

INTRODUCTION

The 225th Session of the Virginia Annual Conference held June 10-14, 2007 unanimously approved the following recommendation:

That the Virginia Annual Conference reaffirm the goal of starting 250 new faith communities in the next thirty years and that the 250 Task Force formulate a comprehensive plan to accomplish this goal and, together with the Cabinet, Common Table for Church Vitality, Office of Congregational Development, and Council on Finance and Administration, propose means to implement such a plan financially and report such plan and means to the 2008 session of annual conference for consideration and action.

In response to this recommendation, the following vision entitled *All Things New: Fruitful and Multiplying – The Virginia Conference* is presented. Members of the 250 Task Force who have written this plan in consultation with the Cabinet, The Common Table for Church Vitality, Office of Church Development, and Council on Finance and Administration are the following: Robb Almy, Darlene Amon, Tom Berlin, Brenda Biler, Keith Boyette, Janet Bracey, Marc Brown (Chair), Shirley Cauffman, Young Jin Cho, Paulo Da Silva, Melissa Dunlap, Lorenzo Hill, Bishop Charlene Kammerer, Christie Latona (Consultant), Peter Moon, Carl Moravitz, Mark Ogren, Wayne Snead, Brooke Willson, and Anna Gail Workman.

The primary focus of *All Things New* will be the establishment of 250 new faith communities in 30 years. This focus, however, will not be the sole basis of *All Things New* as an invitation to strengthen the ministries of our existing faith communities will be shared. If the seeds of 250 new faith communities are to be sown, the present reality of many churches of the Virginia Conference must be strengthened. Existing congregations must be committed to grow where they have been sown as part of the body of Christ. In addition, *All Things New* invites our conference, our churches, and all who are affiliated with these churches to make a commitment to pray with an open heart and mind to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and further, to be obedient to these promptings, which will be absolutely necessary if 250 new faith communities are to be established in 30 years. Specific recommendations are made that will equip all levels of conference leadership to work jointly toward the goal of beginning new faith communities and renewing existing faith communities. It is our belief that seeds of the future are in the fruit of the present. It is our understanding that fruitful and multiplying Christian communities of faith are evidence of the activity of God's Holy Spirit at work in the world.

All Things New is:

- 1) A proclamation of faith in the abundance of God's grace through Jesus Christ
- 2) A reclaiming of our United Methodist heritage as a missionary movement of God's Holy Spirit
- 3) A vision for spiritual renewal through an invitation for all churches to be fruitful and to multiply

While recommendations within *All Things New* will be implemented through the administrative structure of our conference, the consensus is that *these recommendations should not be understood as a conference program*. Instead, *our conference leadership invites our churches to*

1 *prayerfully consider these recommendations as our conference's response to the Great*
2 *Commission of Matthew 28:16-20.*

3 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had
4 designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And
5 Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven
6 and on earth, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the
7 name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I
8 commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

9
10 To implement the recommendations of *All Things New*, the Virginia Conference will need to
11 live into a new reality as taught by Jesus in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-29). This
12 parable of accountability speaks of the trust a master places in his servants to multiply the gifts
13 with which they are entrusted.

14 "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own servants and
15 entrusted his possessions to them. "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to
16 another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

17 "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and
18 gained five more talents. "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents
19 gained two more. "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the
20 ground and hid his master's money.

21 "Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

22 "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents,
23 saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.'

24 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a
25 few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

26 "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted
27 two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' "His master said to him, 'Well
28 done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in
29 charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

30 "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew
31 you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered
32 no seed. 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you
33 have what is yours.'

34 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy servant, you knew that I
35 reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 'Then you ought to have
36 put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with
37 interest. 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten
38 talents.'

39 "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from
40 the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away."

41
42 While this is a favorite passage to use in annual financial commitment drives in local churches,
43 we believe it has even more relevance as we seek to be faithful stewards of our God-given
44 resources across our conference. We believe this teaching of Jesus has the power to transform
45 the Virginia Conference to *a culture of fruitfulness*. This transformation would be seen in the

1 ways that resources and training are offered for both new faith communities and existing faith
2 communities. Some of the gifts of this new culture include:

- 3
- 4 • Focusing on the joy and desire of the Master rather than the desires of the servants
- 5 • Helping everyone be accountable
- 6 • Causing investment in those congregations who do the most with their gifts
- 7 • Inviting all faith communities of the Virginia Conference to live into a new reality where
- 8 abundance and fruitfulness are the expected outcomes of faithful discipleship
- 9 • Inviting all faith communities of the Virginia Conference to become Five Talent Churches
- 10 that demonstrate their faithfulness through multiplication of disciples. A Five Talent
- 11 Church is distinguished by its fruitfulness and not its size. A church of any size can be a
- 12 Five Talent Church (refer to An Invitation to Harvest, Action Step One to learn more).
- 13 • Changing the focus of the Virginia Conference from worrying about the loss of members
- 14 to the joy of meeting the risen Christ in our growing Commonwealth
- 15

16 The desired culture change points to some shifts required to live out the vision statement of our
17 conference: “We envision churches where all God’s people are welcomed at table, nurtured, and
18 transformed to be Christ to others in the world.” Some of these major shifts include:

- 19
- 20 • From spreading resources and attention too thin to focusing on key strategic areas
- 21 • From protecting the present to transforming the present
- 22 • From serving the institution to reclaiming the mission of the institution
- 23 • From investing first in buildings to investing first in leadership
- 24 • From competition to synergy among churches, “new” and “existing,” e.g. any church can
- 25 become renewed
- 26 • From investing in those that are not multiplying to investing in what is working
- 27 • From swapping disciples through transfers of church membership to making new disciples
- 28 through professions of faith
- 29

30 The comprehensive plan and subsequent recommendations seek to help the Virginia Annual
31 Conference make these shifts and transform its culture. *All Things New* is based on *core*
32 *scriptural foundations* and will be overseen by existing *administrative bodies*. Some
33 recommendations require *new structures*.

34

35 The **scriptural foundations** that have guided the formation of the *All Things New* are:

- 36 • *Grace*: God’s redemptive power is revealed through the new and renewing revelation of
- 37 Jesus Christ – II Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 3:10
- 38 • *Mission*: The mission of the Church is to proclaim the gospel, embody God’s Kingdom
- 39 as revealed through Jesus Christ, and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the
- 40 transformation of the world – Matthew 28:16-20
- 41 • *Holy Spirit*: The birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost occurred as the Holy Spirit
- 42 empowered the disciples to proclaim the message of the crucified and risen Christ. The
- 43 Church exists through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:1-12

- 1 • *Body of Christ*: The Church embodies the presence of the risen Christ. All parts of
2 Christ's body are connected together in ministry and mission that strengthen and support
3 the larger ministry of the Church – I Corinthians 12:12-27, Romans 12:4-8
- 4 • *Extending the Table*: Local churches are called to share the good news of the kingdom of
5 God by stepping outside their four walls and welcoming all people to God's table of
6 grace – Luke 14:15-23
- 7 • *Fruitfulness and Growth*: Fruitfulness of ministry is the expectation of faith communities
8 who are connected to the vine of Christ – John 15:1-11. God expects growth and
9 multiplication to be a sign of faithfulness – Matthew 25:14-29

10
11 The **administrative bodies** that will oversee the implementation of *All Things New* are:

- 12 • *Bishop and Appointive Cabinet*: The bishop and the appointive cabinet (18 district
13 superintendents of the Virginia Conference) as defined in the Book of Discipline (§ 260)
14 have the disciplinary responsibility for supervising and initiating the formation of new
15 faith communities
- 16 • *The Common Table for Church Vitality*: The primary administrative body of the Virginia
17 Conference has responsibility for coordinating the total resources of the conference with
18 its vision, and enabling the connections among the local, district, annual conference, and
19 general church ministries.
- 20 • *Church Development Team*: Created by action of the 2007 Annual Conference, this team
21 has the responsibility for resourcing new and existing faith communities.
- 22 • *Office of Church Development*: The office is responsible for providing administrative
23 and resourcing leadership for new faith communities.

24
25 The **new structures** that are being recommended for the implementation of *All Things New* are:

- 26 • *District Church Development Teams*: Each district will form ministry teams (if not
27 currently in place) that will be trained and resourced by the Church Development Team
28 and the Office of Church Development to assist in the formation of 250 new faith
29 communities. These district teams will have the responsibility for discerning the
30 feasibility of new faith communities in their respective districts. Details of the
31 establishment of *District Church Development Teams* are included in An Invitation to
32 Harvest, Action Step One.
- 33 • *Five Talent Academy*: Established through the oversight of the Church Development
34 Team for the training of existing congregations, the academy will focus on the core tracks
35 of worship, mission, evangelism, discipleship and stewardship as well as other areas
36 determined by the academy. Details of the establishment of this academy are included in
37 An Invitation to Harvest, Action Step One.

38 39 **AN INVITATION TO JOIN A MOVEMENT**

40 To accomplish the primary objective of changing the culture of our conference, the following
41 invitation is presented to the 2008 session of the Virginia Annual Conference:

42 43 An Invitation to Plant

44 The Virginia Conference will adopt a response to the formation of 250 new faith communities in
45 30 years that will step outside our conference's prior understanding and experience of new
46 church starts by:

- 1 a) establishing new faith communities through conference initiative and
- 2 b) resourcing existing congregations that wish to multiply through the establishment of
- 3 new faith communities

4 An Invitation to Harvest

5 The Virginia Conference will seek to encourage and provide leadership training and support for
6 existing churches that desire and make a commitment to become renewed faith communities.

7
8 *All Things New* is not a proposal to save churches or even to save our conference. It is a vision
9 for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ through our existing faith communities and through the
10 planting of new faith communities. *All Things New* is an invitation for the Virginia Conference
11 to live into a new reality for mission.

12 13 **AN INVITATION TO PLANT**

14 *The Virginia Conference will adopt a response to the formation of 250 new faith communities*
15 *in 30 years that will step outside our conference's prior understanding and experience of new*
16 *church starts by*

- 17 a) *Establishing new faith communities through conference initiative and*
- 18 b) *Resourcing existing churches that wish to multiply through the establishment of*
- 19 *new faith communities*

20 21 **Foundations for An Invitation to Plant**

22 The story of the Church's birth is told in the second chapter of Acts. On the day of Pentecost,
23 the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus
24 Christ. The result of the disciples' proclamation was the launching of a new faith community in
25 Jerusalem. Throughout the remaining chapters of the Book of Acts, accounts of the first new
26 faith community initiative of the Bible are recorded as new congregations are given birth in a
27 diversity of settings. A majority of the epistles of the New Testament are letters written to new
28 faith communities. New faith communities are the biblical witness of the community forming
29 power of God's Holy Spirit as people respond to the good news of Jesus Christ. We celebrate
30 this power of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

31
32 The formation of new faith communities is part of the heritage of The United Methodist Church.
33 Roots of the Methodist movement begun by John Wesley run deep in the formation of new faith
34 communities. Although there is no firm evidence to date the beginning of Methodism in
35 Virginia, the first new Methodist faith community was probably begun in Leesburg in 1766.
36 Since that time, every United Methodist church in Virginia has had its beginning as a new faith
37 community.

38
39 At different times in the history of the Virginia Conference, there have been concentrated
40 initiatives in the launching of new faith communities. Conference wide initiatives were realized
41 in 1838, 1884, the 1950's, and, most recently, in 1987. The fruit of these new faith community
42 initiatives are still being realized.

43
44 The fruit from the 1987 new faith community initiative includes:

- 45 1. The launching of 13 new churches
- 46

1 In 2006, these churches had:

- 2 • A combined average worship attendance of 5,589 (5% of the total worship attendance of
- 3 the conference)
- 4 • 6% of the professions of faith in the conference (including 13% of the total number of
- 5 confirmands)
- 6 • Contributed 2.8% of the total amount given to apportionments in the Virginia Conference
- 7 (a total of \$692,384.99). These thirteen churches also received \$2,096,000 in loans
- 8 which is/has been repaid with interest.

9
10 2. Mergers and relocations of 11 churches

11 In 2006, 10 of those churches had:

- 12 • A combined average worship attendance of 4,692 (4% of the total worship attendance of
- 13 the Virginia Conference). One of those churches has been closed.
- 14 • 6% of the professions of faith in the conference (including 8% of the number of
- 15 confirmands)
- 16 • Contributed 3.2% of the total amount given to apportionments in the Virginia
- 17 Conference (a total of \$797,954.32). These churches also received \$837,500 in loans
- 18 which is/has been repaid with interest.

19
20 Combined, the 23 churches that were begun, merged, or relocated currently represent 9% of total
21 worship attendance and 12% of professions of faith in the Virginia Conference, yet they
22 represent only 2% of the churches in the conference. In addition, these 23 churches contribute
23 5.9% of all apportionments in the Virginia Conference.

24
25 This biblical foundation and United Methodist heritage form the context for 250 new faith
26 communities in 30 years as Virginia continues to rapidly increase in population. At the 2007
27 Virginia Annual Conference, Dr. Lovett H. Weems, Jr., Director Lewis Center for Church
28 Leadership, Wesley Theological Seminary presented the following information about population
29 trends in Virginia:

30
31 “Virginia is one of the fastest-growing states in terms of population, the presence of younger
32 persons, and the increase in diversity.

- 33 • Virginia was one of the 13 fastest growing states in the 1990s.
- 34 • It is one of 18 states projected to grow by more than 25% by 2030.
- 35 • It is one of the top 15 states in terms of attracting young adults.
- 36 • It is one of 14 states where the population younger than 18 is projected to increase more
- 37 than 25% by 2030.
- 38 • Virginia is among just 11 states where the median age is projected to be under the age of
- 39 38 by 2030.
- 40 • Along with the young, Virginia is also one of 20 states with 30% or more Baby Boomers
- 41 in 2000.
- 42 • The population of children and youth grew in Virginia 22% since 1990. Every region has
- 43 counties where the population under the age of 20 is projected to increase by 26% or
- 44 more by 2030.
- 45 • Diversity increased as the racial/ethnic population grew by 43% in Virginia since 1990.

- Every region has counties where the racial/ethnic population is projected to be 26% or more by 2010.

While this rapid growth in population has occurred, the membership of the Virginia Conference has decreased. From 1990 – 2005, the population in Virginia increased by 26% while the membership of the conference decreased by 3%. During this time period, the Virginia Conference averaged 1 new church start per 70,000 new people.”

Lovett then pointed to the story of another annual conference whose state had experienced a population growth that was comparable to Virginia’s in the same time period, 1990 – 2005. Rather than declining in membership, the other conference grew by 9%. One clue to the different outcome was that during this time period, the other conference averaged 1 new church start per 25,000 new people as compared to 1 new church start per 70,000 people for Virginia. Responding to the challenges of a growing and diverse population, the Virginia Conference will need to reaffirm the biblical foundation and United Methodist heritage of starting new faith communities and the multiplication of existing churches. In order to do this, a new language must be learned as traditional and non-traditional faith communities are begun.

The New Language of New Faith Communities

Invest First in Leadership

Across United Methodism in the United States, the old vocabulary for initiating new faith communities traditionally centered on the acquisition of land and then appointing a pastor who often worked by solitary means to begin a new community of faith. This method of launching is identified as a “parachute drop” model. While this model has, at times, proven effective, it has the lowest rate of success in the formation of new faith communities and is highly dependent upon the entrepreneurial skills of the church planter.

Over the last several years we have learned much about what it takes to successfully plant churches. One primary area of learning is to invest in the training and ongoing support of leadership and to link plants to healthy anchor churches. Annual conferences who have a system for planting based on these shifts have a higher success rate (average of 86% of churches started become viable) in their plants, spend less money per plant (on average \$204,000 per plant over 4 years), and realize average worship rates of 333 worshippers. This is more than double the average worship attendance than the general new start average worship attendance.

Investment in equipping leaders – clergy and lay – is essential in the successful launching of new faith communities. Additionally, we must be intentional about recruitment of talented indigenous leaders. Instead of focusing on an initial purchase of land, the identification and resourcing of leadership teams is the primary funding concern of the conference. When a new faith community charters as a local church, its members will have primary responsibility for funding its capital needs. Resourcing of leadership must become the primary focus of the conference as new and existing faith communities are empowered to witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Equipping leaders for new faith communities and existing congregations will focus on the following definition of a faith community:

1 *A faith community is a community of people gathered and empowered by the*
2 *Holy Spirit for the purpose of witnessing to the Kingdom of God through*
3 *sustainable and ongoing acts of worship, mission, evangelism, discipleship,*
4 *and stewardship.*

5
6 The following understandings of what constitutes and does not constitute a new faith community
7 in the Virginia Conference will provide direction to the leadership emphasis:

8
9 *A New Faith Community in the Virginia Conference...*

- 10 • Did not exist before
- 11 • Ministry is consistent with the doctrine and polity (disciplinary governance
- 12 policies) of The United Methodist Church
- 13 • Is an entity that has a primary focus of reaching new people who are not in
- 14 existing churches
- 15 • Is different from a parent congregation (geographically, language, ethnicity,
- 16 and/or generational)
- 17 • Knows why it exists and has a clear sense of mission/vision and who God is
- 18 calling to reach
- 19 • Gathers for regular worship
- 20 • Receives new members
- 21 • Has intentional disciple-making, mission and financial stewardship systems
- 22 • Has the understood expectation of starting a new faith community in 10 years

23
24 *A New Faith Community in the Virginia Conference is not...*

25 An additional worship service at an existing site *unless* this service is an intentional
26 offering to identified groups of persons who are not significantly represented in the
27 current church composition

28
29 *Models for New Faith Communities*

30 The emerging language of what constitutes a new faith community in the Virginia Conference
31 includes both traditional and non-traditional understandings of ministry. While the following list
32 of models for new faith communities is not exhaustive, the proposed vocabulary of new faith
33 communities in this report includes:

- 34
35 • *Conference Initiated Connectional New Church Start:* When the resources of The
36 United Methodist Church are brought together to launch a new church that is not directly
37 connected to an existing congregation with the goal that it become a chartered United
38 Methodist Church. A church planter bears the primary work responsibility for the
39 launching of a new faith community. This model depends heavily upon the
40 entrepreneurial skills of the church planter and his or her core team. Even in this context
41 there is a vital role for healthy parenting congregations doing one or more of the
42 following:
 - 43 ○ Sending missionaries (those who feel called to reach new people for Christ
 - 44 through the planting of a new faith community) for a specified period of time to
 - 45 the new church.
 - 46 ○ Raising up planters and sending them forth.

- 1 ○ Providing prayer, mentoring and resource support.
- 2
- 3 ● *Anchor Initiated New Church Start:* When a congregation bears the primary resourcing
- 4 and leadership responsibility for the launching of a new faith community.
- 5 ○ *Progeny Congregation:* A new faith community which has a separate and
- 6 independent administrative and ministry structure from the Anchor congregation.
- 7 ○ *Satellite Congregation:* A new faith community whose administrative and
- 8 ministry structure is connected to the Anchor congregation.
- 9 ○ *Church Within a Church:* When a new, and separate, worship service and
- 10 discipleship system is created in order to meet the needs of a radically different
- 11 population than the existing church currently serves (e.g., Korean, Hispanic,
- 12 youth, recovery, etc.)
- 13 ○ *Partnered Congregations:* Two or more churches partnering in a new expression
- 14 of worship and disciple making ministries that do not currently exist.
- 15 ○ *House Church:* A community of disciples multiplied by intentional small group
- 16 focus in multiple settings. These communities meet weekly with leaders who are
- 17 trained, supervised and nurtured by a pastor. Communities have a stated purpose
- 18 of multiplying and engaging in mission individually and/or as a group. The
- 19 sacramental life of the community is provided by an appointed pastor.
- 20 ○ *Virtual Congregation:* An on-line (e.g., “Second Life Faith Community”) that is
- 21 an extension of a sponsoring congregation. This community of disciples meets
- 22 virtually with members who covenant to receive sacraments and engage in
- 23 mission of a local sponsoring congregation.
- 24
- 25 ● *Mission Congregations:* New faith communities that are begun to reach a strategic
- 26 demographic, cultural, or language opportunity for a limited population may be defined
- 27 as Mission Congregations. ¶ 260.1 of the Discipline lists the conditions for a Mission
- 28 Congregation that may be organized in the same manner and have the same rights and
- 29 powers as any local church.
- 30
- 31 ● *Elijah New Church Start:* While this plan invites all churches in the Virginia Conference
- 32 to become **Five Talent Churches: churches that demonstrate their faithfulness**
- 33 **through multiplication of disciples** (refer to An Invitation to Harvest, Action Step One
- 34 to learn more), we acknowledge that this may provide unique challenges for
- 35 congregations who haven’t born fruit (e.g., professions of faith, attendance growth, etc.)
- 36 for the past 5 years, and/or who may be at the end of their natural lifecycle. These
- 37 congregations will be invited to enter into a proactive discernment process with their
- 38 district superintendent. Here are some possible outcomes:
- 39 a. Re-commit to reaching more people, more young people, and more diverse people
- 40 through participation in the **Five Talent Academy** (see An Invitation to Harvest,
- 41 Action Step One for details).
- 42 b. Discover creative solutions to be faithful stewards.
- 43 c. Respond to God’s call to become an Elijah New Church Start. II Kings 2:1-14 tells
- 44 the story of Elijah passing on the legacy of his ministry to Elisha. Part of that legacy
- 45 was a double share of Elijah’s spirit being imparted to Elisha as Elisha began his
- 46 ministry. Elijah New Church Starts follow the biblical tradition of imparting a double

1 share of their spirit in blessing a new ministry. These are churches that intentionally
2 partner in the formation of a new faith community by willingly choosing to either:
3 i. Join another church and give the building for use by the conference to reach a
4 new demographic in the community;
5 ii. Open their doors to a planter and launch team to start a new congregation that
6 assumes all of the operations and ministries of the congregation; OR
7 iii. Close the church (members join another local church) sell the assets and
8 invest in new church development on their district.
9

10 ¶ 213 of the Book of Discipline details the process for a feasibility study that can assist a
11 congregation to consult with its district superintendent in discerning if it is being called by God
12 to become an Elijah New Church Start.
13

14 The Church Development Team and Office of Church Development will initiate and coordinate
15 leadership training and equipping of new faith communities.
16

17 **An Invitation to Plant Action Steps**

18 Within the context of this emerging language, the following six proposed action steps compose a
19 comprehensive plan for the formation of 250 new faith communities in 30 years for the Virginia
20 Conference. Some of these action steps will call the Virginia Conference to step outside our
21 prior understanding and experience of new church starts. Many of these 250 new faith
22 communities will become chartered churches as defined in ¶ 260 of the Book of Discipline.
23 Some of these new faith communities will be new expressions of ministry of current churches.
24 Some will become large, some medium, and some small faith communities. All of these new
25 faith communities will be tasked with the responsibility of making new disciples for Jesus Christ.
26 The following action steps outline three processes essential for creating healthy new faith
27 communities regardless of the type of start:
28

- 29 1. The discernment process for establishing new faith communities,
- 30 2. The selection process through which pastors will be appointed or lay supply be assigned
31 to begin new faith communities, and
- 32 3. The ongoing evaluation of the effective fruit of new faith communities.
33

34 The Church Development Team and Office of Church Development, working in a consultative
35 role with the bishop and cabinet will have the primary administrative oversight in implementing
36 the following action steps.
37

38 **Action Step One: Discernment Process for Establishing New Faith Communities**

39 From Primarily Conference Initiated to Primarily Grassroots Discernment

- 40 1. In the Virginia Conference, new faith communities may be defined by the disciplinary
41 definition of a local church in ¶ 201 of The Book of Discipline. In addition, new faith
42 communities may be extended expressions of intentional worship and discipleship
43 ministries with identified groups of persons who do not presently represent the
44 composition of an existing church. The bishop and district superintendents will
45 determine the viability of a new faith community through consultation with the Church
46 Development Team and Office of Church Development.

- 1 2. Special consideration will be given so that we maintain, in total, a plan rate of one new
2 faith community per 25,000 new people. Attention will be given to the changing
3 demographics of Virginia with priorities given to areas of high population, areas of
4 missed potential, persons living in poverty, and underserved ethnic populations. The
5 location, willingness, and ability of existing congregations to meet needs in areas of
6 greatest growth will also be considered.
- 7 3. New faith communities may become chartered local churches of The United Methodist
8 Church when they average 175 worshipping adults. (Exceptions to this requirement will
9 be determined by the bishop and cabinet in consultation with The Church Development
10 Team and Office of Church Development).
- 11 4. Each district will have a Church Development Team (or equivalent structure) that will be
12 trained and resourced by the Church Development Team and the Office of Church
13 Development by December 2008. These district teams will have the responsibility for
14 discerning the feasibility of new faith communities within that district. The leadership of
15 these district teams will be selected by the district superintendent, but each district team
16 will have at least one representative from the district's Board of Missions, Board of
17 Church Location and Building, and Finance Committee. District superintendents and
18 district lay leaders will be ex-officio members of a district's Church Development Team.
- 19 5. District Church Development Teams may form regional ministry partnerships between
20 districts in developing strategies to meet the unique demographic and mission needs of a
21 specific region.
- 22 6. District Church Development Teams will work with the Church Development Team and
23 Office of Church Development in identifying existing congregations that are strategically
24 positioned in areas of growth.
- 25 7. In the event that an existing congregation does not choose to participate in the process as
26 outlined in step six, a District Church Development Team will work with the Cabinet,
27 Church Development Team and Office of Church Development in the launching of a new
28 faith community in strategic areas of growth.
- 29 8. Through consultation with the bishop, district superintendents, Office of Church
30 Development, and Church Development Team, the viability of congregations that express
31 a desire to become Anchor Congregations will be assessed. Upon selection, these
32 congregations will participate in new faith community leadership training as coordinated
33 by The Church Development Team and the Office of Church Development. Anchor
34 Congregations will be eligible to receive conference funding as outlined in Action Step
35 1.6.
- 36 9. The number of churches to be planted during each 10-year cycle will be determined by a
37 variety of factors including projected population growth and the present effectiveness of
38 existing United Methodist congregations in reaching the population base.
- 39 10. A full-time pastor will not be appointed to a new faith community when it is determined
40 that the ministry responsibility of that new faith community will require less than full-
41 time work.
- 42 11. The overall conference plan for the launching of mission new faith communities will
43 focus on leadership that is indigenous to a region. It is understood that there may be
44 occasions when conference directed initiation of new faith communities may be required.

- 1 12. In addition to discerning possible mission locations for new faith communities, these
2 regional ministry partnerships will encourage regional sharing of resources for new faith
3 communities.
- 4 13. The bishop in charge and the appointive cabinet have the final authority in discerning
5 how many new faith communities are begun each year. The Church Development Team
6 and the Office of Church Development will provide pertinent information from each
7 district's Church Development Team. This information will assist the bishop and district
8 superintendents in determining where, how, and when new faith communities will be
9 established.

10 **Action Step Two: Leadership Selection**

11 From Self-Initiated Leadership to Connected Leadership

- 12 1. The Cabinet, Church Development Team and Office of Church Development will consult
13 with District Committees on Ordained Ministry, the Call Culture Committee and the
14 Probationary Process Team of the Board of Ordained Ministry in the identification and
15 resourcing of new faith community clergy leaders.
- 16 2. The Cabinet, Board of Ordained Ministry, Church Development Team, and Office of
17 Church Development will consult about a recruitment plan for new faith community
18 leaders.
- 19 3. A formal assessment process, currently implemented through the Office of Church
20 Development, will determine if a potential new faith community pastor has the gifts,
21 graces, characteristics, behavior patterns, and affinity (ability to identify) with the
22 community in which a new faith community is being considered.
- 23 4. Leadership selection will not be limited to elders. The appointment of probationary
24 members and local pastors and the assignment of certified lay ministers, lay missionaries,
25 and lay supply will also be considered for the establishment of new faith communities.
- 26 5. The results of the assessment process will be reported to the bishop and district
27 superintendents for appointment considerations.

28 **Action Step Three: Leadership Resourcing**

29 From Self-Trained Leadership to Team Based Leadership

- 30 1. The New Church Leadership Academy for the training of potential new church pastors
31 will continue. Only some of the graduates may eventually have the opportunity to be
32 appointed to start a new church or be the second pastor of a new church – yet, all will
33 have the opportunity to be supportive of a new UM church beginning in their community
34 and perhaps to encourage their current church to “give birth” to a new church.
- 35 2. All new church pastors and spouses (if applicable) will attend “Boot Camp” (orientation
36 and training sessions) as currently practiced.
- 37 3. New faith community leadership will be required to participate in leadership training
38 events as initiated and coordinated through the Church Development Team and the Office
39 of Church Development in order to receive conference funding support for a period of 42
40 months from the beginning date of the appointment.
- 41 4. All new church pastors and re-start pastors will be paired in affinity groups for mentoring
42 and peer-to-peer learning.

1 **Action Step Four: Accountability**

2 From Ambiguous Expectations to Clarifying Expectations

- 3 1. Each new faith community planter will develop a mission plan with measurable goals and
4 benchmarks. This plan will be developed in partnership with the superintendent of the
5 district where the new faith community is being launched, the Director of Church
6 Development and Church Development Team. This mission plan will be shared with the
7 bishop and cabinet.
- 8 2. Elements of this plan will include preliminary demographic findings provided by the
9 Church Development Team in conjunction with the district teams, a ministry plan for the
10 first sixty days, ministry funding needs, plan for stewardship development, goals and
11 benchmarks for pre-launch and post-launch participation, and acknowledgement that
12 continued funding is connected to fruitful ministry and growth.
- 13 3. The Director of Church Development, Church Development Team, and the district
14 superintendent will create a clear plan for funding the project that will include sources of
15 funding and the amount invested by each entity, details for pastoral compensation and
16 housing, and clarification of the role of the annual conference in the purchase of land and
17 housing. Benchmarks necessary to receive assistance for these purposes will be set (with
18 a bias toward the new faith community and parenting congregation being primarily
19 responsible for all such costs). This report will be shared with the district superintendent
20 and Church Development Team.
- 21 4. An accountability meeting will be held in 7 months and 18 months following the
22 beginning of the appointment where the initial plan will be reviewed and, if necessary,
23 adjusted.
- 24 5. Ten percent of all offerings received by new faith communities will be designated for
25 mission giving in consultation with the district superintendent. It is recommended that a
26 majority of this tithe be designated for multiplication of the new faith community within
27 ten years of its existence and that a portion of this tithe be designated for connectional
28 support.
- 29

30 **Action Step Five: Phasing of New Faith Communities, Expectation for Multiplication**

31 From Planting Each Church One at a Time to Churches Planting Churches

- 32 1. In each five year cycle of the 30-year period, 25 new faith communities will be started.
33 The total new faith communities initiated using this five year model during the 30-year
34 period will equal 150.
- 35 2. Additionally, every new faith community will be required to have, as part of its mission,
36 the replication of its faith community within a ten year period through participation in
37 initiating and supporting, financially and otherwise, the launching of a new faith
38 community.
- 39 3. This total number exceeds the goal of 250 new faith communities over 30 years, but it is
40 assumed that not every new faith community will be able to complete the accountability
41 process.
- 42 4. The Cabinet, Office of Church Development, and Church Development Team will have
43 oversight responsibility for the phasing of new faith communities.
- 44

45 **Action Step Six: Financing**

46 From General Support to Intentional Support

- 1 1. It is recommended that a representative of the Church Development Team be included on
2 the Equitable Compensation Commission. Compensation requests submitted to the
3 Equitable Compensation Commission on behalf of new faith communities will be
4 coordinated by the Cabinet in consultation with the Church Development Team and the
5 Office of Church Development.
- 6 2. New faith community compensation guidelines for the Equitable Compensation
7 Commission will continue the current practice of funding for the *Connectional New*
8 *Church Start*.
- 9 3. New faith community compensation guidelines for the Equitable Compensation
10 Commission for *Anchor Congregations* will be established.
- 11 4. New faith community compensation guidelines for the Equitable Compensation
12 Commission for *Mission Congregations* will be established.
- 13 5. Existing congregation and new faith community grants provided through the Church
14 Extension Apportionment will be determined by the Office of Church Development and
15 Church Development Team as amenable to the Common Table for Church Vitality and
16 reported to the Cabinet.
- 17 6. In consultation with the Cabinet and Equitable Compensation Commission, The Church
18 Development Team and The Office of Church Development will develop a plan for full-
19 time Conference Initiated New Church Starts.
- 20 7. To fund costs associated with this plan, a campaign committee of six people will be
21 appointed by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration. In consultation
22 with the Conference Council on Finance and Administration and Church Development
23 Team, the committee will oversee a feasibility study regarding the campaign and present
24 a feasibility report to the 2009 Annual Conference. The cost of the feasibility study will
25 be underwritten through the Church Development Fund with repayment of the actual cost
26 of the feasibility study to the Church Development Fund from proceeds received through
27 the campaign.
 - 28 • The recommended financial goal of this campaign will be \$14 million.
 - 29 • The use of available funds from the campaign will be administered by the Office
30 of Church Development and Church Development Team as amenable to the
31 Common Table for Church Vitality. These funds will assist with:
 - 32 ○ Salary support of new faith communities when total compensation exceeds
33 the funding allotment that is provided by the Equitable Compensation
34 Fund apportionment. The amount of this additional compensation request
35 will be requested by the Cabinet in consultation with the Office of Church
36 Development.
 - 37 ○ Grants and/or loans that may total up to \$100,000 to assist with ministry
38 needs as determined by the conference Church Development Team in
39 consultation with appropriate district Church Development Teams as
40 amenable to the Common Table for Church Vitality.
- 41 8. A New Faith Community Endowment will be established by the Church Development
42 Team in consultation with the Conference Council on Finance and Administration. This
43 endowment will include:
 - 44 • Individual, local church, and organization contributions
 - 45 • A percentage of property and assets from discontinuation or abandonment of local
46 church property as defined in ¶ 2548 of the Discipline. (The Conference Council on

- 1 Finance and Administration is requested to present a report to the 2009 Annual
2 Conference regarding a recommended percentage).
- 3 • The use of available funds from the endowment will be administered by the Office of
4 Church Development and Church Development Team as amenable to the Common
5 Table for Church Vitality. These funds will assist with loans for capital funds
6 projects by new faith communities with proceeds and interest of the loans being
7 reinvested in the endowment.
- 8 9. Program and personnel costs associated with the establishment of a new faith community
9 by an Anchor Congregation will be reported but not factored into the conference
10 apportionment formula.

11 AN INVITATION TO HARVEST

12 *The Virginia Conference will seek to encourage and provide leadership training and support*
13 *for existing churches that desire and make a commitment to become renewed faith*
14 *communities.*

15 Foundations for An Invitation to Harvest

16 The formation of 250 new faith communities will be possible only as the Virginia Conference
17 lives into a new reality for mission. All levels of infrastructure and leadership (conference,
18 district, and local church) must align resources toward the same goal of transformation. Four
19 recommended Action Steps are included in An Invitation to Harvest that will enable the
20 alignment of resources to:

- 21 1. Equip existing churches that wish to become renewed faith communities
22 2. Equip the current conference infrastructure to work jointly toward the goal of
23 transforming the Virginia Conference to a culture of fruitfulness as we reach more
24 people, more young people, and more diverse people

25 Acceptance of this new reality will require our current conference structure to be renewed as we
26 transition from multiple visions for ministry to one vision for transformation. Accomplishment
27 of this vision means we must actively encourage and support:

- 28 • Utilization of existing infrastructure in our conference to work jointly toward the goal of
29 transforming the Virginia Conference to a culture of fruitfulness
30 • Pastors and congregations who desire and make a commitment to become renewed faith
31 communities
32 • Churches that desire and make a commitment to reach more people, more young people,
33 and more diverse people

34 To assist local church, district, and conference leadership to transition from multiple visions for
35 ministry to one vision for transformation, the following action steps are recommended with
36 reports on the implementation of each action step being presented at the 2009 Virginia Annual
37 Conference.

An Invitation to Harvest Action Steps

Action Step One: Establishment of a Five Talent Academy

From Multiple Visions for Ministry to One Vision for Transformation

1. To assist existing churches of different sizes and diversity that desire and make a commitment to revitalize, a Five Talent Academy will be established through the oversight of the Church Development Team as amendable to the Common Table for Church Vitality. In consultation with the bishop and cabinet, the Church Development Team will select a board of directors for the Five Talent Academy. The board of directors will consist of lead pastors and individual lay representatives (selected by the lead pastor) from five congregations who will oversee the implementation and administration of the academy in partnership with conference boards and agencies. Invitation to this board will primarily be based on demonstrated fruitfulness of Five Talent Churches that will be the focus of the academy. Consideration will be given to insure balance of size and diversity of ministry setting based on the criteria as determined by this process. One of the lead pastors will serve as dean. The Office of Church Development will provide primary staff support for the Five Talent Academy.
2. Churches that meet established criteria standards may participate in the academy based on the following:
 - Agreement to create a five year church development plan to accomplish a Five Talent growth goal based on training provided by the academy with target goals (benchmarks), funding plans, and staffing proposals
 - Agreement to participate in appropriate peer learning groups by affinity to accelerate results
 - Training in the academy will focus on Matthew 25:14-29 and the master's expectation for the multiplication of talents by the servants. In the same way that the talents were multiplied for the joy of the master, Five Talent Churches are congregations that demonstrate tangible results through the multiplication of fruitful ministries that glorify God. Based on this biblical message (as detailed in *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Bishop Robert Schnase), the expected areas of fruitfulness for five talent churches are:
 1. Radical hospitality
 2. Passionate worship
 3. Intentional faith development
 4. Risk-taking mission and service
 5. Extravagant generosity
 - Churches participating in the academy may apply for matching grants up to \$100,000 (based on available funding) for the purpose of resourcing ministries that are designed for multiplication. The awarding of matching grants will be determined by the Church Development Team and the Office of Church Development as amenable to the Common Table for Church Vitality.
 - The Church Development Team will provide a report at the 2009 session of the Virginia Annual Conference on the Five Talent Academy.

Action Step Two: Equipping Conference Boards and Agencies to work jointly toward the goal of transforming the culture of the Virginia Conference

From Multiple Visions to One Vision for Transformation

- 1 1. The Common Table for Church Vitality will coordinate and prioritize ministries of
2 Conference Boards and Agencies to engage in joint and partnered ministry toward the
3 goal of transforming the Virginia Conference to a culture of fruitfulness through:
4
 - The formation of 250 new faith communities in 30 years
 - 5 • Resourcing existing congregations that wish to multiply through the establishment of
6 new faith communities
 - 7 • Providing leadership training and support for existing churches that desire and make a
8 commitment to become renewed faith communities as they reach more people, more
9 young people, and more diverse people
- 10 2. The Common Table for Church Vitality will provide a report at the 2009 session of the
11 Virginia Annual Conference on the standard for evaluation and the development of a plan
12 that will align the purposes of the Boards and Agencies of the Virginia Conference
13 toward the goal of transforming the Virginia Conference to a culture of fruitfulness.
14

15 **Action Step Three: Equipping Conference Program Ministry Staff to work jointly toward**
16 **the goal of transforming the culture of the Virginia Conference**

17 From Multiple Visions to One Vision for Transformation

- 18 1. The Personnel Committee of The Common Table for Church Vitality will review and
19 update current ministry descriptions and establish standards for performance evaluation
20 of conference program staff toward the goal of transforming the Virginia Conference to a
21 culture of fruitfulness through:
22
 - The formation of 250 new faith communities in 30 years
 - 23 • Resourcing existing congregations that wish to multiply through the establishment of
24 new faith communities
 - 25 • Providing leadership training and support for existing churches that desire and make a
26 commitment to become renewed faith communities as they reach more people, more
27 young people, and more diverse people
- 28 2. After reviewing and updating current ministry descriptions and establishing standards for
29 performance evaluation of conference program staff, The Personnel Committee of the
30 Common Table for Church Vitality will take necessary action for the realignment of
31 conference program staff positions toward the goal of transforming the Virginia
32 Conference to a culture of fruitfulness.
- 33 3. It is the recommendation of the 250 Task Force that the Personnel Committee of the
34 Common Table for Church Vitality conduct a feasibility study regarding the formation of
35 a conference ministry program staff position with primary responsibility for mentoring,
36 coaching, and encouraging Five Talent Churches as well as resourcing other existing
37 churches of the conference. It is further recommended that this position be:
38
 - Associated with the Office of Church Development
 - 39 • Staffed by a person who has proven effectiveness in initiating and growing ministries
40 in churches or other organizations
- 41 4. The Common Table for Church Vitality will provide a report at the 2009 session of the
42 Virginia Annual Conference on the updated ministry descriptions for conference program
43 staff, report of the feasibility study regarding the creation of a new staff position as
44 recommended, and the necessary action for the realignment of conference program staff
45 positions.
46

1 **Action Step Four: Equipping districts to work jointly toward the goal of transforming the**
2 **culture of the Virginia Conference**

3 From Multiple Visions to One Vision for Transformation

- 4 1. The bishop and cabinet will consider what, if any, changes need to be made to facilitate
5 the goal of transforming the Virginia Conference to a culture of fruitfulness through:
6 • The formation of 250 new faith communities in 30 years
7 • Resourcing existing congregations that wish to multiply through the establishment of
8 new faith communities
9 • Providing leadership training and support for existing churches that desire and make a
10 commitment to become renewed faith communities as they reach more people, more
11 young people, and more diverse people
12 2. The bishop and cabinet will present a report to the 2009 session of the Virginia Annual
13 Conference regarding this review and with suggested recommendations for action by the
14 annual conference.

15
16 **RECOMMENDATION**

17 The 250 Task Force recommends the approval of *All Things New: Fruitful and Multiplying*
18 – *The Virginia Conference*.

19 Marc Brown, *Chair*