

Report of the General Synod Council on Church Multiplication

POLICY WORDING

The RCA will foster a sustainable movement of church multiplication through starting new congregations and equipping church planters both locally and globally.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S INTERPRETATION

New churches—micro churches, fresh expressions, missional communities—reach new people in new ways with the good news of Jesus Christ. The commitment of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) is to start new churches that further the gospel, reaching the spiritually disconnected, bringing them into fellowship, and introducing them to the God of grace who transforms lives and eternities.

An environment for church multiplication is created through an intentional system and process. It begins with prayer and empowering through the Holy Spirit. It grows as new leaders are called and developed and as they emerge. It is built on a solid foundation of assessment and evaluation of church planters and church planting locations, then strengthened through training and equipping. It is life-giving in the ongoing ministry of church planters and new churches in providing coaching relationships and networks of planters for learning, support, and accountability. It expands as new churches reproduce and as healthy, parenting churches catch a vision to partner and multiply in the starting of additional new churches.

The benchmarks for new churches are to see a newly planted church become:

- Self-sustaining in being able to support the cost of ministry for that congregation.
- Self-governing in being able to produce and provide spiritual leadership capable of being discerning, giving direction and conducting discipline.
- Self-propagating in being able to reproduce new followers of Jesus Christ, new ministries, and additional new church starts.

A sustainable church multiplication system is developed in partnership with the assemblies within the RCA. The General Synod Council (GSC), regional synods, classes, and consistories work cooperatively and collaboratively to start new churches and to provide a resourced system that is capable of raising new church planters and launching new congregations.

CHURCH MULTIPLICATION

Planting new churches is the most effective way to make new disciples and fulfill the Great Commission. This continues to be true since it was started in the first century apostolic expansion of the church. Therefore, the Church Multiplication team is devoted to planting 1,000 new churches by 2038 with the desired outcome of making 100,000 new disciples of Jesus Christ.

To accomplish this goal we work with classis and regional synod teams and, more recently, international partners, equipping them to start new churches. Strategic partnerships are being formed to increase the capacity to plant an average of 50 churches per year, or one every week.

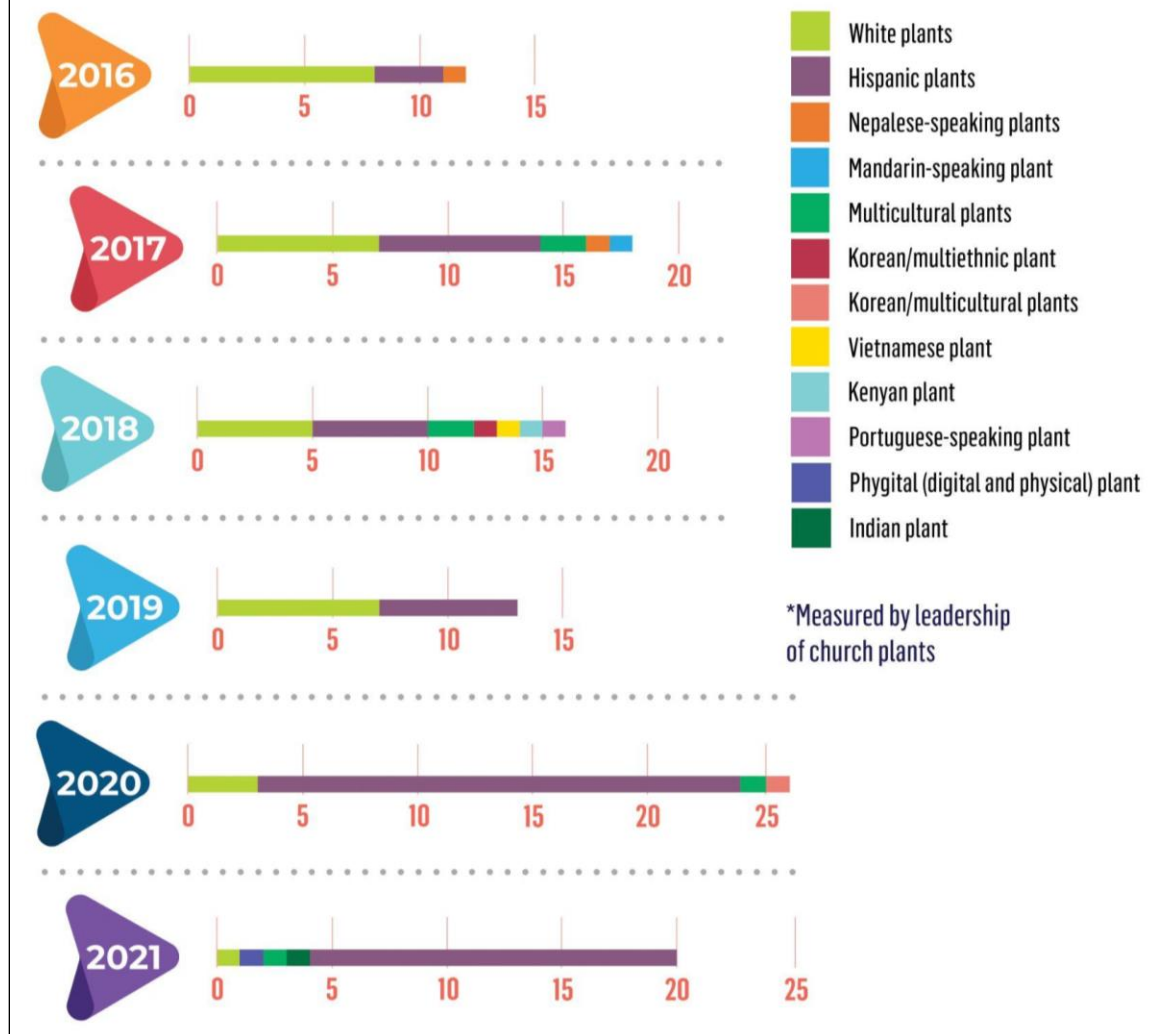
The Church Multiplication staff team consists of Andres Serrano and Rodrigo Cano, part-time church multiplication catalysts; Tricia Bouma, operations manager; Dawn Muller, administrative assistant; and Randy Weener, director of Church Multiplication.

Progress in 2021

- Stimulating new plants:
 - Locally Grown is a cohort to identify and train the next generation of church planters from within two- to five-year-old church plants. Eight planters are currently going through the process.
 - At least 25 potential Fresh Expressions (micro church) planters and parents will participate in the national Fresh Expression Conference, ReMission, this spring to catalyze multiple fresh expressions of church.
 - Over 400 RCA leaders and members have participated in a Fresh Expressions opportunity since 2019 (Vision Day, book study, online cohort, etc.)
 - 20 North American new congregation plans (NCPs) were approved from January to December 2021.
- Church Multiplication launched a pilot Business Coaching program with the goal of helping church plants launch self-supporting businesses. Coaching takes place online.
- An RCA Women Planters online group meets monthly for prayer, encouragement, and sharing resources. The RCA currently has more than 20 women planters.
- Expanding communication:
 - Weekly communications are sent in English and Spanish to planters.
 - Monthly News and Resources communications from the denomination are distributed to sending churches, classis multiplication teams and stated clerks, and other planting catalysts.
 - There is a Church Multiplication presence on all RCA communication campaigns to cast compelling vision for evangelism and church plants, sharing our stories in broader circles.
- We are celebrating the expanding diversity of recent church plants. See the chart on the next page.
 - Church Multiplication has added three people of color to its grant and new congregation plant review team, and Church Multiplication has a diverse staff.
 - Church Multiplication is partnering with the RCA's African American Black Council with a goal of starting five new church plants in 2022. In this effort, we are utilizing Fresh Expressions of Church as a partner. Strategic funding is given to create a plant pipeline that contextually fits the historic Black church.
 - Church Multiplication partnered with Multiplication Network Ministries (MNM) to provide planter training in North and South America. MNM has resources in multiple languages.
 - A generation 2+ task force is being formed with bridge-building ethnic planters.

Diversity in New Congregation Plans*

(January 2016–January 2022)



- Equipping local leadership:
 - Church Multiplication helped the Illinois Classis Church Multiplication Team develop vision, resources, and strategy.
 - The Regional Synod of the Great Lakes has identified six multiplication catalysts working across five classes. Church Multiplication staff is coaching these leaders.
 - Church Multiplication is helping Central Plains Classis refine its planting systems.
- International planting efforts:
 - Through partner Jibit Asha in Nepal, 34 new churches have been planted and 72 apprentices are being trained. RCA Church Multiplication provided training equipment. Two additional churches were planted in Nepal in 2021. One planter baptized 22 new believers at one time!
 - Partnerships in Europe led to the launch of seven church plants, with an additional two in development, in the Netherlands, Germany, Romania, and Hungary.

- Church Multiplication is partnering with Classis de las Naciones and RCA Global Mission to equip, empower, and eventually send the Iglesia Reformada Dominicana (IRD). For more information, see www.rca.org/denomination-from-dominican-republic-joins-rca-classis.

Goals for 2022

- Plant or foster 50 new churches in 2022.
- Work with RCA Global Mission to define relationships with international plants.
- Train a team of leaders in the northeast U.S. to foster and facilitate plants in the three regional synods in the east.
- Develop strategic, sustainable streams of income for planting, including coaching planters to start new businesses or work co-vocationally.
- Help first generation ethnic plants transition to generations 2+.
- Guide at least two classes per year to develop vision, resources, and systems for planting.
- Advance Fresh Expressions of the Church.
 - Host at least 25 participants at the annual Fresh Expressions conference to foster imagination and inspiration.
 - Help the African American Black Council plant five new churches in 2022.
 - Increase disciple-making focus to the third and fourth generation of disciples.