



The Greater Ohio District and the Micro-Church Movement

The Greater Ohio District of the Wesleyan Church affirms and supports various methods of church multiplication. While many of our new churches would be considered conventional church plants, we also support churches which would be considered unconventional such as marketplace ministries, and what is often called the “micro-church” or the “house church network.”

Marketplace ministry is generally defined as: *Ministry, outreach, disciple-making, evangelism, or other Christian activities that are employed in the secular workplace, as opposed to homes, churches, or specialized venues.* There was a time when bi-vocational/co-vocational ministry was necessary. When viewed as a necessity it is generally the primary goal for the pastor to eventually be employed in a full-time capacity. In the marketplace model, the thinking is opposite: How can we get into the marketplace and meet people where they are already doing life? In the marketplace we meet with saints and sinners alike, we become missional practitioners rather than missional theorists. Paul made tents, Peter had his fishing business, Lydia sold fine purple linens, Luke was a physician. In the marketplace God can turn your work into worship, your market into a mission field and your clientele and employees into a harvest field. Of course, the coffee house church has become the most common symbol of marketplace ministry. However, ministries have been birthed through many other forms of businesses including, fitness centers, restaurants, laundromats, childcare centers, etc.

The micro-church can be a little more difficult to define. If we are not careful, we can define any home Bible study or small group as a micro-church. However, certain criteria must be applied for clarity of ecclesiastical status.

A small group or Bible study can be sanctioned by a local church as a ministry and thereby establish presence in another zip-code or part of the community. However, some small groups or Bible studies can become independent of the local church or go rogue. When this happens, they may ask to become an official church (or micro-church) within the district and recognized as a Wesleyan congregation. While this is not impossible, the district will not simply credential a small group without sufficient evidence that it will become a viable church body (or micro-church network) by meeting specific criteria and is led by an assessed/approved pastor.

The question is: What makes a small home group a church, and by what criteria will the district officially recognize a home group as a “house church” or “micro-church network?”

Let’s look at specific criteria for a recognized, district sanctioned, house church network. This is done by asking the questions below:

- 1) Does this group have an assessed and/or viable leader or pastor?
- 2) Does this group have a plan that goes beyond holding a service or Bible study in someone’s house each week?
- 3) How will this church be structured or organized?
- 4) What is the vision of this church? Why should it exist?

- 5) How will this church multiply disciples and leaders?
- 6) How will this church do mission at home and abroad?
- 7) How will this church multiply itself into other areas?
- 8) How will this church establish sustainability of life beyond the original small group participants?
- 9) How will this church organize a treasury and establish essential financial accountability and sustainability?
- 10) Is this church committed to the values of Wesleyan theology and ecclesiology?

When a church answers these questions, the district can determine if this group will become something other than a Bible study in a home and will become a viable, living church in the community and beyond. Every church plant must have DBA approval to be officially recognized and to receive district funds. The micro-church planting team will make a presentation to the DBA during which they will provide answers for the 9 questions above.

Once a house/micro church is recognized by the district, can it receive funds from the multiplication arm of the district?

The answer to this question is, yes, it can. However, the district is aware that a house/micro church network requires far less funding than a more conventional church plant. Funds can be provided for the following: 1) equipment needed for functionality, 2) missional outreach in the community, 3) marketing, 4) training leaders, 5) materials for making disciples, 6) finances needed to launch another house church within the network, and 6) as for any church plant, funds will be provided for assessments, coaching, and other training.

How can the House Church Network (or micro-church) receive district funds?

- 1) First, the network must be an approved church plant by the District Board of Administration
- 2) The church will answer the following questions upon request of funds:
 - a) How are you making disciples?
 - b) How are you raising up leaders?
 - c) How are you doing mission?
 - d) What are your plans for multiplying your presence?
 - e) How much are you requesting and for what purposes?

After these questions are answered and the request is submitted, approval and disbursement of funds will be in the hands of the District Multiplication Leader and the District Superintendent. As it is for all our church plants, District funds are available for the first 3 years of the life of the new church. USF does not start until after year 4 and is phased in at 25% per year. The new church will set aside at least 2% of its annual income for multiplication/church planting.



Micro-Church Network Request for District Funds

How can the House Church Network (or micro-church) receive district funds?

- 1) First, the network must be an approved church plant by the District Board of Administration. Is your network district approved?

Yes _____ No _____

- 2) The church will answer the following questions upon request of funds:

- a) How are you making disciples?

- b) How are you raising up leaders?

- c) How are you doing mission?

- d) What are your plans for multiplying your presence?

- e) How much are you requesting and for what purpose?

f) Other Comments or Explanation:

After these questions are answered and the request is submitted, approval and disbursement of funds will be in the hands of the District Multiplication Leader and the District Superintendent. As it is for all our church plants, District funds are available for the first 3 years of the life of the new church. USF does not start until after year 4 and is phased in at 25% per year. The new church will set aside 2% of its annual income for multiplication/church planting.

Please return this request to:

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