

Christian Reformed Home Missions A Classical/Regional Strategy For Mobilizing a Church Planting Movement

Step I - Forming the Vision and Church-planting goals and strategies within a region and classis.

This vision for Church Planting and Development (CPD) should be formed with significant input and ownership by the area churches.

This is reflected in the Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) Ministry Development Guidelines:

Local ownership and empowerment: CRC classes, in collaboration with racial/ethnic leaders and other planning groups, provide leadership and support in envisioning, encouraging, and empowering congregational reproduction and other church planting efforts, with all appropriate assistance from CRC agencies and educational institutions.

Strategies/Indicators:

All classes and ethnic planning groups have developed a missional vision, with plans for starting and supporting new churches at an annual start rate of 1% to 10% annually, for an overall CRCNA rate of 3-4% annually.

- a. Congregations, Classes, and ethnic groups encourage mentoring and coaching – including local training and support structures – as the *modus operandi*.
- b. Classes, singly and in cooperation with neighboring Classes, are structured, staffed and supported for empowering congregational reproduction and other planting efforts.

Strategic steps for vision formation include the following:

- CPD team of 3-4 persons are assigned to prepare an initial draft of a vision for the region
- Share the draft of the vision with the leaders (council/consistory) of the area churches with follow-up visits to receive input and to provide clarification
- Process the input from the area churches and develop the final vision statement to be recommended for approval at Classis along with the strategic goals and plans for CPDs for a 3-5 year period and beyond.
- Develop an effective communication strategy to cast the vision within the Classis/Region

Step II – Identifying CPD Opportunities

Ordinarily a **task force is formed to process geo-demographic information for the Classis/Region**. They build on the vision and provide the prioritized strategic plan for developing new churches. **This task force includes the following:**

- A prayer leader to mobilize an intercession strategy for CPD
- Two or three local persons of influence, chosen for their commitment to the vision for CPD in the region, as well as having particular gifts and skills in processing demographics
- A representative from the Classical Home Missions Committee (or equivalent)
- The Home Missions Regional Leader (HMRL)

Other ministry consultant/resource persons as applicable

It is important to access demographic information on three levels.

Level One: National demographic reports represent major trends and patterns in population growth, and include information on how these national trends affect the local counties and cities of the Classis/Region.

National demographic information can be found in publications such as *American Demographics* as well as multiple internet sites such as, www.census.gov, or from Easy Analytic Software, Inc., www.EASI.com. The following examples of important national demographic information are selected from the work of William H. Frey and Ross C. DeVol of the Milken Institute.

1. While the United States population is increasingly diverse, with rapid population growth particularly among Hispanics, this diversity will be clustered around several major metropolitan areas rather than being spread evenly across the country. "Multiple Melting Pots" of racially and ethnically diverse populations are projected to cluster in ten metropolitan areas (appendix B, p.1). This is particularly true for Hispanics. "Just 10 metropolitan areas house fully 58% of the U.S. Hispanic population...Ten metro areas, led by Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco, house 61% of all U.S. Asians" (p. VII).
2. Enhanced by clustering, the new racial ethnic immigrants are attempting to maintain their cultural identities in ways unlike their Euro-American predecessors (appendix B, p.2).
3. As an area of strong population growth by new racial new racial immigrants, California will increasingly become unique among the Western states as an "Anglo minority" state with strong representation of Hispanics, Asians and African Americans. The rest of the West will be predominately white with a significant Hispanic presence in states bordering Mexico and California (p. 27)
4. While new immigrants are clustering around a handful of metropolitan areas, domestic migration, particularly among retiring baby-boomers, is also clustering around several metro growth areas in what are being referred to as the New West and the New South (appendix B, p. 3-5,1).
5. "These separate immigrant and domestic migration processes are creating a new divide that will separate 'immigrant gateways' from the rest of the country" (p. 3).

As each Classis/Region researches local and regional demographic information, it will be important to see these national trends and projections. Maps detailing the high immigration states and the high domestic migration states will help in determining priorities for racial ethnic CPDs (appendix B, p.6).

Level Two: Once the national demographic information is processed and the implications for the respective area of the Classis/Region are determined, more detailed analysis of the local area can be pursued.

Level Three: When the growth areas and populations studies for the counties and cities of the Classis/Region have been analyzed and potential CPD locations have been determined, a detailed demographic study by Percept can be ordered to make a final determination for planting a church in that location (appendix D). Based on the cultural factors and the immediate context of that mission setting, an appropriate model and strategy for the CPD can be developed, along with profiling the kind of leader needed.

Step III – Developing Prioritized Proposals and Models

The following steps are for developing specific proposals and models for locations in the region:

1. Having targeted primary areas, additional on-site research is needed to verify the reports and to gain additional information.
2. Prioritize the lists based on such factors as: cultural compatibility with available leaders and resources, racial reconciliation and justice values, readiness in terms of harvest potential and resources available.
3. Develop a location-specific report/proposal for the prioritized opportunities representing a 3-5 year plan (and an additional plan for 10 years). This report will include all the data for a *Church Planting and Development Proposal Outline*. Three items of information need to be emphasized:
 - a. Cast a vision for stewardship of the harvest by estimating the unchurched population. The basic formula is to find the total population of the ministry area, and subtract that from the total worshipping seating capacity of churches in that area (all of their seating capacities times 2).
 - b. Describe as clearly as possible the cultural realities of the unchurched population. This will contribute toward an appropriate leader selection of a Ministry Leader who will be appropriately matched to the mission opportunity
 - c. Give initial description to the model and type of church plant envisioned as appropriate for each site.
4. Process this strategic plan and strategy with the Classis/Region. Consideration should be given to investing in the time to meet directly with the councils/consistories of the area churches to build ownership and to provide information on the various models for parenting.
5. Process the proposals according to priorities with CRHM to access resources and to receive assistance in recruiting the appropriate leader(s).
6. Arrange with the area HMRL and the CPD department to provide training events for area leaders regarding parenting and Church Planting and Development strategies.

In relationship to step six above, the CPD department of CRHM is available to move this process forward in partnership with the various Classes/Regions.

1. The training would focus on the components listed in this paper, namely, how to develop a CPD vision for the region, and a geo-demographic study leading to specific proposals. The training would also provide more in depth information on CPD models and types, and explore the life-cycle stages of a CPD.
2. The Classis/Regional training is to be designed in collaboration with the HMRL and the CHMC (or equivalent).
3. Several examples of training models will be developed allowing for modification of the training event and content as appropriate to each event.
4. Those invited are: CHMC members, Regional CPD task force members, and area pastors and congregational leaders.

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The current harvest opportunities in North America are challenging. “The Spirit is waking us to our mission in God’s world”(Contemporary Testimony, p.44). Jesus invites us to join him. He will give us eyes to see as we invite him to lead us in his work. “I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35). His promise is sure, “I will build my church...” (Matthew 16:18).