



CHURCH PLANTING

Church Planting Process Overview for Church Planters

So, you are thinking of planting a church? Wonderful! We NEED you! We believe that the United States needs missionaries. We are hoping and praying that God's Spirit is at work throughout the country raising up new leaders exactly like you who will answer the call to expand the reach of God's Kingdom.

ECO'S CHURCH PLANTING PROCESS

We believe that the Spirit may be calling you and we want to help you flourish in ministry. We believe that church planting is best approached contextually. This is why we have designed a process to take into account your wiring, the geographic area in which you hope to plant, and the specific vision and plan for your plant. We do not believe in forcing you or your plant into a predetermined model. We celebrate creativity and we think that the church in America is in desperate need of new kinds of leaders leading new kinds of churches to reach new people for the Gospel! We want to help you determine the conditions in which you and your plant are most likely to thrive.

This document should give you a general idea of stages we want all plants to move through. However each church plant is unique and these stages are flexible, in each case they will take your specific plant plan into account. These phases are in the order that a candidate typically moves through our church planting process. Sometimes the Spirit is already on the move and things feel a little out of order and we have to adapt things but let's call the following the most natural path.

1. INVESTIGATE

Congratulations! You are already in this phase because you are reading this document. You have begun the process of church planting. This phase is for anyone who is potentially interested in church planting and wants to learn more about planting, various models, and what life is like as a church planter in ECO. We have a variety of resources to help you discern on our website.

2. QUESTIONNAIRE & INTAKE INTERVIEW

When you hope to officially move into the process of church planting, fill out this questionnaire eco-pres.org/churchplanting/questionnaire/ and then an intake interview will be scheduled with a member of the church planting team. The goal of the interview is to clarify answers on the questionnaire, answer any outstanding questions you may have, and discuss next steps. At this point, the most likely next step is deciding whether or not to go through an assessment.

3. ASSESSMENT

Learn about your personal and ministry wiring. ECO's assessment is particularly helpful for those with an egalitarian theological position. The assessment cost and debrief is \$2,000 and requires you to undergo a background check and sign ECO's Church Planter Assessment Release Form. Via Zoom, our assessment team will walk you through the results and ask further questions. A final report is generated and shared with you and the presbytery leadership in which you plan to plant. The report includes next steps for the plant plan. It also may include requirements.

4. PLANT PLAN

Every church plant should have a plan, a business model, a prospectus, strategy or set of goals. Yet we want to encourage creativity in your context. Clear plans are helpful when approaching donors, articulating a vision to a core team and generally clarifying what "success" looks like for this plant. What is the mission? What will sustainability look like? The target demographic? How do you plan to grow? We want to help make sure you and your plant thrive. In this phase, you will sign ECO's Church Planter Agreement; we also provide a coach who helps you develop a clear plan in line with your unique attributes and skills. Eventually we approve the plan which gives you access to fundraising at a presbytery level and ECO church planting resources.

5. PREPARE/ DEVELOP

Depending on your church plant plan, this could take a variety of different forms. Are you using a for-profit amalgam: building a coffee shop or starting a dance studio which doubles as a church? Are you looking at something more traditional such as launching with a core group from small groups? Are you doing something that involves multiple communities and is less Sunday-centric? Something else? This is why the plant plan is essential. It will help you clarify the path forward for your church and help you to communicate this path clearly to others.

6. PUBLIC WORSHIP

The church exists to adore Jesus and to share his story. At some point your church will have a worship gathering that invites others in for scripture and sacraments. When will this be? What will it look like? All we ask is that you define it in your plant plan.

8. GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability looks different in different contexts. It is one thing to define it in your plan and another thing to plant a church in reality. A bi-vocational church model in Arkansas will likely have a different financial path than a church plant buying property in Seattle. We want to help you to thrive as a church planter and we want your plant to succeed! We will continue to provide resources after you launch to help your plant reach sustainability.

9. CHARTERING

Every established church was once a plant. We want you to begin with this end in mind. When a church is at the point of being self-sustaining, self-governing and self-replicating it moves into becoming a chartered church. This process starts with a request for the national office's help in evaluating next steps. The request to become a chartered church then goes to the regional presbytery for approval and celebration!

10. MULTIPLICATION/ INVESTING

We hope that your plant will charter with us and then stay involved in church planting with ECO. No one knows church planting and the need for it better than planters. You will be a HUGE resource to other planters in your area and even nationally as a coach or a mentor. Your church will be able to provide financially for the needs you know all too well. We don't want to plant churches. We want to plant churches that plant churches that plant churches....!