, stumble over their words, and make a hash of their grammar -- and people will still listen and come back next week to hear more. If a musician makes equivalent mistakes, listeners will cringe and they may not come back at all. Given the fact that your initial location may be makeshift, you will also need to assure yourself that the musical instrument(s) will be available. Electronic keyboards have come down in price and up in portability, and many musicians already own one -- but you'll need to ask.

Nearly all churches include congregational singing in their worship. If you purchase hymnals, the publishers have already dealt with the issue of obtaining the necessary permission from copyright holders. If you intend to print hymn texts in a worship bulletin or to project hymn texts on a screen, you will need to obtain permission to use each hymn you wish to use. OneLicense.net is a US company that allows a church, for a fee, to copy and use a large number of hymns and anthem texts. Similar companies provide the same service in other nations. Be aware that any "public performance" of copyrighted music without permission is a violation of law. Worship services are considered public performances.

Questions to Consider

1. *What styles of music will appeal to your target audience?*
2. *What musical instruments will you plan to use in your worship?*
3. *What are the names and contact information of musicians who can be enlisted to assist in your worship?*
4. *What methods will you use to enable congregational singing, and how will you deal with copyright issues?*

Affiliation

Your new congregation has three basic choices available regarding its relationship with the larger church.

- You can affiliate with a denomination. Some denominations have funds to assist fledgling congregations. Nearly all have ready-made formats and formulae for a variety of situations your congregation may encounter. Nearly all can supply a greater or lesser amount of consultative services. Affiliating with a denomination may (or may not, depending on the denomination) bring your congregation into affiliation with the National and World Councils of Churches. Be aware that if your congregation affiliates with a denomination, there are expectations that will be imposed on you. Some are financial in the way of "apportionments" or similar demands. The amounts established by the denomination (generally on a sliding scale depending on the size and average worship attendance of a local congregation) are required of the local body. Some requirements are doctrinal. Some are related to policy or organization. And, should your congregation wish to buy or sell real estate, or construct or remodel a building, the denomination may have requirements or expectations that must be met. Generally speaking, should your congregation decide to withdraw from the denomination at some future date, the denomination would have a claim on any real estate the congregation owns.
- You can remain totally independent as a congregation. There will be no requirements or expectations imposed on you. Your congregation will continue to have complete freedom to conduct its own business, make its own decisions about doctrine and finance, and retain complete control over its own property. Be aware that if you remain completely

independent, there will be no network or office that can assist you when you are searching for a new pastor; if you need outside consultative services related to new construction or remodeling your church building; or if you as a congregation are facing a situation of stress, conflict or uncertainty. You will not have any relationship with larger church bodies. You will be completely on your own.

- The third (and in the opinion of those writing this document, the best) choice will be for your congregation to join the voluntary association of independent community-based congregations known as the International Council of Community Churches. As a fellowship the ICCC welcomes all who find themselves in the Christian tradition. The Council treasures diversity in ethnicity, style and expression. As a community church you will not be subject to the theological strictures of denominational Christianity and their interpretation by denominational officials. And, you will not be subject to the dictates of "apportionments" or other financial requirements that tend to make life difficult for smaller congregations and newer bodies. Should you wish to affiliate with the ICCC as a community church, be aware that the Council requires for active membership only a financial "libation" amounting to a minimum of one percent of your annual operating budget (excluding capital campaigns and mission/benevolent giving). Affiliation with the ICCC includes your connection to the wider ecumenical movement as well as opening opportunities for meetings and fellowship with other community churches. Consultative services and a variety of printed resources are available to member churches without charge. If your congregation were to decide to withdraw from the Council at some future date, the Council would have no claim on your real estate or other property.

Questions to Consider

1. *What church/spiritual/religious background or backgrounds do you and the start-up team have?*
2. *What background or backgrounds do the individuals within your target audience have?*
3. *What short and long-term benefits do you see among the various options for affiliation?*

The First Worship Service – Marketing and Sales

The most effective way of enlisting attendees is face-to-face. If you are the church planter, you should not plan to do all of the direct contacts yourself. However, the number of people who are willing to do "cold call" inviting is fairly small. Most people won't actively recruit others because they are too shy or too afraid of rejection. Your challenge is to enlist a small number – even if it is only one or two – who will extend the invitation, and then hand the invitee a postcard that will remind them of the details about date, time and place of the first worship gathering. (Post cards will fit easily in a pocket or purse. Full-page flyers fit easily into the nearest waste-paper container.)

The methods for getting to that face-to-face contact are changing. Some municipalities and condominium associations have instituted "non-solicitation" restrictions on door-to-door visitation. Many stores and shops forbid solicitation on their property. The start-up team will need to find creative ways in order to get in touch with people on a face to face basis. For example, some grocery stores while forbidding solicitation will allow bake sales on their property by non-profit groups -- provided of course that the sales are arranged in advance. One strategically placed placard could announce information about your church and the fact that it is new. A resultant conversation during a purchase and sale would not violate the anti-solicitation rule, since the exchange would be initiated by the customer.

Don't forget about press releases to your local print publications and radio and television stations. Many communities have free publications in the form of "alternative newspapers" or

“shoppers’ guides” that will print a brief article about your new church. Contact each media outlet in advance to inquire about their preferred formats and deadlines for submitted materials. After your first worship service, you will want to submit to each a report on the event in the style of a secular reporter. While not every outlet will publish or broadcast both submissions, some may do so and thus help spread the word about your new church.

The list of additional means by which you may publicize your first worship service is limited only by your imagination. Some local shops provide a space for the posting of flyers that publicize upcoming community events. Billboard advertising may not be beyond your means if the billboard company will donate the space and charge only for the placard that covers the space. A friendly business may be willing to feature your worship service on its electronic sign in the midst of its notices of its own sales events.

Walk around the neighborhood of your new church, observe all the locations and means of advertising, and don’t be too shy to ask for donated space and/or materials. The average individual does not take enough notice of a broadcast commercial or printed advertisement to remember it, until she or he has heard and/or seen it at least eight times. And, remembering that your church is meeting is not the same as attending. Publicity and advertising are necessary, but they are not sufficient without a personal invitation.

Questions to Consider

1. *What specific print, internet and other media will you use to publicize your first worship gathering?*
2. *Who will take responsibility for timely submission of information to each of these media?*
3. *What methods can your start-up team design that will enable face-to-face contacts?*
4. *Who will take responsibility for implementing your face-to-face contact plans?*
5. *Who will follow up with all volunteers to assure that all tasks are completed in timely fashion?*

The First Worship Service – Timing and Content

The date you choose for your first worship gathering will depend on any number of local factors. Many start-up churches select the Christmas or Easter seasons for their launch, on the assumption that these are occasions when many who would not otherwise be inclined to attend a worship service may decide to participate. Some other start-ups decide to avoid festival dates in order to be able to give full attention to those who are most likely to become active participants in the new congregation, as opposed to those who are “church tourists.”

Just as important as the date is the starting time of your worship gathering. The routines of the community as well as the work and leisure schedules of your target population need to be considered. Some churches choose two different times and days for worship gatherings to accommodate a variety of schedules.

You will want the first worship experience of your new congregation to be memorable. If there are printed worship materials they should have a crisp appearance on quality paper. If you have special music it should be well rehearsed and effectively presented. If you use video screen projections, they should be attractive in appearance and bright enough to be easily seen. Remember “Murphy’s Law” when dealing with technology. If need be, borrow back-up equipment so that even when everything goes wrong you can still carry on without significant delay.

Having set high standards for your first worship service, you will want to maintain those standards for subsequent services. If you cannot routinely afford a philharmonic orchestra, you may want to reconsider hiring the group for your first service. Otherwise your enterprise may be seen as a “flash in the pan.” Disappointed attendees may start looking elsewhere if the production values of your subsequent worship services are markedly inferior to your first.

A word to the preacher: in the all the preparations for the first worship service of your new church you have appropriately concentrated on a thousand organizational details. It would be natural for your sermon to concentrate on what your hopes and dreams are for the new fellowship. But worshippers will not attend your first service in order to hear your thoughts about an organization. They will attend accompanied by all the hopes, fears, joys and sorrows of their past week, just as worshippers do everywhere and every week. Your ministry and your sermon should attend to the people's needs and priorities, and not to the preacher's.

One of your concerns at the first (and subsequent) worship gatherings will be to collect information about your worshippers so that you can contact them and invite them to return for another service. Some will cooperate with you in this. Some won't. Some will want to think about giving you information for a few days. If you have a convenient internet website with a secure provision for them to enter information (or maybe even a donation), some may respond after they do their thinking. Website creation tools are widely available. If you and/or your start-up team don't know how to set up a website, ask someone who is under twenty years of age about it. They will know how, or know someone who can do it better than they can at little or no fee. Your website address should appear on every publication and every placard, flyer, newspaper ad, etc. that you produce.

An opportunity for informal conversation and refreshments after worship is valued by many worshippers. If you offer coffee and doughnuts, be sure to make non-caffeinated beverages and non-greasy food items available as well. The preacher and the start-up team should be present at the after-worship event, but should refrain from high pressure membership recruiting. Conversations that show a caring attitude toward attendees' families and life situations will communicate the gospel imperative of love, and also will be more effective in encouraging repeat attendance and eventual requests to become members of the new congregation.

Do be judicious in what food you serve during the fellowship event. A full meal after the first worship service may leave attendees expecting a complete menu after every worship service. Also consider what plates and other serving items you will use. Biodegradable disposable flatware and plates are available; though these may be a bit more costly than the alternatives, your choices in this area will be another indication of the values the new church will live by.

Questions to Consider

1. *By whom and by what means will you handle the production of printed and/or projection materials for your first worship service?*
2. *What back-up items will you need to secure to ensure as nearly flawless a worship experience as possible?*
3. *What sermon theme and associated worship elements will best address worshippers' needs?*
4. *What kind of after worship fellowship event will you plan; who will prepare the food and beverages including serving materials?*
5. *How will you secure information about worship attendees?*

Follow-Up

You will want to gather the start-up team for de-briefing as soon as possible after the first worship service. What were the results of your invitations? What opportunities were missed, that can be taken advantage of in time for next week's worship service? What were the best and worst parts of the worship experience, from the moment attendees approached the place of worship to the time they departed? What specifics can be improved? Even if everything seemed to go well and the crowd was larger than you anticipated, there is always room for improvement.

You are now on your way to your second week's worship experience, which needs to be planned and executed in even better fashion than the first. Then will come the third and subsequent weeks, when your unrelenting search for excellence will continue.

In the midst of evaluating the experience, do not neglect relationships. Most members of a continuing congregation do not appear at worship solely to relate to God. They also value relationships with other human beings. Consider how best to encourage the growth of relationships. Name tags and a "passing of the peace" during worship may be a start. What else can you do to encourage the growth of Christian fellowship in your new congregation?

Questions to Consider

1. *What means will you and your start-up team use to consistently evaluate the worship experience for the first months of your church's life?*
2. *What new and additional steps can you take to encourage the growth of your new congregation?*
3. *What felt needs are being expressed by attendees and how will those be addressed?*
4. *What specific steps will you take to encourage the growth of fellowship within the new church?*
5. *How can you include others beyond your start-up team in evaluation, outreach to additional potential members, and encouraging the growth of fellowship?*

Maturing

Beginning with the first worship service, you will want to start including individuals beyond your start-up team in planning, publicity, attendee recruitment, fellowship activities and more. An openness to "widening the circle" of leadership as well as attendance is absolutely essential to moving from a disparate group of attendees to a vibrant Christian fellowship.

The obstacles to widening the circle are obvious. Your small group has been working hard together to bring plans of a new church to fruition. You've bonded in Christian love. And now you're being asked yourselves to open your ranks to strangers? Make no mistake: this will be difficult. And as soon as the first strangers have been welcomed, it will be time to welcome more. But wasn't that growth your original goal? Any hesitation in opening the circle to newcomers signals a slowing or an end to growth.

Your new church likely has fairly simple bylaws. As your congregation grows, you may find it necessary to establish working groups to coordinate your growing ministries to your members and to the larger community. Developing new or amended bylaws is a time-consuming effort. For this reason, delay such a project as long as possible. Your board or council can appoint ad hoc committees or task forces to do what is necessary for now. The only requirement should be that the committees or task forces report on their activities to your board, so that the efforts of all may be coordinated rather than competitive.

As you widen the circle, include more people, appoint ad hoc committees for emerging ministries and more, remember that even the newest member ought to have an appropriate sense of "ownership" of the church and its ministries. While you should not overwhelm your congregation with reports on the details of administration, information (including minutes of meetings) should be distributed as widely as possible. Meeting dates should be announced in advance, with frequent reminders that all church board and committee meetings are open and that all are invited to attend. This transparency will reassure all that you are a welcoming fellowship rather than a closed bureaucracy.

As you grow, your congregation will be exploring new possibilities in ministry. Be sure that everyone knows that new ventures are experiments. Not every experiment succeeds. Most need adjustments of one sort or another as they are attempted. Everyone needs to be reminded

often that failure is not a disaster; it is a learning experience that makes new experiments possible. This is not an easy lesson to learn, and it needs to be re-learned time and again.

Being a church is not a destination; it is a journey. As you, your start-up team and your emerging congregation live and learn together, you will be on a sacred pilgrimage whose goal is an eternal city made real on earth as it is in heaven. May God bless you in your travels!

Questions to Consider

1. *What specific steps can you plan now, to widen the circle of leadership starting with your first worship service?*
2. *What ministries in addition to worship do you envision that will require the leadership and participation of your attendees and members?*
3. *What kinds of reporting can you now plan, for ministries, for finances and for other items that will give your newest members a sense of participation, "ownership" and belonging.*

A note to the reader: this is a document in process. As you have experienced the birth and growth of your new congregation, what surprised you? What could and should this manual have told you about that topic/issue/event? Contact the International Council of Community Churches and share your insights. Your input will help produce a revised edition of this manual that will be of greater help to others. Thank you for your assistance.

Starting A New Community Church

APPENDIX ONE

A Survey of Government Provisions, Restrictions and Requirements

Overview

Local churches function in a variety of ways that are similar to other groups. They buy and sell real estate and other items; they occupy buildings subject to building and safety codes; they hire personnel and pay them wages. Like it or not, governmental authorities understand themselves to have legitimate interests in each of these areas.

In many nations, a local church may obtain "tax exempt" or "recognized charity" status. This status may exempt the church from paying certain taxes, and may allow donors to churches to adjust their own income tax payments depending on the amount of their gifts to the church.

In every nation, marriage is understood not only as a religious union, but as a contract that affects property ownership, child custody and other matters. Laws regarding who may officiate at a wedding, what kinds of documents related to a wedding need filing, etc. are extremely varied.

All the above require some interplay between the local church and government authorities. Gaining familiarity with governmental regulations can make this interplay less stressful and less costly to you.

Arranging the services of an attorney is rarely without cost. For your own sake, please do not attempt to be your own attorney – particularly when: arranging incorporation; seeking recognition as a tax exempt or recognized charity organization; or when purchasing or selling real estate. The fees of an attorney are always less than the fines and other sanctions you may be subject to if important legal documents are improperly prepared or if filings with government offices are improper, late or never completed.

DISCLAIMER: The information in this document should NOT be interpreted to be legal advice. Government regulations change from time to time; the information found here may be out-of-date or inaccurate by the time you read it. The information below is reproduced in the form we received it from our correspondents, none of whom to our knowledge is a licensed attorney. Again: this information is illustrative only. Please consult an attorney for advice about any and all legal questions.

United States

Your church constitution and/or bylaws will be among the documents you need to legally incorporate your church. You will need to form a corporation in order to obtain status as a tax exempt organization under Internal Revenue Service rules. Apply to the Secretary of State of the US state in which your congregation is located to become a corporation. Most states offer free publications or website information outlining the requirements for incorporation. Typically a fee in the range of \$100 - \$300 must accompany your application for incorporation.

Under federal law your new corporation will need to complete and submit IRS form 1023 to become a recognized tax exempt organization. IRS publication 557 describes the requirements and restrictions that apply to tax exempt – known as 501(c)3 – organizations. You will also need to file appropriate forms within your state of incorporation to be recognized there as a tax exempt organization. Obtaining 501(c)3 status from the IRS does not automatically give

you tax-exempt status under your state's regulations. You will also need to obtain an Employer Identification Number from the IRS. The employer identification number is to your church as your personal Social Security number is to you as an individual: a unique number used by the IRS (and many businesses) to identify your church as a unique entity. You are required to have this number to hire employees.

When and as you hire employees, you are required: to comply with all relevant IRS and state regulations; to obtain information from employees on IRS forms; to withhold federal and state income taxes; and to send these withheld taxes to the taxing agencies on a timely basis. At year end you are required to supply information about wages and withholding to the taxing agencies and to each employee on government approved forms. The fact that your church is a "tax exempt" entity does not exempt you from such requirements. Failure to withhold income taxes and/or to report wage information to taxing agencies is a violation of law.

There are special provisions in federal law regarding the income taxes and Social Security taxes of clergy. Generally, clergy are considered employees for income tax purposes and "self-employed" for Social Security purposes.

Proceeds from continuing profit-making activities of a church are considered "unrelated" to the church's religious purposes (even if all the proceeds are spent in advancing such purposes) and are considered taxable. "Continuing" means that the IRS will not seek taxes from the proceeds of an occasional church dinner, but if the church opens up a restaurant the profits from that operation will be taxable.

In the US each state has its own regulations related to weddings and marriages. To determine what your state's laws are, consult with the county or municipal office in your area that issues wedding licenses. In some states, anyone can officiate at a wedding. At least within living memory, more than one state required that only clergy and judges could perform weddings, and it required the posting of a financial bond by each clergy person. (This requirement may no longer be in force, but do check!) One constant: do not conduct a wedding without first having taken possession of the wedding license and having examined the document to determine that it is valid as to place of issuance and date. (Wedding licenses are issued for a limited period of time and can expire.) Failure to follow these procedures may subject you to legal penalties.

Canada

Is a church required to be a legal corporation?

There are two types of structures that would satisfy the legal requirements of Canada. One is "Incorporation" and the other is "Declaration of Trust."¹ Both are valid options. The advantages and disadvantages are listed below.

Advantages of Incorporation

1. The incorporation creates a legal identity separate from the individual members, trustees or leaders, it gives the church a continuing legal existence. Under the law a corporation is treated separately from the members.
2. It allows the church to enter into legal contracts, own property, lease property, etc, in its own name, without trustees having to do so on behalf of the congregation.
3. It provides significant protection for individual church members from personal liability for the debts and legal obligations of the church.

¹ Declaration by trustee that he or she holds a real estate property in trust for someone else (the beneficiary). This agreement includes provisions regarding the transfer of the property and any proceeds to the property prior to transfer. This form can be used in the following provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and Yukon.

4. It allows the church to initiate or defend legal actions in its own name rather than involving individual members or trustees.
5. In Quebec there are provisions for churches in the Religious Corporations Act, including role and functions of the Visitor/Bishop. The Visitor/Bishop acts as Governing Official in Provinces where our churches are entitled to solemnize marriages and to have their clergy authorized by the Marriage Office. Only churches that are incorporated can apply for recognition under the Marriage Act.

Disadvantages of Incorporation

1. More costly (fees for processing and obtaining charitable status...)
2. Filing requirements (notice whenever directors or officers change, corporate minutes for both member's and director's meetings).

Advantages of Declaration of Trust

Less costly (There is no cost because the church can prepare it internally without legal assistance). More easily set up.

Disadvantages of Declaration of Trust

Does not provide the corporate protection for the trustees or leaders of the church. Any suit against the church requires a suit against the leaders and members personally. Church cannot hold property in its own right. Church cannot apply for status under Marriage Act.

Are there procedures to become a "recognized charity" or "non-profit organization"?

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) (formerly Revenue Canada) is the government department responsible for granting organizations charitable tax status. The process routinely takes 6 months to 18 months and requires applicants to fulfill a number of requirements.

One of the major advantages of obtaining charitable status, is that the organization is able to issue receipts to donors for income tax purposes. This can be a major advantage when soliciting for donations. In addition, charities receive certain tax exemptions.

If an organization is created in Canada, is non-profit and is charitable in purpose, it may qualify as a charity within the meaning of the *Income Tax Act*. A non-profit corporation cannot issue tax deductible receipt simply because it is a non-profit corporation. It must first submit an application and be accepted as having charitable status.

What Objects and Purposes are Acceptable for Charitable Status?

The Charities Directorate of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency administers the *Income Tax Act* as it applies to registered charities. CCRA only grants charitable status to organizations where the (a) the applicant's purposes and activities fall within the legal concept of charity as recognized by the courts; and (b) the organization meets the other requirements of the *Income Tax Act*.

The advancement of religion as a charitable purpose

The courts have identified the advancement of religion as a general category of charitable purposes. Other categories are: the relief of poverty, the advancement of education; or certain other purposes that benefit the community in a way the courts have said are charitable.

The advancement of religion refers to promoting the spiritual teachings of a religious body, and maintaining the doctrines and spiritual observances on which those teachings are based. There has to be an element of theistic worship, which means the worship of a deity or deities in the spiritual sense. To foster a belief in proper morals or ethics alone is not enough to qualify as a charity under this category. A religious body is considered charitable when its activities serve religious purposes for the public good. The beliefs and practices cannot be what the courts consider subversive or immoral.

Other activities that advance religion include: organizing and providing religious instruction, and performing pastoral and missionary work; and establishing and maintaining buildings for worship and other religious use.

Are there any requirements related to owning property as a church?

Church property is held by Trustees; they have the title. The Trustees hold the property for the use and benefit of the church. The Trustees must follow the lawful directions of the Church Board or Church Council. The Trustees cannot deal with certain property without first obtaining the consent of the Board. Since church property is held by Trustees, they have the foremost responsibility for respecting this understanding of ownership and acting in accordance with its ramifications.

Who may officiate at weddings?

The regulations regarding who may solemnize weddings vary among the provinces. It is recommended that the clergy of the new congregation contact the local offices authorized to issue wedding licenses, to determine the applicable laws and regulations.

Scotland

Scotland has its own legal system although there are some laws (Acts of Parliament) that are common to the entire United Kingdom. The general legal system, charity law and protection of vulnerable groups (children and adults) in Scotland is unique. There is no absolute requirement for starting up a church. Anyone can start such and there is nothing specific that requires to be done. However, if that church wishes to own heritable property, employ staff or become a registered charity then it must incorporate in some way

It could take the commercial route to incorporation and become a company in law. That would then permit it to hold property and there is a particular type of company (called "limited by guarantee") that is often used. Alternatively it could take the option of "constituting" itself by agreeing a formal constitution (it would not be able to hold property with this form) or it could become a "Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation" (SCIO). The SCIO is a new form of incorporation which has both advantages and disadvantages. All options for charity registration in Scotland can be found on the website of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) at <http://www.oscr.org.uk>

Whichever form of incorporation is chosen the proposed charity must have "charitable objectives". These objectives and full details on how to apply for charity registration can be found at <http://www.oscr.org.uk/about-scottish-charities/becoming-a-charity/>

If a church registers as a charity then they become fully accountable to the charity regulator (OSCR) to whom they must provide annual accounts and meet various statutory obligations. Once so registered there are tax advantages as well as full transparency. Not so registering, whilst possible and quite legal, perhaps suggests that the church does not wish to be transparent and accountable

Although the procedure is very similar to England the charity regulator and the legislation governing charities is quite different. In England it would be the "Charity Commission" instead of OSCR

Also similar in Scotland but running under different legislation and under a different overseeing body is the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme. This is a government scheme where organisations, including churches and other voluntary organisations, can undertake background checks on prospective volunteers and employees. For unpaid voluntary workers these background checks are free of charge but the church must be registered with the "Central Registered Body in Scotland". All prospective staff have to be issued with a job description and it is this description that determines whether they work with a vulnerable group or not and whether that work is incidental or regular. If it is regular then the church is required to check that individual and to have them join the PVG Scheme

The law in Scotland relating to marriage specifies that it is the officiant who is registered and it is possible for any new church to have its ministers officiate at a legal wedding if they

have permission from the Registrar General. The government department dealing with that permission is the General Register of Scotland. The permission can be a "one-off" or it can take the form of a three year renewable license once the church has become established.

Ghana

- 1.Churches are exempt from paying taxes but if a church is operating a profit making business then that part of church-owned operations is taxable.
- 2.It has become a law in Ghana for every church to register with the registered general department of legal co-operation.
- 3.After registering with the register general department before a church can have weddings or other activities which have connection with the law the venue of church must be registered with a Regional metropolitan and coordinating council .The church and its leaders like pastor and his working staff must be gazetted by the council.
4. A person must be an ordained minister before he or she can perform a wedding.

France

Churches in France are governed by the "Law on Religious Associations." General information about the law may be found in Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_association.

Other Nations

Each nation is unique in its laws related to churches. You should consult an attorney for details. We welcome your submission of summary information regarding the laws of the nation in which your church is located, for inclusion in subsequent editions of this work.

Starting A New Community Church

APPENDIX TWO

Sample Constitution and Bylaws

The following documents should be altered to fit your local circumstances. These documents call for a “unicameral” board structure in which the same body has oversight of both the spiritual and material concerns of the church. This is not the only possible structure. Some churches choose a “bicameral” system in which Deacons (spiritual concerns) and Trustees (material concerns) share administrative duties. Others choose a multi-board system with a coordinating Council or Advisory Committee.

There are several reasons for recommending a one-board or unicameral system. A unicameral arrangement is easy to interpret to people who are newcomers to church structure. The possibility of adding committees that report to the Council allows for growth in ministries as the congregation grows. Issues that arise from coordinating efforts among various bodies are avoided. Finally, nothing can “fall between the cracks” in administration since everything related to the functioning of the church is under the purview of one body.

In those jurisdictions in which a constitution and/or bylaws is required for purposes of incorporation, you should submit your governing documents to an attorney's review before proceeding to adopt them as a church.

CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ANYWHERE

Article I: Name, Location and Incorporation

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be the First Community Church of Anywhere.

Section 2. This church's mailing address shall be Post Office Box 123, Anywhere, [Name of State/Province/Nation], and its business address shall be 456 Main Street, Anywhere, [Name of State/Province/Nation].

Section 3. This church shall be chartered as a not-for-profit religious corporation according to the laws of [Name of State/Province/Nation.]

Article II: Statement of Purpose, Vision and Welcome

{Several sample statements appear in Appendix Three. Some churches choose to include in their constitution and bylaws a formal creed or statement of faith in addition to a statement of purpose, vision and welcome.}

Article III Affiliations

Section 1. The First Community Church of Anywhere shall be affiliated with and in support of the International Council of Community Churches. Through the International Council of Community Churches this church shall be affiliated with the national and world-wide ecumenical movement.

Section 2. The First Community Church of Anywhere shall be affiliated with and in support of such local and regional ecumenical bodies as are authorized by at two-thirds majority vote of members at any properly called business meeting of the church.

{For those "dually affiliated" churches that also hold membership in another communion, a suitable section outlining that additional affiliation should be included in this Article of the constitution.}

Article IV. Membership

Section 1. The First Community Church of Anywhere shall establish requirements for full and associate memberships through its bylaws. All full members shall be eligible to attend and vote on all issues at business meetings of the church.

Section 2. In the case that [Name of state/province] law restricts voting on any issue to persons who have attained a certain age in years, the church shall observe that law.

Section 3. The First Community Church of Anywhere shall establish in its bylaws standards for attendance at church functions and standards for financial support of the church as a requirement to retain voting rights.

Section 4 The First Community Church of Anywhere shall establish in its bylaws provisions for the termination of membership.

Article V. Annual and Special Meetings

Section 1. The First Community Church of Anywhere shall meet in annual business meeting [at the church's customary place of worship, at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday in January], or at some other date, time and location determined by the church Council prior to the end of the preceding month. The date, time and location of the meeting shall be communicated to all voting members by public notices prominently posted at the church's customary place of worship, by announcements in all public worship services for a period of two weeks preceding the meeting, and by such other means as the Council may mandate. The church shall at this meeting vote on an annual budget, elect those officers and other officials of the church established by its constitution and bylaws, and act on other matters that may come before it in a manner consistent with its constitution and bylaws.

Section 2. The First Community Church of Anywhere may meet in special business meeting called by the Council or a majority thereof, by the Pastor, or by petition of at least twelve members of the congregation. Each such meeting shall be publicized in advance in the same manner as an annual business session. The notice of meeting shall specify the purpose for the meeting. Only motions related to the stated purpose of a special business meeting shall be entertained at that meeting.

Section 3. One-fifth of the number of those holding full membership in the church shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at annual business meetings and at special meetings of the church.

Section 4. Unless otherwise directed in this constitution, a simple-majority vote shall determine an action in an annual or special business meeting. Except in those provisions that are in

violation of this constitution, the most recently revised version of Roberts Rules of Order shall be followed in all business meeting.

Article VI. Officers, Council and Committees

Section 1. The First Community Church of Anywhere shall elect from its membership a Council President, a Council Vice-President, a Clerk, a Treasurer, and such other officers as the bylaws may direct and the church may of its own accord decide. Terms of office and term limits if any, shall be those established by the church's bylaws.

Section 2. All officers shall be members of the church's Council, which body shall have responsibility for the oversight of all church ministries, programs, functions, events and staff. The Council shall have the powers and responsibilities assigned by civil law and customarily exercised by a non-profit organization's board of trustees, and shall be considered to be the board of trustees for that purpose.

Section 3. The Council shall appoint and have oversight of those committees established by the church in annual or special business meetings. The Council may appoint and shall have oversight of such additional committees as it considers appropriate in order to carry out its duties and responsibilities.

Article VII. Finances

Section 1. The fiscal year of the First Community Church of Anywhere shall be from January 1 through December 31.

Section 2. The Council shall recommend a proposed budget for the current fiscal year to the annual business meeting of the church.

Section 3. The Council shall buy, sell or encumber real estate or any rights thereto only upon a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting at an annual or special business meeting of the church.

Article VIII. Auxiliary Organizations

Section 1. The church may establish an auxiliary organization by simple majority vote at any meeting of the church's Council.

Section 2. Any such organization shall be subject to oversight by and directives from the church's Council.

Section 3. Any such organization shall submit to the church at the church's annual business meeting each year a report on its activities and programming for the previous year, and a financial report for the just-concluded fiscal year that includes beginning balances on all accounts, all income, all expenditures, and ending balances on all accounts.

Section 4. Should an auxiliary organization cease to function for a period of twelve months, the Council may declare the organization defunct. The financial and other assets of any defunct auxiliary organization shall revert to the church, and the last officers of the organization shall assist the church treasurer in the recovery of said assets.

Article IX: Pastor

Section 1. When a vacancy exists in the church's pastorate, the Council shall nominate to the church a pastoral search committee consisting of not less than five nor more than eleven persons, and shall designate which appointee is to chair the committee. The church shall act on the nominations at an annual or special business meeting.

Section 2. The pastoral search committee shall use those resources available from the International Council of Community Churches in its proceedings.

Section 3. The pastoral search committee shall recommend to the church a candidate to become pastor only if that individual has attained a bachelor's degree from an accredited college and a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary, or the equivalent thereof; and if that individual has been ordained by a recognized denomination or is seeking ordination through this church and the International Council of Community Churches.

Section 4. An individual shall be called to become pastor of this church after recommendation by the pastoral search committee and a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting at an annual or special business meeting of the church.

Section 5. The pastor shall have major responsibility for preaching and pastoral ministries, shall be the executive leader of any additional professional and support staff employed by the church, shall be member ex-officio of the church Council and all committees appointed by the church and its Council, and shall in cooperation with the Council seek to advance the church and its ministries. The Council shall develop a detailed job description for the pastor, shall in cooperation with the pastor develop annual goals, and shall provide for the annual evaluation of the pastor's professional performance in relation to those goals.

Section 6. A pastor's tenure shall terminate upon the resignation of the pastor, or upon two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting at a special business meeting of the church called for the purpose. In either case, advance notice of a minimum of 45 days shall be provided in advance of the close of the pastorate.

Article X: Other Staff

Section 1. The church may employ additional professional staff to assist and work with the pastor. Professional staff employed by this church shall have the same educational and ordination qualifications as the pastor. The Council in cooperation with the pastor shall establish job descriptions and provisions for goal setting and professional performance evaluation for each professional staff person.

Section 2. The church may employ support staff as provided for in actions of the church and provision in the church budget. The Council in cooperation with the pastor shall establish job descriptions and procedures for performance evaluation for each support staff person.

Article XI: Bylaws

Section 1. The Council shall recommend bylaws to the church at annual or special business meetings. Any member may recommend a new or amended bylaw at an annual business meeting of the church.

Section 2. Nothing in the bylaws, job descriptions or other documents approved by the church or Council shall be in conflict with this constitution or the provisions by which the church is incorporated.

Article XII: Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a three-fourths majority vote of those present and voting at an annual business meeting or at a special business meeting called for the purpose, provided that copies of the proposed changes have been prominently posted at the church's customary place of worship for a period of two weeks preceding the meeting, and distributed to the church's membership by such other means as the Council may mandate.

BYLAWS OF THE FIRST COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ANYWHERE

Article I: Membership

Section 1: Any individual who is in agreement with the Statement of Purpose and the Statement of Faith of this church may become a member of this church upon simple majority vote of those present and voting at a meeting of the church's Council. The applicant shall indicate whether she/he wishes to be a full member or an associate member of the church.

Section 2. Full members shall have privilege of vote.

Section 3. Associate members shall be those who wish to retain full membership in another church, but also wish an affiliation with this body. Such members shall have all privileges except that of vote.

{This provision allows for seasonal memberships; memberships of those who belong to local churches and/or denominations that prohibit dual membership; and other exceptional cases.}

Section 4. As soon as possible after action by the Council, new members may be recognized and welcomed as such at a public worship service of the church.

Section 5. All members of the church, both full members and associate members, shall be expected to attend worship services of the church, and to support the church financially. Should a member fail to do either or both for a full calendar year, the Council shall be responsible for seeking to reactivate that member's interest and involvement. In the case that such efforts fail to effect a change within an additional twelve months, the Council shall declare the member inactive. Inactive members shall not have privilege of vote. When an inactive member renews activity by gift of record and attendance at two consecutive weekly worship services, the Council shall return the member to active status. Active service in the military, full time attendance at a distant educational institution or confinement to a nursing or other medical facility shall be reason for retaining active status regardless of attendance and giving during such status.

Section 6. Members shall be removed from the church rolls in the case of death, transfer of membership to another church, inactivity for five consecutive years, or actions that would bring disgrace upon the church. Such actions include but are not restricted to a court conviction for a felony that involves violence or bodily harm to another.

Article II: Officers

Section 1. The Council President shall be the chief lay officer of the church, and shall preside at business meetings of the church and at meetings of the Council. The President shall nominate to the Council the membership of any committees organized by the Council, shall have oversight of the work of such committees, and upon request of the pastor shall represent the church at meetings of ecumenical and community bodies.

Section 2. The Council Vice-President shall assist the President and shall preside at meetings in the absence of the President. The Vice President shall have special responsibility for overseeing the performance reviews of the pastor and of any additional church staff.

Section 3. The Clerk shall record the transactions of all meetings of the church and of the Council, and cause the same to be published and/or distributed in those formats and venues assigned and directed by the Council. The Clerk shall keep a complete record and roll of the membership of the church, and shall notify without delay any person whose membership status has changed. The Clerk shall receive and send letters of membership transfer, and shall collect and preserve records and materials related to the history of the church. The Clerk may, upon approval of the Council, appoint one or more persons to assist in the performance of the Clerk's duties.

Section 4. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the receipt, safekeeping and disbursement of all church funds; for keeping adequate records thereof; and for rendering reports on the same as follows: monthly to the Council; annually to the church in advance of the annual business meeting, and upon other occasions as directed by the Council. The Treasurer shall cause to be sent quarterly to each donor to the church, a detailed statement of giving year-to-date. In the case that recordkeeping is done by electronic means, the Treasurer shall back up the relevant files on a regular basis, and shall keep such backup files in a location other than that of the original files. The Treasurer may, upon approval of the Council, appoint one or more persons to assist in the performance of the Treasurer's duties.

Section 5. The church may by simple majority vote at any annual business meeting or special meeting called for the purpose, establish additional offices. Each such office shall be provided with a title and job description. Any officer elected to such a position shall be a member of the Council.

Section 6. All officers must be members of the church. Officers shall be elected at the annual business meeting of the church. The term of office for each officer shall be one year. No person shall serve in any office for more than six consecutive years, unless retained in office by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting at the annual business meeting. In no case shall a person serve in any office for more than ten consecutive years. Should an office fall vacant prior to the expiration of term, the Council shall nominate an individual to fill the unexpired term, and present that nomination to a special business meeting of the church called for the purpose of filling the office.

Article III: The Council

Section 1. Regular meetings of the Council shall be held monthly, except that in extraordinary cases the Council may adjourn for a period of no more than sixty days. Each member of the Council shall be notified of the time, date and place of meeting not less than seven days in advance, by postal mail or by electronic means.

Section 2. Special meetings of the Council may be called by the President, the Pastor, or any three members of the Council by notice to the Clerk. The purpose of a special meeting shall be included in notices to each member. Each member of the Council shall be notified of the time, date and place of meeting not less than seven days in advance, by postal mail or by electronic means.

Section 3. Three-fifths of the membership of the Council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Unless required otherwise by the Constitution and bylaws of the church, a simple majority vote of those present and voting shall determine an action of the Council.

Section 4. At each meeting, the Council shall receive reports from the Treasurer, and from committees appointed by the church and by the Council. Each meeting's agenda shall provide opportunity for members of the Council and for the Pastor to present new business for consideration by the Council.

Section 5. The Council shall appoint a nominating committee of five persons annually, to prepare a slate of officers and other elected persons to be presented to the church's annual business meeting. At least two of the members of the nominating committee shall be persons who are not currently serving as members of the Council.

Section 6. The Council shall appoint a budget committee of five persons annually, to hear recommendations from the staff relations committee, the Council and others, and to prepare a recommended budget for review and amendment by the Council and subsequent proposal to the church at the church's annual business meeting. At least two members of the budget committee shall be persons who are not currently serving as members of the Council.

Section 7. In addition to those responsibilities assigned it by the Constitution, the Council shall coordinate the work of all committees; delegate responsibilities not determined by the Constitution, bylaws or job descriptions; engage in annual planning conferences for church programs and activities; and coordinate the calendar of church activities.

Section 8. The Council shall provide for an annual audit of the church's financial records, and present a report on the same to the church by the posting of same in a prominent place at the customary place of worship of the church, and by such other means as the Council may find appropriate.

Article IV: Committees

Section 1. In the case that the church or Council establishes a committee and appoints its members but does not designate a committee chair, the committee shall select its own chairperson from among its members.

Section 2. Each committee shall select a secretary to develop minutes of meetings and to distribute same to the members of the committee and to the Council; and shall select additional persons for specific tasks as may seem appropriate to the committee.

Section 3. Each committee shall present progress reports on its work to the Council. Such reports shall be made on a monthly basis, unless in any given month there has been no activity to report.

Section 4. Each committee shall seek to coordinate its activities and programs with those of other committees and the church at large, by reporting its planned activities to the Council and accepting such amendments to schedule as the Council may find necessary.

Article V: Finances

Section 1. The Council shall designate the financial institution or institutions with which the church shall have a relationship, and with whom the church's funds and those of its auxiliary organizations may be placed on deposit or invested.

Section 2. The Council shall designate systems of financial control and reporting for church funds and those of its auxiliary organizations, in order to avoid scandal and to maximize transparency in the handling of monies.

Section 3. The Council shall encourage gifts to an endowment fund, shall recommend to the church procedures for the investment of endowment funds, and shall nominate to the church annually, an endowment committee to oversee the handling and investment of endowment funds.

Section 4. The Council shall regularly review the financial situation of the church, and may propose amendments to the budget to the church at a special business meeting of the church called for the purpose.

Article VI: Auxiliary Organizations

Section 1. The presidents or equivalents of each auxiliary organization shall be invited to attend each meeting of the Council as a member ex-officio.

Section 2. The church Treasurer shall provide or cause to be provided to each auxiliary organization, such orientation and training in the church's financial procedures as may be appropriate.

Article VII: Church Staff

Section 1. The Council shall appoint annually, a staff relations committee, to consult with the pastor and other professional and support staff, and to make recommendations regarding performance reviews, staff compensation, and other matters related to the effective functioning of church staff.

Section 2. The Pastor and each additional professional staff person shall prepare an annual report on goals, activities and accomplishments for presentation to the church's annual business meeting.

Article VIII: Amendments

The bylaws of this church may be amended by a simple majority vote of those present and voting at an annual business meeting or at a special business meeting called for the purpose, provided that copies of the proposed changes have been prominently posted at the church's customary place of worship for a period of two weeks preceding the meeting, and distributed to the church's membership by such other means as the Council may mandate.

APPENDIX THREE

MISSION, VISION AND INVITATION STATEMENTS

“A Community Under the Cross”

We are a community under the cross of Jesus Christ.

Believing that the essence of the Good News is the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and are empowered to be witnesses by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as we look in anticipation of His second coming.

We are committed to meet the spiritual, mental, and physical needs of our immediate church family and the broader community as a unified body of Christians. Because we have been fed the bread of life, and the living water of our Creator. We offer food to the hungry, clothing to the naked and justice for the oppressed.

Because in Christ we are healed, we offer healing to the sick, Because through Christ sacrifice we have received mercy, we offer care for the prisoner, because by the Holy Spirit we have received peace, joy and courage; we offer comfort to those who grieve and encouragement to the disheartened; because of the mighty acts of God, we are restored, redeemed and revived.

We proclaim reconciliation for broken relationships, love for children, and affection and respect for the elderly; and the opening of our community, to all who seek to walk in the way of Jesus, now and until the end of the age.

--Progressive Community Church, Chicago, IL

“Mission; Vision; Motto”

Mission: The Church at Litchfield Park is an interdenominational community church, welcoming all people to worship, serve, and fellowship in Christian Love.

Vision: With dynamic Christian spirit that aspires to be as inclusive as the love of God, The Church at Litchfield Park will provide a foundation that inspires and enriches the lives of the congregation, empowering all to grow in commitment to the Church, the Community and greater world.

Motto: A House of Prayer for All People.

--The Church at Litchfield Park, Litchfield Park, AZ

“Committed ... “

People's Community Church is committed to preparing, educating, and teaching Christians to grow spiritually by equipping them in the mission of Christ.

--People's Community Church, Berea, OH

“Our Mission and Purpose”

We are an assembly of Christians bound together to profess and uphold the Biblical Faith and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through our unified witness, collective action, mutual support and accountability, all to the glory of God.

We shall promote faithfulness to the biblical call exemplified in such scripture passages as the Great Commandment found in Matthew 22:37-40 and Great Commission found in Matthew

28:18-20, in addition to such core paradigms as the great requirement found in Micah 6:8, the great confession found in Matthew 16:13-19, the great standard found in John 15:9-17, and the great pursuit found in 1 Peter 1:14-15, and to live out the blessed example of Christian fellowship given in Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35 and demonstrating the characteristics of divine adoption found in Galatians 5:16-26.

--Ujima Christian Church, Ewing, NJ

“We Believe In Jesus”

We believe in Jesus!

We want to be like Jesus.

We want to teach what Jesus taught and live like Jesus lived.

We're not much into doctrines and human-made systems of belief. Those mostly serve the purpose of dividing people into camps of right and wrong, acceptable and not acceptable.

We don't believe Jesus lived that way.

Jesus found ways to accept and love everyone he came into contact with. We're trying to do the same, although we have to admit we're not nearly as good at loving as Jesus was. But we're trying!

We call ourselves a "community church" because we believe Jesus made himself available to the whole world - not just a little group of select people. We're not overly troubled by folks who come to us with different beliefs, ideas, experiences, or ways of looking at things. We find reason to "commune" with each other not because we all think alike, but because God loves us all, and each of us is seeking the same thing - the Way to a better world, the Truth that sets people free, and the Life that is abundantly full and meaningful. We believe the Way, the Truth, and the Life revealed in Jesus is worth discovering and sharing together!

We believe!

--Tellico Village Community Church, Loudon, TN

“Love is....”

Love is the doctrine of this church;
The quest of truth is its sacrament;
And service is its prayer.
To dwell together in peace,
To seek knowledge in freedom,
To serve humankind in fellowship, To the end that all souls
shall grow Into harmony with the Divine -
Thus do we covenant with each other, And with God.

--Longboat Island Chapel, Longboat Key, FL

“We Are ... “

We are Christ centered

We know and understand God and the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ.

We are Bible rooted

The Bible, as God's Word, is a course of instruction and a guide for living.

We are people focused

All people matter to God and, therefore, all people matter to us.

We are mission minded

We believe and practice the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.
We are prayer dependent

Prayer is a direct means of communication with God and it is essential in our relationship with God As individuals and the church.

--Peace Community Church, Fort Myers, FL

"Whosoever Will, May Come"

To you who find joy in your faith,
and wish to share it with others;

To all who are confused,
and need to focus life at the Center;

To all who are lonely, dispossessed or rejected,
and seek an inclusive fellowship;

To the disillusioned,
longing for a better tomorrow;

To you minds waiting
for a challenge to match your enthusiasm;

To those with leisure
who lack re-creation;

To the burdened and the bound
looking for a Savior

This church opens wide its door and says,
IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, WELCOME!

-- Chapel By the Sea, Clearwater Beach, FL.

Where will you print and reprint your new church's statement of vision, purpose and welcome? In each week's worship bulletins? On a large wall poster inside each entrance door of your place of worship? On your website? On your printed stationery? If your statement reflects the character and spirit of your church – and it should – the statement needs to appear in as many locations and as often as possible. The statement will then be a reminder to present members as well as an invitation to all who may be seeking a church home.

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