

*Recommendations for annual conference leaders recruiting from other denominations*

In many areas across the United States, the largest and/or fastest-growing segment of the population is Hispanic/Latino. In some of these areas there is no Hispanic/Latino United Methodist faith community present. Annual conferences that are serious about reaching their mission fields have an urgent need to find pastors who can start and/or grow these new faith communities. This urgency, along with our desire to find persons who possess the marks of successful church planters, compels some to consider recruiting planters from outside our United Methodist system.



Even non-United Methodist pastors with the recommendation of a United Methodist pastor will need to go through a process of annual conference education and assessment. We need to very clearly communicate our expectations about the culture in which we want them to work and whether the prospect has the experience, education and capacity to function in a new ecclesiastical culture. We recommend that you do a thorough and frank interview with all prospects to explore their ecclesiology and doctrinal understandings to assess their ability to adjust to the United Methodist culture.

If the candidate cannot adjust, problems will emerge that may lead to conflict, disappointment, or even the loss of a congregation and/or a pastor after the conference has made a significant investment. The severity of these problems may lead to the discouragement of the district or conference leadership. They may have invested both emotionally and financially in Hispanic/Latino ministry or new church starts and may have a sense of failure that prevents them from trying again.

**Step 1: Interview**

In preparation for the interview the prospect should be asked to bring a written résumé of life experience (and academic degrees, if available). The potential planter should receive a set of simple questions detailing the topics for prior to the interview to allow her/him to prepare and not be surprised.

Topics to be addressed in the interview (Prepare questions in advance):

1. Understanding the Sacraments as Means of Grace

- a. Baptism

In particular, ask their views on infant Baptism. If the person is not comfortable with the United Methodist practice of infant baptism s/he will not perform this ritual with children.

- b. Holy Communion

Many non-United Methodist pastors cannot accept the open table and place conditions or requirements that are not consistent with UMC beliefs to exclude persons from the Communion Table.

## 2. Understanding the Priesthood of all Believers

In other traditions the pastoral leader makes most of the decisions for the congregation. This style of leadership may lead to conflict with our system of representative democracy and our understanding of the polity of the church.



## 3. Itineracy, the appointment system and Episcopal authority

This is particularly important for pastors who join our church with a congregation that they have organized, for whom itineracy is a foreign concept.

4. The connectional system, the importance of apportionments and accountability to the annual conference for their ministry
5. The ability to work with persons who have different perspectives on homosexuality and abortion
6. The reasons why he or she is seeking to change his or her denominational affiliation by joining The United Methodist Church
7. Expectations and options for certification or licensing, the requirements needed for a Local Pastor's License and the ordination process

## Step 2: Verify

**Verification comes through letters of recommendation and background checks. Secure at least three letters of recommendation** from the former denomination or an organization that knows his or her history and effectiveness in ministry. ***If all else checks out, conduct a background check before hiring.*** Some annual conferences have been able to secure background checks for persons coming from other Latin American nations.

## Step 3: Decide To Assign/Appoint

The bishop and cabinet, in consultation with conference Hispanic/Latino ministry leaders, fix an appointment or assign a planter. All stakeholders in the process agree to establish benchmarks, measures, and evaluation processes in advance, ensuring that all parties understand the expectations.

## Step 4: Sign a Covenant

A written agreement helps clarify the relationship and expectations for both the conference and the pastor. It will also help to guide the pastor in self-evaluation, along with a more formal evaluation by the district superintendent or annual conference at the end of an agreed-upon time period.

### Step 5: Assign a Mentor

The district superintendent assigns an elder in good standing to serve as a mentor to the new pastor. The expectation is that there shall be regular meetings with the mentor/coach and visits with the congregation to provide guidance on local church structure and polity in areas such as:

1. Continuing Education requirements
2. Sexual misconduct guidelines of our church
3. Supervisory role of district superintendent
4. Accountability to *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*
5. Ability to deal with diversity: cultural and linguistic



### A Probationary Period

If a pastor is approved as a United Methodist probationer there needs to be a probationary period of one to two years with a follow up interview mid-way through the probationary period and a final interview at the end of the time. The purpose of the probationary period is to provide the pastor the opportunity to see if she or he is able to function within the United Methodist system, and the conference will have the time to assess both his or her effectiveness as well as her or his ability to participate in the United Methodist culture. During the probationary period either the pastor or the conference could discontinue the relationship.

### Additional Resources

Several other Path 1 resources may prove useful as you begin cultivating Hispanic/Latino church planting ministries in your annual conference. Please contact the New Church Starts Division/Path 1 at GBOD for these and other resources:

- High-Potential Planter Traits (English and Spanish language versions available)
- Church Planting Best Practices in an Hispanic/Latino Context
- Project Partnerships and Ministries in an Hispanic/Latino Context
- Information about the Lay Missionary Planting Network (English and Spanish language versions available)
- Recommendations Regarding Shared Facilities

Path 1 gratefully acknowledges MARCHA West for its foundational work and collaboration on the recommendations in this document.

*For additional information and consultation about church planting within the Hispanic/Latino community, please contact Samuel Rodriguez ([srodriguez@gbod.org](mailto:srodriguez@gbod.org)) at (877) 899-2780, Ext. 1706.*