

# DOING A NEW THING

Shenandoah Presbytery

Committee on New Congregational Development



A Policy and Guidelines for the Formation  
of New Worshipping Communities

# Shenandoah Presbytery

## Committee on New Congregational Development

### I. Introduction

The formation of new worshiping communities (NWC) is the work of the Holy Spirit. As a Presbytery, we intend to work collectively to create conditions that welcome, pay attention to, and foster the work of the Holy Spirit among us in birthing new ideas, inspiring fresh expressions of the Church, and bringing about new worshiping communities. To that end, the Committee on New Congregational Development's (CNCD) role is to create space for, encourage, and support ideas and leadership for NWCs as the Spirit brings them forth. Doing so may include publicizing ideas for potential NWCs and working on behalf of particular ideas and communities to recruit and connect leadership and participants. Even more so, it shall include working to inspire our congregations and their members to recognize the importance of NWCs, to be open to the possibilities NWCs bring, and to support each other through care and accountability as we collectively participate in the formation of NWCs throughout Shenandoah Presbytery. With this spirit in mind, Shenandoah Presbytery has established the following policies and procedures for CNCD to use in supporting the healthy formation of NWCs within our bounds.

### II. Definition of a New Worshiping Community (NWC)

The Presbyterian Mission Agency's (PMA) national 1001 New Worshiping Communities movement (1001) uses the following definition of a NWC in their ministry of care and accountability, including, but not limited to, determining which communities/ministries are eligible for PMA/1001 financial grants:

#### New

- Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus Christ  
*NWCs witness in word and deed (1 John 3:18), continuing Jesus' own mission of discipling, feeding, teaching, healing, welcoming, crossing boundaries, and proclaiming God's coming realm. Those with new and renewed faith join the Spirit's transforming work in the world.*
- Taking on varied forms of church for our changing culture  
*Living out the Gospel demands ministry which engages today's cultures (John 1:14). New ways of joining Christians together for contextual ministry will use current and historic ways of "being church" as springboards for creative innovation (Matt 9:17).*

#### Worshiping

- Gathered by the Spirit to meet Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament  
*We seek to hear, come to believe, and are equipped to live the promises of God revealed in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. NWCs welcome new members of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) through Baptism and are nourished by Christ's spiritual presence in the Lord's Supper.*

- Sent by the Spirit to join God’s mission for the transformation of the world  
*The Spirit impels us outward, so that worshipers participate in the redemption of the world in Christ (Col 1:20). Therefore, the primary beneficiaries of the NWC are not its own members, but rather its community and world.*

### **Community**

- Practicing mutual care and accountability  
*We commit ourselves to love one another (John 13:34) in relationships of mutual care and accountability, as faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Entrusting ourselves and the church to the Holy Spirit, we seek to grow to maturity in faith and life.*
- Developing sustainability in leadership and finances  
*As distinct yet connected expressions of the body of Christ, NWCs have local leadership arising from their own community of faith (Exodus 18:21). Pastoral leadership, facilities, and programs are all appropriately structured in order to demonstrate good and faithful stewardship.*

Shenandoah Presbytery and its CNCD shall be guided by this definition when determining which communities and ministries within our bounds qualify as NWCs, and are, therefore, appropriate to come under care of the CNCD for support and accountability.

### **III. Care and Accountability for New Worshiping Communities (NWCs)**

#### **A. Beginning a New Worshiping Community**

The formation of NWCs is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work inspiring fresh ideas for NWCs, calling leaders and participants together, guiding a community in its discernment and formation, and sustaining it in its life and ministry. Given that the Holy Spirit often (and thankfully!) works in surprising and unpredictable ways, it’s impossible to create step-by-step instructions, or even to state precisely in what order things should happen, for the successful formation of a NWC.

There are, however, helpful resources to assist in the process. The most important of these resources is prayer, supported by scripture study, and close attention to the community and context in which one is present and/or to which one is called. To support these spiritual disciplines, 1001 provides “Starting New Worshiping Communities: A Process of Discernment,” a guide for persons interested in participating in the creation of a NWC. 1001 also hosts conferences and regional gatherings, and offers additional resources to support the creation of NWCs. Further, the CNCD is available for support and consultation as well.

Once a NWC begins to form or the possibility of a NWC is being considered, it is expected that the community and its leadership will seek to enter into covenant with Shenandoah Presbytery as soon as reasonably possible. If the leadership of the community is informal or not yet established, or if the NWC is still in the idea phase, the CNCD may assist with discernment and in making an appropriate determination of leadership and support.

B. Intentional Formation NWC

When an individual or group has an idea for a NWC, but is not yet ready to enter into a covenant agreement, the individual or group will be asked to fill out an [Application for NWC Partnership](#) and submit it to the CNCD. The CNCD will then schedule a time with that individual or group for mutual discernment. Should the CNCD agree to enter into an intentional formation partnership, goals and benchmarks will be created and a liaison assigned to support the discernment process and assist in moving toward a Covenant NWC.

C. Covenant New Worshiping Community

The CNCD is the committee responsible for covenanting with NWCs located within the bounds of Shenandoah Presbytery. A Covenant NWC is formally recognized by the Presbytery and is eligible to apply for financial grants and other forms of support from the Presbytery. Covenant NWCs can also list the Presbytery as a ministry partner on applications for grants from other bodies, such as those made available through the PMA/1001.

A NWC that seeks to enter into covenant with the Presbytery, should complete the [Application for NWC Covenant](#) and submit it to the CNCD. The CNCD will then review the application and schedule an interview with leadership from the NWC. Through the application and interview, the CNCD seeks to learn how a NWC intends to meet, or is already meeting, each of the six points of the NWC definition.

Should the CNCD agree to enter into covenant with a NWC, the CNCD will work with the NWC leadership to ensure the timely creation of an active Leadership Council (see below). Additional goals and provisions (beyond the six points of the NWC definition) will also likely be specified by the CNCD for the NWC as part of the covenant agreement and to aid in care and accountability. Examples of such goals and provisions might include, but are not limited to:

1. Meeting particular benchmarks in areas such as attendance and/or financial and leadership sustainability
2. Evidence of connection to and support of the work of the Presbytery and greater Church
3. Engagement in an active relationship with a 1001 Coach
4. Maintaining an active partnership with a chartered Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation

A NWC's covenant must be renewed annually. A NWC seeking to renew its covenant should complete the [Application for NWC Covenant Renewal](#) and submit it to the CNCD. The CNCD will then schedule an interview with the NWC leadership. Through the application and interview, the CNCD seeks to learn how a NWC has matured in the past year, and plans to continue to mature in the coming year, in each of the six points of the NWC definition.

The CNCD also seeks evidence that the NWC Leadership Council (see below) has met regularly and is functioning appropriately. Further, the CNCD seeks to learn how the

NWC has addressed any goals and provisions previously specified by the CNCD as a condition of the covenant. As a condition of covenant renewal, the CNCD may specify additional goals and provisions. The CNCD enters into covenants with NWCs, and renews them, at its discretion and reserves the right to terminate any covenant at its discretion.

D. NWC Leadership Council

The NWC Leadership Council is the group responsible for making governing decisions for a NWC. The NWC Leadership Council has responsibilities parallel to the Session of a chartered congregation. A Covenant NWC is required to have an active Leadership Commission that meets regularly, but not less than quarterly. Membership of the Leadership Commission should consist of at least three active NWC participants, a presbytery liaison appointed by the CNCD, and any stated NWC pastoral leader (see below). The Council may also include a person or persons from a partner congregation, when such partnership exists.

When a NWC becomes a chartered congregation, the NWC Leadership Commission ceases to exist and its functions become the responsibility of the chartered congregation's Session.

E. Forms of Presbytery Support

1. Care and Accountability

The care and accountability for Covenant NWCs shall include prayer for NWCs and their leaders, participants, and supporters. Care and accountability should also include helping NWCs to connect with the life and ministry of Shenandoah Presbytery as a whole, and, at times, to connect with partner congregations and persons; assistance finding appropriate persons to preside over Sacraments and meet other needs; guidance on best practices for finance, personnel, insurance, property, and other administrative needs; and assistance connecting with other resources and support, including those offered through PMA/1001.

2. Financial Support

Grants are available from the Presbytery through the CNCD to support the healthy formation of NWCs. They are not intended to be the sole financial support of a NWC, but rather are intended to be combined with other sources of funding (such as contributions from NWC participants, partner congregations, and PMA/1001 grants). The goal of these grants are to aid NWCs as they move toward financial independence and sustainability.

Grants are awarded at the discretion of the CNCD. To be considered for a presbytery grant, complete the grant section of the appropriate application (Application for NWC Partnership, Covenant, or Renewal).

Examples of expenses for which grants are available include:

One-time Grants:

- 1001 leadership assessment for NWC pastoral leader
- Special equipment and supplies
- 1001 conference attendance

Multi-year Grants:

- 1001 coaching relationship
- Liability insurance
- Personnel expenses, including health insurance premiums for staff
- Rental space

To promote increased financial self-sustainability, and because grants are not intended to cover the full cost of an expense, multi-year grants are usually graduated, with grant payment amounts highest at the beginning of a grant period and then decreasing as the grant period continues. Multi-year grants are paid on a specified schedule and continued payment of funds is contingent on a NWC remaining in active covenant with the Presbytery. Continued payment of funds is also contingent on the NWC meeting any additional provisions specified by the CNCD when a grant is awarded. Lastly, the CNCD reserves the right to terminate a grant at its discretion, thereby ending any unmade payments.

F. Becoming a Chartered Congregation

The hope of the CNCD is that many NWCs will ultimately become chartered Presbyterian Church (USA) congregations, participating fully in the life of the Presbytery and the larger church. While no timeline for doing so is established here, progress towards becoming a chartered congregation will be an important part of the conversation as NWCs seek to renew their covenants with the Presbytery. A specific time-frame for becoming a chartered congregation may be specified by the CNCD as a provision for entering into a covenant, or renewing a covenant, with a NWC.

**IV. Care and Accountability for New Worshiping Community (NWC) Pastoral Leaders**

NWCs, and the new forms of church they often express, require a variety of forms of pastoral leadership. Some may have full-time Teaching Elders serving as Pastor(s). Some may have part-time and/or bi-vocational Teaching Elders or Commissioned Ruling Elders serving in pastoral leadership. And some may have non-ordained leaders performing many of the traditional pastoral functions, with sacramental needs met by a Teaching Elder or Commissioned Ruling Elder. As such, the CNCD seeks to allow for the variety of pastoral leadership NWCs require, while also ensuring NWCs have qualified persons serving in pastoral roles.

A. Approval and Re-approval for NWC Pastoral Leaders

As part of the application/re-application to become a Covenant NWC, the pastoral leader(s) associated with the NWC shall complete the [Pastoral Leader of a Covenant NWC form](#) and will be expected to meet with the CNCD during the scheduled interviews for approval and renewal of the Covenant NWC agreement.

A pastoral leader for a NWC shall be required to have one or more of the following credentials:

1. A PC(USA) Teaching Elder or other ordained pastor approved by the presbytery
2. A Commissioned Ruling Elder
3. Completion of an approved 1001 internship and/or favorable 1001 assessment
4. For those under care of another committee of Shenandoah Presbytery, the support and approval of that committee

When a NWC is in a formal relationship with the CNCD through an Intentional Formation Partnership or as a Covenant NWC, the pastoral leaders of the NWC are also in a relationship with the Presbytery through the CNCD, with all of the rights and responsibilities thereof.

All pastoral leaders for NWCs shall be required to have a background check completed in accordance with the [background check policy](#) of Shenandoah Presbytery.

As part of the application/renewal process for Covenant NWCs goals, benchmarks, and other requirements may be set for the pastoral leader(s), including, but not limited to, the completion of a 1001 assessment and/or internship, active participation in a 1001 coaching relationship for a designated amount of time, participation in a 1001 cohort, participation in the life of Shenandoah Presbytery, completion of requirements of another committee, when the pastoral leader is under the care of that committee, and/or a mentoring relationship with a member of the CNCD or a Teaching Elder designated by the CNCD.

**B. Forms of Presbytery Support for NWC Pastoral Leaders**

Many of the Forms of Presbytery Support listed above for NWCs in general also apply to a NWC's pastoral leader(s), including but not limited to financial support. See Section III E for information about the possible uses of grant funds available to NWCs and their pastoral leaders. More specifically, any pastoral leader associated with an Intentional Formation NWC or a Covenant NWC, whether at their own request or by the requirement of the CNCD, who intends to participate in a 1001 assessment may request grant funds to assist in paying for up to 75% of the total cost, including travel. Grant funds may also be requested for assistance with the costs associated with maintaining an active 1001 coaching relationship and/or participation in a 1001 cohort.

**C. Pastoral Leadership when a NWC Becomes a Chartered Congregation**

Once a NWC becomes a chartered congregation, the NWC's pastoral leadership will be accountable to the Presbytery through another channel and the leader's relationship with the CNCD ceases.

**V. Conclusion**

While the 1001 NWC movement neither fits neatly into traditional models for what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ in the world nor into the old model of church planting that Presbyterians have long embraced and employed, it is fundamentally founded

upon the work of the Holy Spirit in doing a new thing in the world, in our denomination, in our Presbytery, in our communities, and perhaps – just maybe – in and through our current congregations, as well.

“Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

“Thus says the Lord... I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19a)