

Upper New York Annual Conference

Guidelines for Chartering Local Churches and Recognizing Mission Congregations

Purpose, Vision, and Goals: The purpose of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The way the Upper New York Conference seeks to live out that purpose can be seen in our Vision Statement: *"To live the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places."* We believe disciple-making happens at the local church level, and that the purpose of the Annual Conference is to equip local church lay and clergy leaders to be more effective in making disciples in their own context. This includes financial participation in giving of Ministry Shares to enable more leaders to be equipped and New Faith Communities to be planted. This document is primarily concerned with New Faith Communities. It is designed to provide clarity around the timing of and process for moving a New Faith Community to life as a Chartered Church.

New Faith Communities are planted in different communities with different capacities for long-term growth. We anticipate planting new faith communities that might become any of the following:

1. Fully chartered United Methodist Churches that can support one or more full time clergy under appointment and participate fully in the connectional life of the Annual Conference.
2. Fully chartered United Methodist Churches that can support one less-than- full-time clergy person and participate in proportional ways in the connectional life of the Annual Conference.
3. Fully chartered United Methodist Churches that are led by lay persons, under the sacramental oversight of a nearby elder, that participate in proportional ways in the connectional life of the Annual Conference.
4. Fully chartered Mission Congregations that follow the disciplinary guidelines of such faith communities, as delineated in the following paragraph:
 - a. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2012*, paragraph 259 gives guidelines for establishing a new church. Paragraph 259.4 states, "Each annual conference or its equivalent may determine the minimum number of members and other criteria required for the organization of a local United Methodist church." Additionally, 259.1.a states, "A mission congregation may be designated when any of the following conditions exist: a) Membership opportunities and resources are limited and not likely to result in a chartered congregation for an extended period of time. 2) A strategic demographic, cultural, or language opportunity for serving a limited population is present. 3) It is expected that long-term sustaining funding from sources outside the congregation will be necessary to enable the congregation to exist, and the assumption of full connectional support items by the congregation is unlikely. 4) It is probable that the annual conference will need to provide long-term administrative guidance, including attention to the distinctive property needs of the congregation. When any of these conditions exist, the Cabinet, in consultation with the congregational development area of the annual conference, may designate an entity a mission congregation. The mission congregation may be organized in the same manner and have the same rights and powers as any local church."

The guidelines below are to clarify the Upper New York Conference understanding of and practice around chartering each type of faith community.

Upper New York Annual Conference Chartering Guidelines

At the time of launching a New Faith Community in the Upper New York Conference, the Director of New Faith Communities, the District Superintendent, the Cabinet, and the church planter or church initiating the new congregation will be clear regarding long-term vision for this initiative based on the potential of its mission field. These people will ask: Do we anticipate that this faith community will always be a part of the parent church (new campus or church-within-a-church reaching a different demographic), or will be a chartered mission congregation, a chartered congregation with a full-time pastor, or a chartered congregation with a less than full-time appointment (including a strong partner in a multi-point charge)? While we recognize plans may change, this agreed upon direction will guide the process going forward.

The chartered status of the Ministry will be reviewed once on or after the Effective Date, and thereafter once per year, by the Director of New Faith Communities (or an entity he/she assigns this duty), the District Superintendent and the extended Cabinet, who together shall determine the future status of the Ministry. Any of the foregoing persons may notify the Ministry, or otherwise express an expectation, at any time that the Ministry shall, now or in the future, become a chartered congregation in the United Methodist Church (a "Ministry Intended to Charter"), in which case the Ministry will use its best efforts to do so. The Ministry acknowledges and agrees that it must charter, if applicable, upon reaching an average of 70 persons in worship (a "Ministry Required to Charter").

Per Upper New York's New Faith Communities Covenant,

1. New Faith Communities covenant to Charter this ministry at such a time as we reach an average of 70 persons in worship.
2. New Faith Communities covenant to not purchase or take ownership of any real estate prior to legally incorporating and (if applicable) chartering.

The following criteria will determine readiness for chartering at each level:

Chartering Guidelines for a Full-Time Appointment:

1. Consistent Weekly Participation in worship and/or small groups: Average 125 over a six-month period. (It is recommended that at least 100 be adults.)
2. Committed People: Prospective charter members role has reached 150 people. ("Prospective charter members" are those who have engaged in an ongoing way in worship and/or discipleship ministries in the congregation. All do not necessarily have to choose to become charter members.)
3. Timing: Not less than 1 year, nor more than five years after the launch of regular public worship/small groups/gatherings.
4. Income: Equal to or greater than all expenses, including compensation, program, and facilities for a period of 1 year.
5. Essential Ministries: Evidence of maturing development of teams and ministries including discipleship growth, evangelism, mission outreach, stewardship program, and leadership development.

Chartering Guidelines for a less than Full-Time Appointment (in places where target population is limited):

1. Consistent Weekly Participation in worship and/or small groups: Average of 70 over a six-month period. (It is recommended that at least 40 be adults.)

2. Committed People: Prospective charter members role has reached 75 people. ("Prospective charter members" are those who have engaged in an ongoing way in worship and/or discipleship ministries in the congregation. All do not necessarily have to choose to become charter members.)
3. Timing: Not less than 1 year, nor more than five years after the launch of regular public worship/small groups/gatherings.
4. Income: Equal to or greater than all expenses, including compensation, program, and facilities for a period of 1 year.
5. Essential Ministries: Evidence of maturing development of teams and ministries including discipleship growth, evangelism, mission outreach, stewardship program, and leadership development.
6. Evidence is shown that there is little or no potential to grow the church above this level in the near future.

Chartering Guidelines for a Lay-lead Faith Community:

1. Consistent Weekly Participation in worship and/or small groups: Average of 70 over a six-month period. (It is recommended that at least 40 be adults.)
2. Committed People: Prospective charter members role has reached 75 people. ("Prospective charter members" are those who have engaged in an ongoing way in worship and/or discipleship ministries in the congregation. All do not necessarily have to choose to become charter members.)
3. Timing: Not less than 1 year, nor more than five years after the launch of regular public worship/small groups/gatherings.
4. Income: Equal to or greater than all expenses, including compensation, program, and facilities for a period of 1 year.
5. Essential Ministries: Evidence of maturing development of teams and ministries including discipleship growth, evangelism, mission outreach, stewardship program, and leadership development.
6. A clearly delineated relationship with an elder who gives sacramental oversight.

Chartering Guidelines for a Mission Congregation:

The Upper New York Conference will charter a Mission Congregation according to the following guidelines:

1. A Mission Congregation:
 - a. includes regular community worship and/or small group gatherings
 - b. is theologically Wesleyan
 - c. has an effective system for making disciples
 - d. is engaged in ministry with neighbor
 - e. receives new members
 - f. demonstrates faithful stewardship
2. A Mission Congregation in the Upper NY Conference may be established only when the primary mission field is substantially economically challenged and/or marginalized, and/or limiting resources. A Mission Congregation shall make new disciples of Jesus Christ from the primary mission field and incorporate them into the full life of the congregation.
3. A Mission Congregation shall be formed only when the full structure of a chartered Local Church is not the most feasible and/or a hindrance to disciple making work of the new congregation.
4. Specific administrative and financial responsibilities of the Mission Congregation may be assigned to a partner organization. Partner Organizations may include another chartered Local Church, the Upper NY Conference Finance and Benefits Offices, an agency or judicatory body of the United Methodist Church, a not-for-profit corporation that is affiliated with The United Methodist Church, or some other body approved by the Superintendent in that area.

5. The responsibilities and functions that may be delegated to a Partner Organization include the functions of the following committees in a chartered Local Church: Trustees, Finance, Staff Parish Relations, and Church Council (as it relates to administration, staffing and finances).
6. The organizational plan for the Mission Congregation including the role of each Partner Organization shall be approved by the extended Cabinet.
7. Every Mission Congregation shall function as a mission outpost of the United Methodist Connection. As such, a Mission Congregation shall be exempt from paying apportionments. However, a Mission Congregation shall be encouraged to voluntarily contribute connectional giving to the conference apportionment funds based on a percentage of local church offering income determined by the Mission Congregation itself.
8. A chartered Mission Congregation may be eligible to apply for a grant from the New Beginnings Fund to provide for a portion of the pastoral compensation and benefits package. Any grant amount will be applied for and reviewed on an annual basis.
9. The chartered status of every Mission Congregation shall be reviewed every two years by the District Superintendent and the extended Cabinet, and shall determine the future status of these faith communities.

Upon Chartering

Upon chartering, the Ministry will officially be welcomed as a chartered congregation at the time of Annual Conference and, beginning in July of the year following their official charter (or such other time as determined by the Conference), shall pay, at minimum, ministry shares using the following graduated percentages of giving:

- First year: 25% of a full share of connectional ministry
- Second year: 50% of a full share of connectional ministry
- Third year: 75% of a full share of connectional ministry
- Fourth year: 100% of a full share of connectional ministry

Updates

The Ministry acknowledges and affirms that these Chartering Guidelines may be updated and/or amended from time to time by the Conference with or without notice to the Ministry, and that the Ministry shall be responsible for requesting the most recent Chartering Guidelines from the Ministry upon preparing to charter as a local church or mission congregation.

Exceptions to the Guidelines and Criteria: Exceptions to the statistical numbers and/or deadlines for charter may be made only with the approval of both the UNY Extended Cabinet and the New Faith Communities Team.

PURPOSE The purpose of this document is to guide a unchartered Ministry in the administrative steps of chartering. There are a lot of legal things that need to take place during chartering. If these legalities are neglected, it will one day lead to problems. It is the responsibility of the leadership of the unchartered Ministry to ensure these items are completed after they have been approved to Charter by the Cabinet.

___ 1. Read UNY's **Charter Guidelines** above.

___ 2. Complete an **Application to Charter** form found at
<https://forms.office.com/r/hK3EYFqLWp>