



Presbyterian Mission
**1001 New Worshiping
Communities**

Mid Councils can lead the way in launching new worshiping communities within their bounds. The specific ministry of presbyteries and synods in the planting of these communities is one of imagination, support, and accountability.

Imagining a new future for the Church is a spiritual practice. Mid Councils committed to exploring the new thing God is doing among us have a culture of prayerfulness, expectancy, flexibility, and hope. As a mid council leader, you can foster this culture and help your presbytery share these practices together.

- Make space in your gatherings for listening to how the Spirit is moving in your local congregations. Pay particular attention to the voices long-silenced, the murmurs from the margins, and the cracking echoes of adolescents. Are you being nudged or beckoned beyond the status quo and the comfortable ways of doing things?
- Identify the innovators and seek their wisdom and insight. Many of the leaders of these new worshiping communities are sitting in our pews, serving on our sessions, studying in our seminaries. Pray for them. Provide opportunities for them to explore new possibilities for leadership in a new worshiping community. Send them to a 1001 event. Better yet, go together!
- Get in the car and drive around your area and the neighborhoods within your bounds and encourage the pastors and leaders in your mid council to do the same with teams from their congregations. The 1001 staff will help you with explorations and exercises to help you exegete your neighborhoods so you can see with fresh eyes what God is already doing and where you might join God in ministry.

Support for new worshiping communities is a critical opportunity for mid councils to come alongside creative and committed leaders who are gathering communities of women and men new to the Presbyterian Church (USA). These moments of ministry together are where we share the best of who we are and gain fresh perspectives that will guide us into a new future. Here are the key elements of a supportive mid council:

- An identified and committed team of leaders from across the mid council working together to create healthy patterns of communication between the mid council and the new worshiping community
- An understanding of the financial investment necessary to launch a new worshiping community and identifying and cultivating the necessary resources to support the community to sustainability
- Strong relationships with the 1001 national and regional staff and utilizing the resources developed in partnership with other mid councils, new worshiping communities, and ecumenical relationships. Our connectional polity provides great opportunity to learn with and from one another.

Accountability for new worshiping communities helps everyone take stock of the realities of developing and growing a new community of disciples. Regular conversations are opportunities to celebrate successes and troubleshoot problems before they become crises. Best practices for establishing helpful patterns of accountability include:

- Developing benchmarks and metrics that are specific to the context of the new worshiping community
- Establishing regular rhythms of communication, feedback, and reporting on agreed upon metrics (Mid councils should be mindful here of the burden of paperwork for young projects that are typically short staffed. It is reasonable to expect communication and response from your NWC leader. It is also important to choose carefully what you require and how frequently you require updates so that the measures are indeed *meaningful* for the context, *helpful* to the mid council, and *achievable* by the NWC and its leader.)
- Connecting the new worshiping community with a partner congregation (Research demonstrates that new worshiping communities with a strong partnership with a local congregation are healthier and more sustainable. In addition, the partner congregation experiences new vitality and life because of the relationship with the NWC.)
- Being present with the new worshiping community at milestone moments, in times of discernment, and in the midst of everyday life. In these times, the mid council can often be in the wings allowing the members of the new community to use their own voices and listen for their own solutions and calling, but it is helpful to know that supportive friends and fans are nearby and rooting for their success.