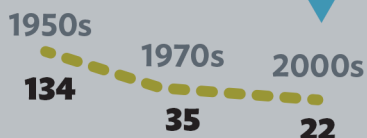


Starting new communities of faith

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TOMORROW

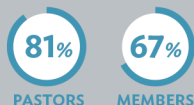
The PC(USA) is not starting new congregations like we used to.



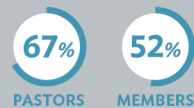
Average number of new congregations created annually during each decade, PC(USA) and predecessor denominations

But Presbyterians say that creating new worshiping communities is important...

to reach the next generation of Presbyterians



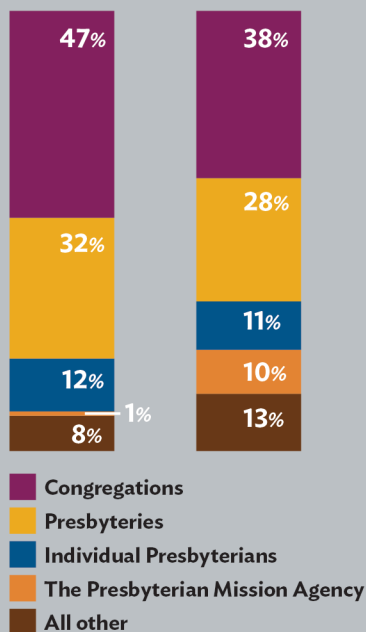
and as an effective evangelization tool.



WHO is best equipped to start them?

Pastors say

Members say



Bare Bulb Coffee is one of the PC(USA)'s innovative new worshiping communities. Learn more at onethousandone.org

Recognizing a need for change, the 220th General Assembly (2012) approved the “1001 New Worshiping Communities” initiative, revolutionizing how new communities of faith can be started.

In place of the traditional model—hiring a full-time pastor, buying land, building an expensive new facility in the suburbs, and expecting people to come—the new approach encourages Presbyterians to think creatively about creating “church” where people are. This might involve inviting neighbors to a weekly Bible study, welcoming new immigrants, reaching out to young adults, or setting up an intentional faith community in a brew pub or a neighborhood home.

When we asked about this new initiative prior to General Assembly, very few members and fewer than half of pastors had even heard of it. Perhaps for that reason, small majorities expressed the opinion that creating 1,001 new faith communities over 10 years is not a realistic goal. Most, after all, likely had in mind the traditional model instead of a more fluid vision of what church and Christian disciple-making might look like in our changing culture.

On a positive note, anecdotal reports since the General Assembly suggest growing enthusiasm for 1001 New Worshiping Communities. And why not? Large majorities of Presbyterians recognize that new communities of faith are needed to reach the next generation. As they become more familiar with an initiative that seeks to empower congregations and individual Presbyterians to form these communities, it seems likely that our next survey on this topic will yield very different results.

Jack Marcum is coordinator of Research Services of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

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