

Rocky Mountain Ministry Network

Church Multiplication in a Culture of Community
Adopted by the District Presbytery on September 11, 2019

The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network places a high value on sustaining a culture of community and belonging. We are also a network that needs and values church planting. If we are a community, then how do we act like a community when navigating the waters of church multiplication? How do we find balance between the needs of a network and the burden of a church planter? How do we advance the kingdom in light of sensitive issues like location, proximity, sponsorship, affiliation, and diverse parenting models? If we truly value community, then communication and collaboration should be practiced in all we do, including church planting, PACs, multisites, and micro-churches. The potential for misunderstanding surrounding the process of church multiplication warrants greater care in understanding the why and how before determining the where.

This document is not intended to be a comprehensive manual for church planting procedures. Its purpose is to cast vision and articulate what is needed to advance the kingdom of God within the context of true community.¹ **It outlines the RMMN's case, requirements, and process for community on the front end of church multiplication.**

A. Face of Community. It is important to answer the question, “What does community look like in its working gloves?” Community means...

- 1. Support.** We help, equip, resource, protect, and care for each other.
- 2. Accountability.** We give credibility, accreditation, recognition, recommendation, and correction.
- 3. Connectedness.** We provide belonging, networking, unity, ownership, community, and friendship.
- 4. Inclusion.** We warmly welcome, accept, embrace, and value others.
- 5. Communication.** We communicate with clarity, timeliness, and accuracy.
- 6. Synergy.** We collaborate, partner, and cooperate to advance the kingdom of God in our network.
- 7. Respect.** We allow margin for tolerance, loyalty, patience, dissent, diversity, and kindness.
- 8. Forgiveness.** We practice patience, reconciliation, grace, and mercy.
- 9. Family.** We practice trust, togetherness, hospitality, and generosity.
- 10. Leadership.** We entrust network leaders to provide structure, strategy, implementation, and adjudication.

B. Case for Community. Following are five reasons why we should be sensitive to each other when determining the location and proximity of future church plants, PACs, and multisites.

- 1. Biblical obedience requires it.** If we are Christ-followers and members of an eternal kingdom and sacred community, then we must express those values in everything we do, including

church multiplication. That means the following scriptures must also be embraced when determining location, proximity, and timing.

“Live in harmony with one another” (Romans 12:16).

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18).

“Don’t act out of selfish ambition or be conceited. Instead, humbly think of others as being better than yourselves. Don’t be concerned only about your own interests, but also be concerned about the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

“People should be concerned about others and not just about themselves” (1 Corinthians 10:24).

“It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation” (Romans 15:20).

Disregarding Christlikeness in the interest of organizational growth or personal preference is a step away from goodness. It only sows seeds of resentment and organizational mistrust that linger long after a church plant is “pushed through.” We have an obligation to be sensitive to the needs, situations, and opinions of all our ministries no matter what size ministry they are.

- 2. Collaboration compels it.** Unified mission in a city and network is extremely important. It is so important that it should be determined through the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders instead of being unilaterally determined either by a church planter or an established church leader. Proverbs 11:14 teaches us that *“victory is won through many advisers.”*
- 3. Consistency demands it.** We cannot call ourselves a community and knowingly neglect, ignore, or compete with one another’s needs. We must be sensitive to each other. In most cases, it is possible to address each other’s needs when we meet face-to-face, dialogue, and are guided by a sense of community.
- 4. Deeper penetration demands it.** The enormity of the unsaved demographic in Colorado’s and Utah’s cities gives us plenty of geographic margin to be sensitive to one another. Allowing for margins of ministerial courtesy and saturation does not decrease our potential to reach unsaved people. On the contrary, it allows for wider penetration that only increases opportunities for evangelism. We must seek the same kind of balance while wisely stewarding the resources, opportunities for long-term growth, and evangelism in Colorado and Utah. On the other hand, some situations involving the planting of very unique churches (ethnic, generational, language, or distinctive target audiences) may warrant the Presbytery’s dismissal of geographic margins.
- 5. Long-term success requires it.** A welcoming environment is more conducive to new church planters. Creating a culture of collaboration, communication, and sensitivity is most likely to lead to enthusiasm regarding future church plants and a growing interest in parenting and mothering models. It is also more likely to lead to valuable interpersonal relationships and interchurch partnerships years after the plant has been established. From a network standpoint, this collaboration also increases social capital and organizational capacity to seize greater opportunities in the future.

C. Requirements of Community. When it comes to church planting, our commitment to community should involve the following:

1. **Respect.** Community requires that we value every minister, the ministry they lead, and their contribution to the network enough to initiate dialogue and communication. This would also necessitate our seeking dialogue, feedback, and the blessing of affected colleagues before any kind of preapproval without surprises, convenient omissions, or exclusions. Before making a decision that affected Philemon, the Apostle Paul said, *“I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord”* (Philemon 1:14). If the opportunity to disagree or say “no” is not provided, then “yes” does not mean anything anymore.
 2. **Ownership.** As a network, we must recognize the need and own the challenge of planting new churches. Over the past 20 years, the combined population of Colorado and Utah has increased by 2.5 million people. The number of AG churches has increased by 20 or one new church for every 125,000 new people. The national average ratio for AG churches to population is 1 church for every 24,161. To reflect our national average, we would have needed to start 100 new churches over the past 20 years. By 2040, 3.8 million people are projected to be added to the combined population of Colorado and Utah which means we need to find a way to start 152 new churches over the next 20 years (an average of about 8 per year). Colorado continues to be listed as one of the nation’s top unchurched states. Many Utah communities are 60-90 percent Mormon, and the state is Christianity’s last frontier in our nation. This may even warrant the Presbytery’s targeting key cities before a planter is even identified. Nevertheless, these realities should create an urgency in us to build strategies with higher levels of reproduction in mind.
 3. **Flexibility.** Whether it is planting, PACs, or multisites, each situation is different and there is no “one size fits all” form of approval. Leaders who have been elected and chosen to steward the interests of the network along with cooperative pastors must forge a balance between many factors. These factors include the number, size, and extensive programing of existing works in a given area, population density, city boundaries, mile radius, type of community (rural, sub-rural, urban, sub-urban, mountain, metropolitan, or walking/driving) and other dynamics. That is why collaboration, cooperation, and systemic thinking is required to fairly evaluate each opportunity.
 4. **Communication.** Written agreements or memos of understanding that clearly outline target areas, buffer zones, ministerial etiquette, and mutual expectations should, when at all possible, be used. The network’s establishing minimal and reasonable organizational expectations that support its core values would be wise as well.
 5. **Adjudication.** Because some may have less than practical grounds to either protest or support a new church plant, our network ministers will need to trust the judgment and decision of those whom God has appointed to steward the network. It would seem wise that after general standards are identified, any exception, appeal, or violation should be decided by the Network Presbytery. Christlikeness would then require us all to support those decisions without guile or resentment.
- D. Process of Community.** The following steps should be taken and signed off on by all parties before a church plant begins the launch process:
1. **Introduction and Letter of Intent (LOI).** Before the church location and launch date are announced, a prospective church planter and their spouse should initiate a meeting with the network superintendent to discuss the plant. They should deliver a letter of intent (LOI) and a

strategic plan outlining the concept, proposed timeline, specific location, requests, and list of references. The list of references should include the full name and contact information of previous ministry employers, denominational leaders, mentors, and ministerial colleagues. In this meeting, the network superintendent will ask a few exploratory questions, review the network's document entitled, "Church Multiplication in a Culture of Community," and provide a copy of any relevant policy that may be relevant.²

2. **Community awareness and rationale.** After signing a document entitled, "Church Multiplication in a Culture of Community," the church planter and their spouse should prepare to demonstrate an awareness of what God is already doing in the surrounding geographic community. This awareness should also include the existence of other AG or non-AG evangelical and Spirit-filled churches within the target area. The church planter should then make a written case for needing a new church in that area, community, or neighborhood and submit it to the network superintendent. Because we believe we hear from God in community, we also believe that God will tell us together without any one person claiming divine affirmation or dismissal. The presentation will be made to the network superintendent in writing and over the phone before advancing forward.
3. **Synchronization.** After checking referrals and receiving the case/rationale for a new church, the superintendent may approve network funds to cover the cost of the church planter assessment. The approval of funds for assessment should not be confused with the approval to plant. This approval only helps the network determine compatibility before being presented to the Network Presbytery.
4. **Assessment.** The church planter and their spouse will take the church planting assessment test, and the results will be shared with the network superintendent and the church planting team.
5. **Local dialogue.** Provided the assessment results are favorable, the network superintendent will set up a meeting between the superintendent (or designee) and the church planter and their spouse as well as any other ministries/ministers that may be immediately affected by the proposed location and/or proximity. This meeting may also include representatives from the appropriate section and/or region. The meeting agenda will consist of the following components:³
 - a. **Introductions.** Each participant, with exception of the church planter who will do so later, will introduce themselves and briefly share the circumstances of their divine call to their current ministry setting.
 - b. **Spiritual demographics.** The church planting candidate will share relevant data related to the spiritual needs of the community. An objective resource that can be utilized for this information is www.thearda.com.
 - c. **Story of origin and proposed model of ministry briefing.** The prospective church planter and their spouse will share their story and why they believe God is calling them to start the church in this community. They should also include relevant demographic information, their initial thoughts about the ministry model they expect to embrace, the timeline, and sponsors or partnerships as well as the makeup and origins of the launch team.
 - d. **Suggestions on ideal location(s).** The network superintendent will ask the local pastors of existing churches for guidance regarding physical locations that would be conducive for the model the church planter desires to pursue.

- e. **Seasoned counsel.** The network superintendent (or designee) will invite the local leaders of existing churches to share any words of wisdom they desire to communicate with the prospective church planter.
 - f. **Potential concerns.** The network superintendent (or designee) will welcome local leaders to share any concerns they have regarding matters of proximity and location. The leaders should be informed that this is their primary opportunity to express their reservations and concerns in a manner that will be considered in the approval process.
 - g. **Prayer.** The network superintendent (or designee) will conclude the meeting with a time of prayer for the church planter, existing churches, and lost people who reside in the target community.
 - h. **Informal minutes.** A written report summarizing the group's thoughts, agreements, and understanding of each of the components mentioned above shall be prepared and sent to each participating member.
6. **MOU.** The superintendent's office will create a Memo of Understanding (MOU) outlining the intent to plant, location, and any other ministerial courtesy the launch may require. The MOU will be signed by the church planter, their spouse, and the network superintendent.
 7. **Process.** The church planter will then be released to begin the process to seek approval by the Network Presbytery. Requests for formal approval will require each of the steps above to be completed and submitted before being placed on the presbytery agenda.

E. Parent Affiliated Churches (PACs) and Multisites. It is important to note that the steps outlined above only apply to church plants under the category of network affiliated churches. The Parent Affiliated Church (PAC) category and multisite model allow any sovereign General Council church to start a Parent Affiliated Church (PAC) or additional campus anywhere they so desire. However, it is our hope and request that General Council churches and other districts/networks would act in the spirit of this document when planning and launching a PAC Church or multisite location.

Conclusion. The Holy Spirit will guide and lead His church when we humbly seek His direction (Acts 16:6-10). This process is not about seeking the approval of man but God. I do not believe ANY existing church leader, including the superintendent, should have the power to veto a church plant nor do I believe we should allow ANY church planter seeking our approval, support, or funding to unilaterally declare a location apart from community and collaboration. That means we must be willing to slow down, be led by process, collaborate together, and trust the final decisions of the Network Presbytery.

Contending for community,

Gene Roncone
 Rocky Mountain Ministry Network
 Network Superintendent/Network Pastor (aka "Helper")

Statement of Understanding

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

This document is not intended to be a comprehensive manual for church planting. Its purpose is to summarize our understanding of the relationship between church planting and the sense of community needed to advance the kingdom of God in the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network. It is intended simply as a basis for clear communication in the earliest stages of church planting that we all may “speak the same thing” (1 Corinthians 1:10). By signing below, you are affirming that you have read this document and asked questions to ensure you understand, to the best of your ability, the network’s vision and commitment to community as it pertains to church planting.

_____ Date _____
Gene Roncone
Network Superintendent/Network Pastor

_____ Date _____
(insert name here)
Church Planting Applicant

_____ Date _____
(insert name here)
Church Planter’s Spouse

¹ This document was submitted to a review team consisting of leaders representing the district/network, church planting and the national office. That team consisted of the following people listed in alphabetical order: Lonnie Campbell, Vern Finck, Chad Graham, Larry Griswold, Todd Hudnall, Jeremy Jensen, Noreen Lemon, Alex Lucero, Caleb McNaughton, James Naron, Aaron Nash, Chris Peterson, Steve Pike, Randy Popineau, Chris Railey, Shawn Reine, Darlene Robison, Rob Rocca, Sam Scalf, Don Steiger, Phil Steiger, Charlie Stoumbaugh, Dane Wead, Janie Wead-Mobley, and Zac Wilkinson. The document was then amended to reflect valuable and recurring suggestions from the review team and resubmitted to a small team of successful millennial church planters for suggestions. The document was then revised again before being evaluated and adopted by the Network Presbytery on September 11, 2019.

² Most of the exploratory questions the network superintendent will ask in the introductory meeting are taken from those listed in the book, *Leading Church Multiplication*, by Tom Nebel and Steve Pike, Churchsmart Resources, Saint Charles, Illinois, 2014, pp. 80-81.

³ The steps outlined under the heading, “Case for Community,” are the collaborative work of Gene Roncone asking each RMMN Regional Church Planting Representative to respond to an email on the question: “What steps should a network that prioritizes community take when approving the location and proximity of future church plants?” Steve Pike (East Slope Executive Presbyter and Executive Director of Urban Islands Project) replied on August 5, 2019; Travis Lowell (West Slope Church Planting Coordinator) on August 14, 2019; and Zac Wilkinson (East Slope Church Planting Coordinator) and Alex Lucero (Utah Church Planting Coordinator) on September 3, 2019.