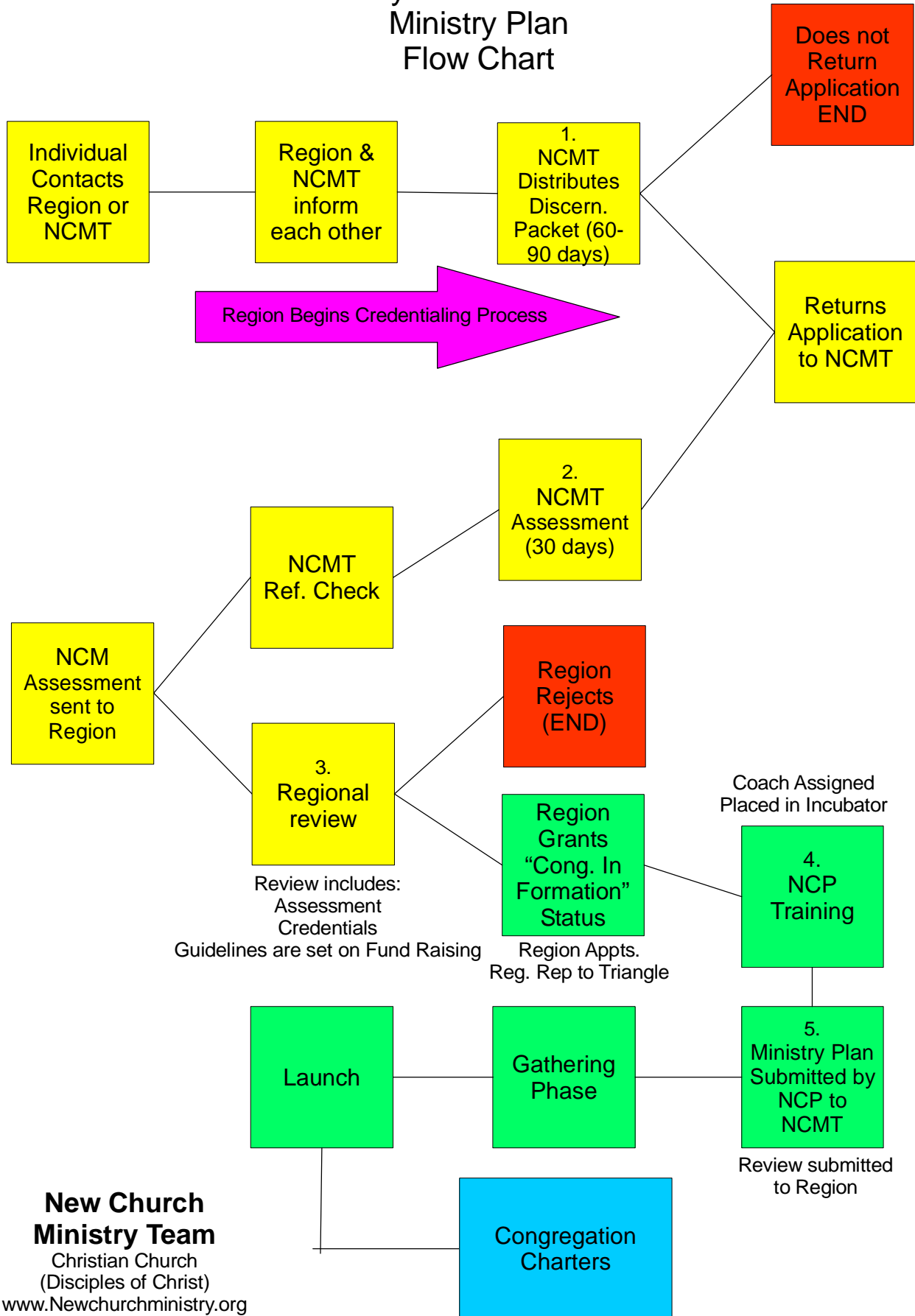


INDIVIDUALLY INITIATED PROJECTS

Individually Initiated New Church Ministry Plan Flow Chart



New Church Ministry Team
Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
www.Newchurchministry.org

More than a third of recent new church projects have been Individually Initiated Projects. In some cases, an ordained pastor is the trailing spouse to an area without a Disciple congregation and decides to start one. In other cases, some pastors and lay people have been infected with a vision to plant a new church, and that vision won't let them rest until its done.

We used to send those people to counseling (haha). However, a reflection of scripture sets numerous precedence for this kind of call and for what our response should be. The NCMT values these explorers of the faith and believes that it is not our place to determine the authenticity of their call. We will work to help them seek funding, to train them, and even to assess them, as long as they work with the Region towards credentialing.

These projects have been difficult for Regions, as few have any policy for dealing with these types of calls. The proposed ministry flow chart addresses some of the issues that have hampered both individuals and regions in the Establishment of these exciting new congregations.

Communication between the NCMT and the Region is extremely important in these projects. The NCMT will make contact with the Regional Liaison, who in turn will advise the Regional New Church Committee. In addition, the NCMT assumes that the Region takes responsibility on credentialing candidates and is in conversation with the individuals.

1. DISCERNMENT
When an individual announces their intentions to start a new congregation, and makes contact with our office, we invite them to pause for 30-90 days for Discernment and begin the credentialing process. The spiritual discernment process is important to allow the individual confirm their call from God for this project.

2. ASSESSMENT
If they return the application at the end, the NCMT sets up an Assessment and makes a report to the Region, along with a reference check. This neither confirms nor denies a call. It suggests strengths and weaknesses related to this ministry. Its purpose is to help the NCP prepare for this ministry.

3. REVIEW
Once the Region either recognizes their ordination, or gives the candidate a license, the Regional New Church Committee offers the individual a "Congregation in Formation" Review. During this review, the assessment is reviewed and guidelines are established for fund raising for the project. A favorable review grants the Church Planter "Congregation in Formation" status which allows the NCP to raise funds, and give charitable tax credits. It also gives the region an opportunity to offer encouragement to the NCP, and perhaps make an incentive grant. The Region can make plans to send the NCP to training with the NCMT at this time as well. The NCP may begin to gather the new congregation, but should be discouraged from launching worship with the new project until training can be completed.

At this point, the Regional New Church Committee appoints a Sponsor Representative from the committee. The NCP may choose at this time to select a group of prayer partners.

4. TRAINING

Once the NCP has attended NCMT training, they will be assigned a coach who completes their triangle.

5. SUBMISSION OF MINISTRY PLAN

At training they will submit a ministry plan for their project for review by the NCMT. This plan, with NCMT comments, will be forwarded to the Regional Liaison who in turn will submit it to the Regional New Church Committee. The congregation will then follow the plan towards development.

It is important to note that Individuals starting new congregations often feel that the Region puts too many roadblocks in front of their project. It is important to communicate with the individual early on what the process is and remind them that their regional and national partners are only interested in their success and that we are not trying to control their vision or call. Most will appreciate the support and backing.

If the individual is a new Disciple, it may prove worthwhile to introduce a mentor pastor from a neighboring congregation. This mentor will be responsible for introducing the individual to Disciple ethos, and for assimilating the NCP into regional and district life.

Many of our fastest and least expensive new church starts have been completed by individuals. Most are bi-vocational and deeply committed. Their congregations develop deeply committed individuals as well. This form of new church start is very worthy of our support and attention. Most of these individuals will have little regard for demographics, and may want to start congregations in areas that are nonviable. It is important to show them the data, but in the end it has to be their call.