

1 Congregational Development

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3 In his final moments with his disciples, Jesus said, "...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,
4 and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Not only was he
5 speaking to those gathered 2,000 years ago, he was--and is--speaking to his followers this very
6 day. As God's Kingdom continues to come into reality, we disciples must continue to be
7 witnesses to those around us.

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9 In the 1800's when Indiana was being settled, this happened through aggressive church
10 planting. Where ever a community began to develop, we Methodists and Evangelicals and
11 United Brethren were there planting new communities of faith. As a result, a significant
12 percentage of Indiana's population came to faith and became followers of Christ, transforming
13 their communities and even the world.

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15 The most recent church development studies point to the fact that new churches are more likely
16 to grow. Churches born prior to 1980 have declined more than they have grown over the past
17 decade. With the change of population patterns and the growth of new communities, the United
18 Methodist Church needs to once again move to reach these growing people groups.

19
20 This is a significant moment in our church's life – not simply because we have formed a new
21 Indiana Conference, but because of the tremendous challenge and opportunity facing us as we
22 carry out Christ's command to make disciples. With a culture that is becoming increasingly
23 secular, church planting and the starting of new faith communities, congregations, and worship
24 services is just as important as in the 1800's.

25
26 Church development will be working in five strategic arenas:

- 27 1. New Church Strategy – We would like to see the Indiana Conference plant 20 new
28 churches during the next 7 years.
- 29 2. High Potential Church strategy – We will be looking for churches that have 5 of the 8
30 high potential areas.
 - 31 a. Could have the right location. . .
 - 32 b. Could have good lay leadership. . .
 - 33 c. Could have the right pastor. . .
 - 34 d. Could be healthy. . .
 - 35 e. Could have a sense of urgency. . .
 - 36 f. Could be ready and willing to relocate. . .
 - 37 g. Could be in an area of population growth. . .
 - 38 h. Could have a significant number of unchurched. . .
- 39 3. Multi-Site Church Strategy – We would like to come along-side existing congregations to
40 help them develop offsite worshipping communities. We will look for:
 - 41 a. Multi-cell healthy churches. . .
 - 42 b. Large population density areas. . .
- 43 4. Growing Church Strategy – A number of our churches in the Indiana Conference are
44 growing at the present time. We will plan to help these churches in every way possible to
45 continue to move forward.
- 46 5. Sending of the Saints Training Strategy – There are some churches that have good lay
47 and clergy leadership, and we would like to help those churches begin to grow in
48 reaching new persons for Christ and the church through “best practices” training events.

1 Jesus called his disciples--the saints--to go out into the communities and preach and heal and
2 baptize. To that end, the conference's new Church Development team is calling all of our
3 churches to play a part.
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5 **We propose that every church - working alone or in cooperation with other churches –**
6 **strive to start one new faith community that is specifically targeting persons outside their**
7 **church's constituency over the next two years.**
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9 The Church Development team is committed to support our churches in this effort through
10 providing resources, including best practices training, demographic information, discernment
11 and prayer guides, as well as specialized help. We can't afford not to wholeheartedly pursue
12 this **Sending of the Saints** endeavor, for as Jesus said, "The fields are ripe unto the harvest!"
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14 I would like to thank Gary Schaar, Ken Grubb, Milt Ashby and all who have served the Church
15 Development committees of the previous conferences. The work they did has now prepared us
16 for the next phase of ministry.
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18 **Mark A. Gough, Director of Church Development**
19 **Ed Fenstermacher, Associate Director of Church Development**