DISCIPLESHIP AND WORSHIP IN NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

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OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Although NWC leaders describe both discipleship and spiritual formation as types of personal growth, there are key distinctions in their descriptions of the two. When asked what discipleship means to them, leaders describe it as following Jesus, and use relational and communal terms to describe discipleship; for them, discipleship is about action and cultivating relationships with other people. Spiritual formation, on the other hand, is described as personal faith development, and involves disciplines that cultivate a personal relationship with God.

Five distinct types of spiritual practices emerged from the data: traditional, contemplative, outward focused, inward focused, and narrative. NWCS that engage in more traditional and outward-focused spirituality also tend to be more communal, whereas contemplative and inward-focused NWCs tend to incorporate more personal spiritual practices into their tradition.

DISCIPLESHIP & SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Worshiping community leaders use worship as a means to help their participants understand scripture. Leaders’ top priorities for the worshiping community are building relationships, worshiping together, and serving others: in short, to love each other and to love God.

Leaders are making worship more active by incorporating food, engaging in spiritual practices together, and cultivating the creativity of worshipers.

About 83% also offer sacraments. Common themes for communion include sharing a meal as a sacrament, including children, and practicing an open table, in which anyone can receive communion. Common themes for baptism include baptisms in nature and full immersion.

WORSHIP PRACTICES
DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

HOW DO NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES (NWC) ENGAGE IN DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION?

“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)
VITALITY AND NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

This report focuses on two of the seven marks of congregational vitality: discipleship and worship. In the first section, we cover discipleship, and in the second worship.

Leaders were asked to rate themselves on each of the seven marks with the following single-item questions. How well does your worshiping community...?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark of Vitality</th>
<th>Not at all well</th>
<th>Slightly well</th>
<th>Somewhat well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love and care for all its participants</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the needs of people in the local community or beyond</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead inspiring worship</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfill its mission</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay healthy and strong</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize faith formation and disciple making</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in evangelism</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For descriptors of the seven marks of congregational vitality visit [https://uscongregations.pcusa.org/question-seven-marks/](https://uscongregations.pcusa.org/question-seven-marks/) (n=103)
DISCIPLESHIP AND NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

Although most NWCs engage in discipleship, leaders do not rate it as their strongest mark of vitality.

When asked to rate how well their worshiping community prioritizes faith formation and discipleship, leaders give themselves an average score of 3.20 out of 4, which translates to a self-rating of 80%.

NWC scores on the seven marks of vitality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caring relationships</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outward focus</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ecclesial health</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worship</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>servant leadership</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discipleship</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evangelism</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

91% of new worshiping community leaders disciple participants in their community. The methods of discipling cited is, in order of prevalence: one-on-one mentoring (61%), followed by small groups (60%), Bible study (53%), service projects (36%), discipleship courses (16%), and confirmation classes (8%).

However, on average NWC leaders give themselves a relatively low rating regarding how well their worshiping community prioritizes faith formation and discipleship. In fact, the only mark of vitality they rate themselves lower on is evangelism.

Since this is a self-rating, it could be that leaders are simply harder on themselves regarding their discipleship efforts.

Data is based on leader self-ratings of single-item questions, which are listed on the previous page. The average score for each item was converted into a percentage score for ease of interpretation.
**WHAT DOES DISCIPLESHIP MEAN TO NWC LEADERS?**

New worshiping community leaders were asked to describe what discipleship means to them. The percentages in the following chart indicate the percentage of times a particular topic or theme showed up in the 93 responses. Most responses contained more than one theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal growth and learning</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ-like</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and making new disciples</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spread the Gospel</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do justice</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common descriptors NWC used to describe discipleship were about following Jesus.

After that, about one third describe discipleship as a journey of personal growth and learning, and about one quarter describe it as a process that is primarily about our relationships with others.

Other themes include the importance of action, which was named almost twice as often as the importance of obedience.
WHAT DOES DICSIPLESHIP MEAN TO YOU?

"[to] be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)

It means growing together towards Jesus.

It means worrying about the people God has placed besides me. In the spiritual and the physical. It means taking them through a process of understanding of faith and hope. Believing in God's will, but also physically working and making an action to do His will. It means a spiritual discipline exerting the person so that they give fruit in abundance.

Discipleship is a demonstration of our relationship with the Triune God, through the way we choose to spend our time, talents and treasures and the way we treat our neighbors.

Discipleship is not just an individual pursuit; it is relational and deeply rooted in communal influence and formation. Disciples of Jesus therefore are learners and doers of God's love whose whole lives exemplify such love.

"He must become greater, I must become less" (John 3:30).

Discipleship means knowing Jesus (and being in the lifelong process of coming to know Jesus). Knowing Jesus means engaging with a world in need in ways consistent with Jesus actions and dispositions. We focus on Jesus's preference for the poor and oppressed, and say "to know Jesus is to do justice".

Forming oneself and others into Christ's image.
WHAT DOES SPIRITUAL FORMATION MEAN TO NWC LEADERS?

New worshiping community leaders were asked to describe what spiritual formation means to them. The percentages in the following chart indicate the percentage of times a particular topic or theme showed up in the 93 responses. Most responses contained more than one theme.

The most common way NWC leaders describe spiritual formation is as a process of faith development and learning.

After that, leaders focus on Jesus and the development of a person’s personal relationship with God through the use of disciplines and practices.

Other themes include the importance of relationships, and connecting spiritual formation to discipleship (some describe it as a path to discipleship; others say these are the same thing).
Spiritual formation is the intentional effort to form ourselves to what is pleasing to God. In the community this happens through conversations, prayers, and trying new things...but also in experiencing one another’s circumstances and being there with each other.

To grow in faith and grace...

Spiritual formation means growth and maturity toward doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

The discipline of getting closer to God.

Spiritual formation is the exploration of our relationship with the Triune God, through prayer, study, meditation, discussion, etc.

Spiritual Formation are the practices that form us into disciples. They're the daily habits, efforts, prayers and exercises that lead us into being formed in God's image and likeness. They're the rhythms we chose to be released from sin, shadow, addictions, compulsions, and attachments in order to be free in God's love, light, freedom and hope.

Spiritual formation to us is to provide a platforms and avenues of communion with the Divine.
New worshiping community leaders were asked what practices their community engage in on a regular basis and most often. First, they were given a list to choose from to state their regular practices, then they were given space to write about their most common practices.

The top three practices are prayer, hospitality, and study. The least common are solitude, fasting, and honoring the sabbath. Leaders also had an opportunity to write in other types of discipleship and spiritual formation practices their community engages in and 24 responded. Other methods leaders wrote in include:

- Shared meals
- Loving their neighbor
- Creative activities
- Being in community together

When asked to write about what practices they engage in most often, the list was almost exactly the same. The largest difference was in the percentage that spoke of how they gather in worship; although this was not in the pre-determined list of discipleship and spiritual formation practices, 25% of leaders mention it as one of their most common practice.
DISCIPLESHIP & SPIRITUAL FORMATION PRACTICES

Five themes emerged from the combination of discipleship and spiritual formation practices.

A closer examination of how communities engage in discipleship and spiritual formation practices shows that there is a pattern in the practices. Certain practices tend to group together.

An analysis of the data show that there are five groupings of discipleship and spiritual formation practices: traditional, contemplative, outward focused, inward focused, and narrative.

NWCS that engage in more traditional and outward-focused spirituality tend to be more communal in practice, whereas contemplative and inward-focused NWCs tend to incorporate more personal spiritual practices into their tradition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Outward Focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Being a good steward of the Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making disciples</td>
<td>Speaking truth to power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving others</td>
<td>Hospitality and welcoming the stranger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study of Bible or spiritual leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing the Good News</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating the sacraments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality and welcoming the stranger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contemplative</th>
<th>Inward Focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>Solitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td>Fasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitude</td>
<td>Honoring Sabbath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing the Good News</td>
<td>No hospitality or welcoming the stranger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring Sabbath</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results were derived from a principal components analysis; factor loadings over 0.4 were retained. The rotation converged in 6 iterations.
Discipleship and spiritual formation is incredibly varied. It comprises both outward practices, focused on action in the world, and inward practices, focused on interior spiritual life. It can also be personal (done alone) or communal (done with others).

Overall, 39% of leaders said their NWC focuses more on communal practices, and 15% stated they focus on personal. 46% said it was an even split.

In addition, 27% state that their communal practices are more outward focused, and 21% said more inward focused, with 52% saying there was an even split.

Although in general, inward is more common than outward orientations, and communal is more common than personal practices, the plurality of NWCs aim for an even split of personal-communal and inward-outward.

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
Leaders do not generally rate themselves very strongly in terms of their community having clearly stated beliefs and values, which is not unexpected for a newly-formed group—especially one that is trying to reach people who do not have a history of going to church. However, these communities are nevertheless demonstrating their values in their responses to the other questions below. Over two thirds of new worshiping community leaders are working “to a great extent” to equip their participants to welcome all people, and almost as many are helping their participants apply their faith to everyday life. It could be argued that this strong support for being welcoming is, in fact, the most tangible statement of the beliefs and values of new worshiping communities being surveyed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This worshiping community...</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>To a small extent</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equips its participants to welcome all people</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps its participants apply their faith to everyday life</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge its participants to become more Christ-like</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has clearly stated beliefs and values</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BREAKING OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF THE CHURCH

New worshiping communities are being Jesus out in the world.

63% of new worshiping communities report having either a missional, outreach, or justice ministry focus

NWCs that do not focus on these things still do them—and they do not work alone, either. The vast majority (90%) of new worshiping communities work together with other community organizations and agencies.

Percentage of NWCs reporting missional, outreach, or justice ministry as a focus

- Missional: 50%
- Outreach: 36%
- Justice ministry: 21%

Ways of working with other organizations include:

- Ecumenical activities: 42%
- Providing food and shelter: 42%
- Justice: 39%
- Education: 38%
- Children's activities: 36%
- Arts: 29%
- Environment: 19%
- Sports activities: 17%
- Healthcare: 12%
- HIV/AIDS support networks: 4%
- Other: 26%

Specific work being done includes:

- Citizen re-entry programs
- Community farms
- Habitat for Humanity
- Helping at-risk teens
- Homeless advocacy
- Hurricane relief
- LGBTQ groups
- Political organizing
- Recovery groups
- Refugee support

Data on this page is from the 2018 leader survey
OUTWARD FOCUS IN NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

New worshiping community leaders are more likely to report that they foster environments of diversity (90% say this is either “true” or “very true”) than they are to say that they are fighting inequality (66% say this is true or very true) or working for social justice (68% true or very true).

This worshiping community...

Fosters environments of diversity
- Not true: 2%  
- Somewhat true: 9%  
- True: 45%  
- Very true: 45%

Has a noted presence in the community
- Not true: 5%  
- Somewhat true: 20%  
- True: 45%  
- Very true: 30%

Provides an ethical voice for our community
- Not true: 5%  
- Somewhat true: 19%  
- True: 49%  
- Very true: 28%

Is working for social justice
- Not true: 7%  
- Somewhat true: 29%  
- True: 37%  
- Very true: 28%

Is fighting inequality (for example, poverty or racism)
- Not true: 10%  
- Somewhat true: 25%  
- True: 39%  
- Very true: 27%
WORSHIP PRACTICES IN NWCS

THIS SECTION PROVIDES AN EXPLORATION OF HOW NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES GATHER IN WORSHIP

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs (Psalm 100:2)
WHERE NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES GATHER

New worshiping communities can be found in many places.

87% of new worshiping communities have a regular gathering place

These gathering spaces include...

- Space provided by PC(USA): 52%
- Other (please specify): 31%
- Home: 21%
- Coffee shop: 14%
- Community center or library: 13%
- Bar or pub: 8%
- Outdoors: 8%
- Restaurant: 7%
- Space provided by other denomination: 6%
- School: 5%
- Rental space: 5%
- Own space: 4%

The most common place to find a NWC is in an urban setting.

26% Urban, 14% Suburban, 12% Inner city, 10% Small town, 9% Rural

This is the first wave of the survey in which some NWCs stated that they own their own space. Three NWCs own a church building, and a fourth owns a non-church building.

Also, the percentage that are meeting outdoors has doubled, from 4% to 8%.
WORSHIP SERVICES IN NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

New worshiping community leaders were asked to rate the extent to which their worship services are designed to do each of three things: help participants understand scripture, encourage participants to take action, and challenge participants’ assumptions and convictions.

Although leaders rated all three of these goals highly, they rated “help participants understand Scripture” to be the greatest goal of their worship services.

Worship services for this community are designed to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>To a small extent</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help participants understand Scripture</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage participants to take action</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge participants’ assumptions and convictions</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New worshiping communities are participating in the sacraments, and they are baptizing many people that are confirmation age or older.

37% of baptisms in 2019 were of people age 12 or over.

83% of new worshiping communities offer sacraments. Sacraments are most often administered by a teaching elder affiliated with the community (68%).

Over half (53%) of the communities reported that they had at least one baptism in the last year. In 2019, there were 110 baptisms for those 12 and younger, and 64 for those over 12.

In addition, 14% stated that they also have other special ceremonies or rituals. Some of the comments on these include:

- We have celebrations/rituals 8 times a year for the equinox, solstice and half days.
- We have a welcoming circle and than a prayer circle that includes silent meditation and then sharing of prayers, stories, whatever iso people's hearts.
- Weddings, quinceañeras, memorial services
We have had one baptism, and wanted something close to immersion but didn't have a space to offer that, so we did it outside with a big bucket dumped over her head. It was awesome.

We're having 'Pickle Church' and Communion will take place in the midst of the Agape Feast which, in this case, will involve a bunch of chopped veggies.

Our communion often times is our meal, as was the case with Jesus the night before he was betrayed. We speak of communion as being the church's reconciling act, where divisions are collapsed around the table.

The Vietnamese community enjoys immersion baptism, but we do it with a small font because is what we have. Immersion is part of our cultural understanding of the Sacrament.

The Words of Institution are usually offered in a narrative and sometimes conversational style and we use a plate and pitcher made by a local potter and a Mason jar for the cup in order to bring an element of cultural relevance to the sacrament.

How do they offer sacraments?

35% of leaders say there is something unique or special about how the sacraments are offered in their community.

- 24% describe a special method of administration
- 21% state that they offer weekly communion
- 21% state that communion occurs as part of a meal
- 21% emphasize an open table for communion
- 15% describe something special about the location
- 15% describe something special about the meaning of the sacrament
- 15% describe something special about the tools used

We have freedom of being more creative in our gatherings in homes.

We stand in a circle around the room as a symbol of being the Body of Jesus.
WHAT DOES ‘NONTRADITIONAL’ MEAN?

New worshiping communities are doing new things and doing old things in new ways.

45% of leaders describe their worshiping community as nontraditional

When asked what makes their communities nontraditional, the top themes were:

- Conversation instead of sermon
- Eating meals as part of worship
- Creativity and the arts included in worship
- Non-traditional venues or times
- Intentionally multicultural
- Lack of liturgy or alternative liturgy

“Worship occurs outdoors when possible and locations vary. Worship style is multi-sensory using sidewalk chalk, bubbles, drumming, arts and other activities. Preaching is replaced by group sharing and reflection. Scripture readings are often paired with readings from other literary sources.”

“We are intentionally interracial and cross cultural. We form community around a shared meal and a question that arises out of our reading of scripture. We listen to each other and work to become friends.”

“We don’t preach, rather we have an extended time of teaching and discussion or we engage in a spiritual practice together. Monthly we host community conversation nights to invite spiritually curious people into a discussion on culturally relevant topics that are often justice oriented.”

“We have done worship through poetry, drawing, crafting, and communal prayers and discussions.”

Quotes are from the 2018 leader survey
People are experiencing and finding spirituality without any traditional markers of church (sermons, churches, 'worship' music, Sunday gatherings, explicitly Christian language, etc.)

We are a community gathered specifically for doubters & disciples together.

We gather in a cafe, around round tables, instead of on pews. It is also an open format since a majority have never been in church before, they are able to ask questions during the presentation of the Word.

We rotate through different worship styles honoring the physical, cerebral, spiritual and service in turn.

[We] break open the term 'worship' by fostering deep conversations about the 'big stuff'.

Our sermons are more like group conversations.

Emphasis on vulnerability and deep sharing of life across boundaries.

Most of the folks we work with have been turned away from the church and so the way in has been through nontraditional worship. We have no bulletins and everything we do is sung.

Worship is participatory, involving many voices reading prayers and adding to the message.

Sermons can be interactive. Prayer of Confession is often a manual activity. There is movement in the service, and we try to be multisensory with the worship experience.

Quotes are from the 2018 leader survey
WHAT ARE THEY DOING IN WORSHIP?

Leaders are making worship more active by incorporating food, engaging in spiritual practices together, and cultivating the creativity of worshipers.

• Through their “Peas and Love” program, Okra Abbey is serving food to the elderly. They also host weekly potluck dinners, where worship and fellowship occurs. Their ministry is focused on food, but it also includes the arts. They have brought in community members to help with art installations and graffiti to decorate their space.
• The worship style at Reclamation Ministries is slightly alternative. Although it follows the lectionary, the style of liturgy is Celtic, and instead of a traditional sermon they have a conversation surrounding the Bible verses. To emphasize this non-traditional approach, worship is not held in a sanctuary with pews, but instead in a parlor with chairs.
• We can see similar trends in more traditional worshiping communities, as well. For example, the Riverfront is in a growing, upscale community. This worshiping community has no church building and no plans to have a building. Worship is in a pavilion in the summer and in a contemporary arts center in winter. Worship includes Methodists and Episcopalians too, and often centers around the arts.
• At Anchor City Church, pastor Jeya So uses art and creativity as a method of worship. She argues that by “bypassing the verbal centers,” we can access a deeper connection to the Holy Spirit, which exists within all of us. According to Jeya, hands-on activities “disrupt us enough to connect to the Creator” because creativity is the ability to steward our imagination to love people as we love ourselves. It creates a “heart-to-hand” connection. Jeya states that one of her challenges in this approach is that Asians are uncomfortable with creativity. She argues that her job as a pastor is not to disseminate information, but rather to cultivate the imagination: to help people see clearly into the fullness of their call, and to help people look for moments where the Divine is shining through.
Interviews with new worshiping community leaders indicate a fundamental shift in how people approach religion within these communities. The “typical” NWC (if we can even say such a thing exists) does not focus on doctrine; its attention is instead toward *meaning*, *belonging*, and asking the deep *questions*.

These three spiritual needs are interrelated: people must feel that they truly belong before they feel safe enough to ask the deep questions, which are necessary to access meaning. New worshiping communities attempt to provide safe spaces that will facilitate unity in diversity; to build a community that includes children and all the “childish” gifts of creativity, openness, and play, and especially one that reaches out to the margins, because they believe that this is where they will find God.

**UNITY IN DIVERSITY**: leaders are striving to promote unity while preserving diversity, by doing things such as providing safe spaces for people to practice being neighbors. Churches are NOT considered to be safe spaces.

**CHILDREN ARE CENTRAL**: children are often viewed—and utilized—as a bridge to the broader community. Also, getting them involved meaningfully in the community and its worship gives them a sense of ownership of the community

**ACTIVE WORSHIP**: leaders are making worship more active by incorporating food, engaging in spiritual practices together, and cultivating the creativity of worshipers.

**GOD IN THE MARGINS**: And finally, we learned that new worshiping community leaders are reaching out to find God in the margins in a variety of ways, emphasizing what they believe to be not just the desirability, but also the necessity of social justice ministry.
ABOUT THIS REPORT

This research was conducted in partnership with the 1001 NWC office of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

This study is part of a research project tracking the progress of these communities. The goals of this research are to:

1. Determine the level of success of the new worshiping communities and their leaders.
2. Understand the varied expressions of church that are present in new worshiping communities.
3. Learn how these communities are similar to and different from to mainstream congregations.
4. Identify markers or benchmarks that lead to continuing viability and sustainability of new worshiping communities, both within and outside the scope of the 1001 NWC program.

This research includes information from all five waves of an annual survey and six years of interviews of NWC leaders. Data was collected in 2015, 2016, 2017 (interviews only), 2018, 2019, and 2020.

The most recent survey was sent in April 2020. The survey was sent by email to all known leaders and shared on the 1001 Facebook page. Email invitations were sent to 445 leaders, and 114 responded to the survey, for a 26% response rate.

The 2018 leader survey was sent in March 2018 to 403 leaders for whom we had email addresses. Of these, six reported their community as inactive and 122 returned the survey for a response rate of 32%.

Other data on NWCs is gathered from the Highrise database maintained by the 1001 NWC office.
ABOUT 1001 NEW WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES

Igniting a movement in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to begin 1001 New Worshiping Communities (NWCs), using new and varied forms of church for our diverse and changing culture, and forming new disciples of Jesus, transforming our denomination, and impacting our world.

—the 1001 NWC office

1001 NWC (new worshiping communities) is a movement happening in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Across the PC(USA), God is raising up leaders in churches and presbyteries who are creating new worshiping communities.

They are taking on new and varied forms of church for our changing culture. Primarily they are seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ, to change and transform the world.

In June 2012, the 220th General Assembly declared a commitment to a churchwide movement that results in the creation of 1,001 worshiping communities over the next 10 years.

Since the beginning of the 1001 NWC initiative, 519 new worshiping communities have been raised up across the PC(USA), and an additional 76 pre-existing communities have joined the 1001-fold. Of these 595 communities, 481 (81%) are still active.

The 1001 NWC initiative includes new worshiping communities, new church developments, immigrant fellowships, and other expressions of church all under the umbrella of NWCs.

New worshiping communities, immigrant fellowships, and other expressions of church are initiated by a leader and may or may not have a goal of organizing as a congregation. New church developments, on the other hand, are initiated by the presbytery with the goal of becoming organized as a congregation.
Research Services helps the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) make data-informed decisions using surveys, focus groups and interviews, demographic analysis, and program evaluations.

We are social scientists with backgrounds in sociology, public policy, and economics. We serve congregations, presbyteries and synods, PC(USA) national agencies, and other PC(USA)-related organizations. Research Services is a ministry of the A Corporation Administrative Services Group.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of this report, contact us at 502-569-5077 or research@pcusa.org.