



Five Streams of Missional / Congregational Multiplication

Exploring five distinct streams of faith communities
in The Florida Conference to fulfill our mission of
Making New Disciples

New Churches

New Faith Communities



Church Planting

Historically labeled a "Parachute Drop." Demographics prove this has the potential to be the most culturally relevant type of start. It is designed to offer a full range of worship, discipleship and mission work with a goal of chartering.

Leadership skills for this type of church plant are entrepreneurial with a temperament for perseverance. Also a high passion for evangelism.

Examples: Community of Hope, New Covenant, Harvest, Good Samaritan

Multi-Site Campus

Strong church begins a new campus with plan to offer a full range of ministries at the remote campuses. Options for future are either separate charter or remain a multi-site.

Because there is connectional relationship to the main campus, local pastors may be utilized. There is usually shared sermon prep with the campuses having similar messages.

Examples: Lake Deaton, Harvest Bayshore, Grace Central Campus, Grace Sarasota

Fresh Expressions

Reaching new people in new places. Targeted at reaching un-churched, de-churched, often in a missional context. Usually small gatherings in areas of common interest, includes discipleship and serving together.

Led by lay or clergy who are missional-minded. The person would be passionate for ways to connect people outside the church.

Examples: Helping Hands, Yoga Chapels, Sunday Soul, Pints and Parables

Focused Worship

The key distinction - it does not carry the expectation of full ministry, often within the same campus, and is targeted to reach a specific demographic group.

This is usually led by clergy with leadership background in the culture of the primary demographic group, like family-centered, Millennials, empty-nesters.

Examples: The Five, Vessel, Sun City Center Hispanic

Intentional Communities

The focus is primarily on immediate human need more than worship. This stream is designed to form ministry in areas generally unable to independently support ministry.

Leadership skills best served by having a diverse background and ability to work with other non-profits, city, or government organizations. A passion for mission is a must.

Examples: Mission Ebenezer, JFON (Justice for Our Neighbors), YAMM (Young Adult Missional Movement)

Five Streams

Of Missional/Congregational Multiplication



Florida is a state shaped by water: streams, rivers, lakes, gulf, and ocean. These bodies of water flow into each other; just as the lakes, rivers, gulfs and streams merge into increasingly more powerful bodies of water, so should our various streams of faith communities flow into an increasingly more powerful connection of disciple-making communities focused on transforming their immediate communities, making an impact in the world. We hope this article gives understanding of 1. How we got here, 2. Where we are now, and 3. What we are currently exploring in Florida to continue the Methodist movement of making disciples.

Using this metaphor of water, we believe it will be helpful to identify areas of congregational vitality, discipleship, missional engagement, and innovation. We currently recognize five streams that seem to be most promising in reaching Floridians with the Christian faith as it is expressed in The United Methodist Church. We want to clarify the differences between them, the various sources of leadership skills, and how together they might bridge the missional strategy of our annual conference.

Exploring FIVE distinct streams of faith communities in the Florida Conference

How we got here

Just as a river changes course over time so must the church adjust its connecting points to the changing shorelines of the world in which we are placed without changing our Wesleyan message of grace. We want to serve and lead a Church that is able to embrace core convictions of scripture and tradition and also be adaptive to a rapidly changing culture.

Methodism grew dramatically in Florida from 1950 to 2000, as population exploded from 2.8 to 15 million people. The dominant pathways of migration via the main interstate roadways were from people in mid-west and northeast, including retirees who seasonally migrate for

winter. Many of these people were active Methodists. The next dramatic shift came in 2000-2010 and it was predominantly, though not exclusively, with people who migrated from the Caribbean. With the continued growth of our population, we can no longer assume a church culture as part of people's lives or that a church culture exists in our cities. Last year, Tampa was listed as the second least religious metro area in the U.S. It is clear, as we study the lack of growth in Florida Methodism, that we are not connecting with the changing communities and culture surrounding our churches.



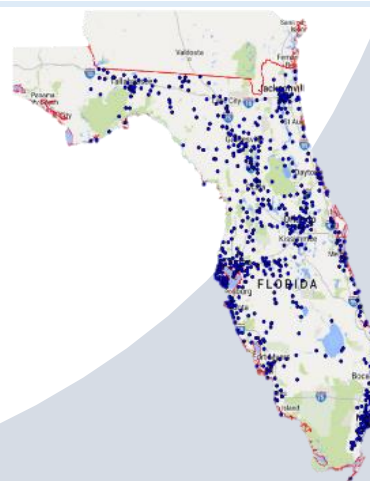
Stats and generational shifts

Statistics bear out the declining impact, with the United Methodist denomination growth rate lagging behind the Florida population growth. Clearly, the church is not creating or expanding inroads into the current culture. We live in a volatile (VUCA-volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) period which requires adaptive leadership skills. The trend for many of our Florida Conference congregations has resulted in lay and clergy who have not experienced dynamic, healthy, and growing discipleship.

An August 2016 Pew Research article, “*Why American’s ‘nones’ left religion behind,*” states that 78% of adults who do not identify themselves with a religious group were actually raised in a church. Of those, 49% indicate that a lack of belief led them to leave the religion from their childhood. These “nones” can be broken into three categories: self-identified atheists, agnostic, or describe their religion as “nothing in particular.”

Additionally, the Gen X and Millennial generations tend to be anti-establishment, anti-institutional, and more cause-motivated. For example, the financial giving of the younger generations is more cause-responsive and also missional. We have entered a time of generational shifts with the need for adaptive and creative leadership that encourages these generations to have healthy discussions about money and the causes that are important to them. A church’s ability to be change responsive is critical to the future.

In July of 2015, immersed as a discovery team from the Florida Conference exploring the Fresh Expression ministries in England, we repeatedly heard the gospel of Matthew explicated as “Jesus will build the church (Mt. 16:18)” while the task of his followers is “*..make disciples of all.....(Mt. 28:19.)*” In past generations we could assume a direct connection between worship attendance and disciple development, because worship attendance was generally connected with learning experiences like age specific Sunday School and mid-week Bible study. We affirm that the church of the future will include both creative practices of discipleship AND an increasingly missional movement. Our future will be a United Methodist Church fully engaged with the many and varied cultures that make Florida unique. This church will grow elements of all the streams we have identified flowing together as disciples of Jesus Christ transforming the world.



• FL Conf. Churches