



Diocese of Western Anglicans

What Is a Congregation?

August 2020

Definition of Terms

Lay Missioner A Lay Missioner is usually a bi-vocational lay leader with gifts of gathering and catalyzing, pastoring and teaching, and leading and managing other lay members who are called to start a new missional community, and under certain conditions, a church plant or congregation. A Lay Missioner begins by gathering people into a process of missional discipleship formation so that disciples and Christ-centered missional communities are birthed, formed and multiplied to the glory of God. Lay Missioners are licensed by the bishop to serve as ‘pastor-teachers’ according to their gifting, to gather the members of the body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus.” (Ref Document: **Lay Missioner Ministry Manual**)

Mission Startup A Mission Startup is a new Christ-centered community likely led by a lay leader or Lay Missioner with a vision for growth that leads them to corporate worship, disciple-making and mission. A Mission Startup is usually organically a part of a larger congregation or local church, but may be birthed through Kingdom-driven efforts by the Deanery or the Diocese. The trajectory for planning and development is toward a self-funding, self-governing and self-reproducing Christian community.

Missional Community A Missional Community is a Christ-centered community of 20-40 adults, likely led by a Lay Missioner, or mission-driven lay leader that grows in the Spirit through worship, disciple-making and mission, so that the Missional Community’s members are impacting the world in visible and practical ways. Missional Communities will likely form from a structured Church Plant, Congregation or Resource Church and, in most cases, will continue to extend the reach of their sponsoring/birthing church. A Missional Community is represented at Synod through its sponsoring church, which should ensure that missional community members are included within the members eligible for election as a voting representative in the Synod delegation.

Church Plant A Church Plant is a Christ-centered community likely led by a Presbyterian called by God to plant a new church. A Church Plant is committed to growth in the Spirit and membership growth through conversion, progressing steadily through developmental stages of reproductive community life. Due to resource levels, a Church Plant is likely initiated by the Deanery or a Resource Church. A Church Plant generally will have a minimum Average Sunday Attendance of 25 members.

Congregation A Congregation, likely led by a Presbyterian, is understood to have developed a system of worship, disciple-making and mission that fosters an



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environment for, and momentum toward, growth and reproduction. It may be networked with other Congregations or it may stand on its own. Healthy development of a Congregation is usually dependent upon a minimum Average Sunday Attendance of 75 and will be self-funding, self-governing and self-propagating. As growth is experienced, a Congregation will sponsor new Missional Communities and Congregations that may be released as new Church Plants.

Resource Church A Resource Church, led by a Presbyter, operates with multiple Congregations and worship services (onsite and/or off-site) and/or Missional Communities to impact the wider culture with the gospel. A Resource Church is self-funding, self-governing and self-propagating with a minimum Average Sunday Attendance of 200+ and accepts the responsibility to contribute generously in time, people and funding to the development of new Church Plants in the Deanery and the Diocese.





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This document was prepared on July 1, 2019 in support of a Canon Review Process which eventuated in a redefinition of terms for Local Churches in the Diocese of Western Anglicans.

PART 1

Anglicans in the United States often use ‘parish’ and ‘congregation’ interchangeably to identify a local church that is organized and functions as a center of worship, teaching, learning and mission. This understanding has been increasingly codified over time with reinforcement given by the ongoing training of its clergy in Anglican seminary environments and generalized lay experience with a model of local church. There are distinctives associated with ‘parish’ and ‘congregation’ in theological and functional terms, but for this reflection, not essential to review. This parish or congregation model was often driven by:

1. Space—the physical property where people gathered for worship, fellowship, teaching, training and outreach events and projects. This property often served as the center of a local community’s activities while also serving as a place of encounter with the divine.
2. Worship—the defining function and identifying characteristic was often the kind and quality of the weekly worship service, primarily taking place on Sunday morning. Anglican worship is so distinctive and central to our experience of this model, that the service is life-shaping for many—*lex orandi, lex credendi*.
3. Organization—a pastor, (an Anglican Rector or Vicar) ministers from the center of the local church community to lead worship services, offer courses on Scripture and other subjects of importance, manages programs for various needs of people of varying ages and provides pastoral care to all. The focus on worship, pastoral care and various learning activities reinforced the ‘Come and join us’ orientation to our common life.
4. Culture Compatibility—agrarian life oriented people to a pace of life that required a paid pastor to provide worship, teaching and care to a local region, gathering and caring for those who lived nearby and who were otherwise unavailable in summer due to the rigors of farm and factory and in winter due to harsh weather. Since pastors tended to stay for long periods of time in a church community, trust grew as the pastor did the ‘church work’. The model carried with it the with hope that people in that



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region (small town, small city, zip code, etc.) would see the local church as ‘their’ church and come to be a part of it—often for marriages, baptisms, confirmations and burials—but sometimes not much more. Following the Reformation and more intentionally in recent decades, people often selected from the array of local churches by denomination or reputation of the pastor. The church in the 20th Century relies more heavily on transfer growth and developing its means of gathering like-minded people than it does on conversion growth.

What is a congregation in this model?

A congregation is a gathering of people that worships, pays a priest and supports itself financially and organizationally, with a minimum threshold of about 40 people in average Sunday attendance (ASA). While some details are generally negotiable, including ASA and full time stipend for the priest, congregation members generally worked to establish these minimum expectations and proceed to meet the minimums. The American church regardless of denomination averages about 55 people on Sunday for worship.

What was or is the outcome?

Congregations tended to remain small and under-resourced to fulfill the mission to which God called them, often measuring health by Sunday worship attendance instead of growth and development of disciples who are capable of making new disciples of Jesus. These congregations were usually oriented around the maintenance of the organization (worship services, pastoral care and classes) and hoped for new members through attraction and/or transfer from other congregations of the same kind. By God’s grace, however, many have thrived and moved well beyond the minimum, but one thing remained—the word ‘congregation’ or ‘parish’. As a congregation grew in number of members, what increased were the number of worship services, programs and new members. Rarely, if ever, did it start a new congregation, as this was left up to the regional or diocesan network to initiate and sustain.

Cultural Divergence

While the local church as ‘parish’ or ‘congregation’ served the church when there was high alignment between the church and the wider culture, the church and the wider culture have diverged sufficiently, enough to require the church to re-



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orient its life and work to and through the lens of mission. The practical reality is that the sheer number of people living near a local church that do not seek God on that campus or in relationship with the members of the local church represents a challenge, and that challenge is, if people no longer seek God on the campus of the local church, then the local church must go and seek them to make a case for Jesus Christ as Lord. This goes to the purpose of the church as communicated by Matthew as he recounted Jesus' words: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations (ethne)..." (Matthew 28:19)

The statistics given by such researchers as the Barna Group and Pew Research Group point to further decline in the church's ability to respond to this increasingly secularized culture, as the church itself declines in its capacity and commitment to carry the gospel through its members. The emerging paradigm of the church that responds to the call to bridge the chasm created by divergence between the church and the society surrounding it, is described as 'missional'. While there are an abundance of books on what it means to be 'missional', for our purposes, it may be summarized in the following manner:

1. **Lay mobilization**—instead of beginning with space, the missional church begins with people, formed as a Christ-centered community, that is increasingly clear that one lives out his/her calling in Christ in the world where the gospel is carried everyday. A missional church produces everyday missionaries.
2. **Clergy Equippers**—instead of organizing themselves around managing an array of church programs (worship services, Sunday school classes, bible studies, social events and service projects, etc.) that draw people into their sphere of influence, they train their church members to bridge the chasm with the wider community so that the gospel is carried by everyday missionaries into their neighborhoods, schools and work-sites to make disciples of people who live, play and work there.
3. **Lay Leaders**—instead of occupying those with leadership gifts, skills and aptitude with tasks that cause the organization to function at optimal level, the missional church orients its leaders to the work of modeling, mentoring, managing and coaching people in the disciple-making processes that increase the capacity of the church to impact the wider community with Christ-centered people.



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4. **Christian community**—instead of drawing people to one central campus where the ‘identifiably important’ activities are shared, Christian community provides the medium whereby everything we do and wherever it is done, is undergirded with meaningful relationships that are increasingly transformative of people—homes, coffee shops, schools, work conference rooms, community centers and many more places all become environments where Jesus meets with people through His people.

As a result of this re-orientation of the church from ‘maintenance’ to ‘mission’, we need to allow a greater variety of models for the local church that are given encouragement and affirmation by the Anglican Church.

What is a congregation in this model?

A congregation, is biblically rooted and culturally engaged and, as first defined by Henry Venn, is a self-governing, self-funding and a self-reproducing (self-propagating) group of Christ-centered people who are living as disciples of Jesus and reaching for others in the wider community so that they may also live as disciples of Jesus. In this model, leadership may be lay or ordained and the focus is not on how many people gather for worship together weekly, but on how many disciples are made so that more disciples may be made through them.

What is the outcome?

Congregations may be started with a few people sharing in the right core values and commitments, some of which include: incarnational and missional discipleship, biblical hospitality, meaningful and transparent relationships and orientation to unchurched and unsaved people nearby and far away.

Congregations may grow from a few to a few hundred in this model, as well, but imitation and reproduction is practiced and modeled for others. A local church may contain one or more of these congregations that network together in order to minimize the costs and organizational demands of the former model.



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PART 2

Where do We Go From Here?

The world has changed, but the needs of people have not changed. The church exalts the One who is the same '*yesterday, today and forever*'. (Hebrews 13:8) The church has been equipped over the course of Christian

history with the knowledge and experience to respond to those needs if we will. The Holy Spirit works actively in and through the church to present Jesus to the world.

How might we initiate and strengthen a movement in our diocese that starts and grows churches of a variety of sizes that are mutually interdependent and are participating in the primary work of starting, growing and strengthening healthy churches organically?

Raw Material comes in many forms, but biblically defined and Spirit-formed values in people find themselves to be inevitably expressed in a community of people. Some essential key values show Christ-formed disciples as:

1. Teachable—life-long learner; allows God to shape others; mentors well
2. Trustworthy—follows through in action what is promised; faithful
3. Team Player—collaborative in style and temperament
4. Transparent—personal integrity and authenticity
5. not Territorial—not driven by controlling others; not a defender of turf

A Developmental View of Congregational Growth

Each of the expressions of the local church that follow may be led by an ordained leader, either a presbyter or a deacon, and our current and future fruitfulness will be impacted greatly by how we mobilize and train lay leaders. So, we are being intentional in encouraging missional lay leaders (Lay Missioners) to take their place in the leadership of those small groups, communities, congregations and local churches where they may effectively influence people for God's Kingdom.



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Mission Start-up—this is a *seedling* of a church that begins with some of the people, leaders and funding it will need as it grows. A Mission Start-up is often birthed in a key leader who will either (a) seek to develop a Missional Community networked with a Local Church, or (b) plant a Congregation that will grow, we hope, into a Local Church. This will be discussed at the outset, so that proper assistance may be given, but for the purpose of clarity, a Mission Start-up will describe a ‘Church Planting’ trajectory and a Missional Community will describe an extension of the Local Church.

A Mission Startup will be recognized and given diocesan affirmation and support when it has exhibited and/or gathered:

1. A leader as the primary mobilizing, catalyzing or planting lay person
2. A core team of support for the this leader
3. Sufficient funding to demonstrate the capacity to gather people
4. Teachable people who collaborate easily
5. Sufficient Anglican ethos that is understood and applied
6. People in submission to the authority of the diocese—the bishop and those who assist him—if the group is sponsored by the Deanery or the diocese, and to the local church—the Rector and the Vestry—if the Mission Start-up is sponsored by a local church
7. Annual assessment will be engaged to facilitate growth and development; at the 5-year mark, a thorough evaluation will take place to determine trajectory and the next steps
8. Receiving training, planter coaching, and planter assessment

Missional Community—this is a developing Mission Startup that may not develop into a church plant or become a Local Church. At this early stage, the variables contributing to its development may not even be known. For the purposes of development, though, to the basic requirements of a Mission Start-up, the Missional Community will have added:

1. From 10-12 up to about 50 people who gather for worship, disciple-making and mission, most likely as an extension of the Local Church, unless it has been sponsored by the deanery
2. A clearly defined mission focus on a local neighborhood or community subculture
3. A leader who is a Lay Missioner or trained lay leader



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4. Supported by a small team of leaders who train and oversee the work of the missional community
5. Most likely sponsored by a Local Church initiating work in a community that is distant enough from the campus to make this new work a better option for evangelism and discipleship

At this stage, the markers for a Missional Start-up and a Missional Community may overlap or be interchangeable; the key factor being the vision and plan of the key leader and the leadership team so that the trajectory is set into the culture of the emerging community.

Church Plant—this is a *sapling* of a church with all of the elements of a seedling of a church. A church plant may be established under the initiative of the deanery or form under the supervision of a local church and its Rector. A Church Plant may develop from; a missional community that has matured into a Church Plant, a missional start-up that has matured in the same way or the initiating work of a lay or clergy leader who has gathered a group of people to plant a congregation. To the basic requirements of an emerging work, the church plant will have added:

1. A clear strategic plan of development with a focus on mission and development through worship, disciple-making and mission
2. A growing disciple-making culture among the members
3. A core team of 12-15 leaders that share the commitment required to advance their goals
4. Sufficient funding for the next phase of development (12-18 mos)
5. A minimum of 50 core, tithing members (25 giving units minimum)
6. Coordinated engagement with the Deanery church planting team
7. A commitment to tithe to God through the Diocese of Western Anglicans

Congregation—this is a young, but *solid tree* of a church with all of the development of a seedling and of a sapling of a church. A congregation may operate under the supervision of the Deanery and its 501c3 corporation, it may grow toward self-sufficiency and operate under its own 501c3 corporation or it may remain integral to the local church. To the requirements of a church plant, the congregation will have added:



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1. A minimum of 75 core, tithing members (35 giving units, minimum); if operating under the supervision of the deanery, the Congregation is tithing to God through the diocese
2. An active and established disciple-making culture that reproduces through evangelism and discipleship actions and activities
3. A Lay Missioner who is the likely leader of a congregation, unless a priest is available to equip and lead the congregation and there is sufficient funding for his services
4. A networking relationship with other congregations under the governance of a Local Church Vestry or it is organized as a 501c3 corporation with its own Rector, Vestry and bylaws, as guided by the diocese

Should the Congregation have sufficient resources to become self-funding, it is likely to exceed \$100,000 to address the needs of congregation growth.

If the Congregation becomes self-funding at this phase of development, then it may be encouraged to become self-governing, as well, electing its own Rector, forming a Vestry and establishing itself as a 501c3 corporation.

Worship is regularized for a congregation, when it may be more sporadic and driven by the development of a missional community or a church plant

Resource Church—this is a *towering tree* of a maturing church with one or more congregations that are being nurtured into health and growth. A congregation is likely to be led by strong maturing lay leaders or a trained and licensed Lay Missioner working alongside the clergy and Vestry leaders and often both. To the requirements of a Congregation, a Resource Church will have matured to:

1. Become fully self-funding, self-governing and self-reproducing
2. Be organized as a 501c3 corporation with a Vestry, Rector and bylaws
3. Have a Clergy Equipper as the Rector and is funded full-time
4. Effectively develop and train Lay Leaders who create missional culture in the local church
5. Be practicing disciple-making reproductively and organically
6. Likely have more than one congregation with active missional communities and small groups of varying sizes



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5. Be effectively and joyfully worshipping God on a personal and corporate level
6. Have sufficient membership to be self-funding, recognizing that local church costs often require a **minimum** \$150,000 annually. The research suggests that a church with 100 ASA has reached a point where the pastor needs to spend more time training, leading and mobilizing others. A church with 150 ASA has reached a point where additional support staff has been hired to support a growing membership and begun congregation reproduction. A church with 200 ASA has reach a point that they are really ready to resource for congregation reproduction both onsite and offsite. Resource churches often operate on more than twice this minimum amount of \$150,000, but for those whose goal is to grow and mature into a Resource Church, the following may apply as general minimum estimates:

a. Church tithe	\$20000
b. Church rent	\$24000
c. Priest (full-time) stipend and medical	\$80000
d. Organization costs	\$15000
e. Administrative staff	\$30000
f. Ministry costs	\$12000
g. Miscellaneous, locally variable	<u>\$17000</u>
	\$198000

In some cases currently, our congregations are making every effort to function self-sufficiently and may have sufficient membership, but insufficient funds; in this case, costs may be reduced appropriately and still remain self-funding. A priest may be able to serve part time or property space may be found at a reduced rate. If the priest is missional in focus and able to equip the members of the church for effective disciple-making and mission, then they may move toward greater health and growth.



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PART 3

A New Definition of Terms

Mission Startup

A new Christ-centered community likely led by a lay leader or Lay Missioner with a vision for growth that leads them to corporate worship, disciple-making and mission. A mission startup is usually organically a part of a larger congregation or local church, but may be birthed through Kingdom-driven efforts by the Deanery or the Diocese. The trajectory for planning and development is toward a self-funding, self governing and self-reproducing Christian community.

Missional Community

A Christ-centered community of 20-40 adults, likely led by a Lay Missioner, or mission-driven lay leader that grows in the Spirit through worship, disciple-making and mission, so that the Missional Community's members are impacting the world in visible and practical ways. Missional communities will likely form from a structured church plant, congregation or resource church and, in most cases, will continue to extend the reach of their sponsoring/birthing church. A Missional Community is represented at Synod through its sponsoring church, which should ensure that missional community members are included within the members eligible for election as a voting representative in the Synod delegation.

Church Plant

A Christ-centered community, likely led by a Presbyter called by God to plant a new church. A church plant is committed to growth in the Spirit and membership growth through conversion, progressing steadily through developmental stages of reproductive community life. Due to resource levels, a church plant is likely initiated by the deanery or a resource church. A Church Plant generally will have a minimum Average Sunday Attendance of 25 members.

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A resource church, led by a Presbyter, operates with multiple congregations and worship services (onsite and/or off-site) and/or missional communities to impact the wider culture with the gospel. A resource church is self-funding, self-governing and self-propagating with a minimum ASA of 200+ and accepts the responsibility to contribute generously in time, people and funding to the development of new church plants in the deanery and the diocese.

