



# INCUBATOR PROGRAM

Already approved by Council &  
work has begun!



*"where ministries can thrive, servant leaders grow  
and communities are engaged."*

# New Worshiping Communities Incubator Program

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## Background

For more than 10 years, Denver Presbytery has sought to develop new worshipping communities that gather people around God's word that would not otherwise gather. This is extremely important considering that the greater Denver-metro area has seen a dramatic increase in population in this timeframe.

The presbytery currently has 6 active New Worshiping Communities (hereafter referred to as **NWCs**), 4 of which are immigrant communities and 2 are emergent faith communities. The immigrant communities include East African, Latinx, Telugu (Indian), and Vietnamese. We also have a Burmese Evangelist. Additionally, we will have a NWC starting up this year that focuses on building Christian community through a paddle board shop.

Thanks to the generosity of Jane Hays, the presbytery received a bequest of more than \$1.9 million to be used for new worshipping communities. The funds must be used within 7 years of the distribution of the funds. They can only be used for the salaries of organizing pastor(s) or NWC staff and the procurement of property.

## Purpose

To catalyze the formation of new worshipping communities throughout Denver Presbytery and develop the infrastructure to support ecclesiastical generativity as an ongoing ministry of Denver Presbytery. Specifically, we will launch an incubator program that will recruit 4-8 leaders (preferably, though not exclusively, Teaching Elders) to establish 4-8 NWCs in the next 5 years. These NWCs and their leaders will be supported and encouraged by existing congregations and ministries who will also learn how to nurture an ecosystem of ecclesiastical generativity in DenPres. Furthermore, we will encourage and provide resources to help this wave of NWCs to start at least one NWC in their first 5 years of ministry. These efforts may result in a potential for 8-16 NWCs getting started within a 5-year time horizon.

## Rationale

Building on the existing energy and manifestations of NWCs throughout DenPres, this proposal will provide a well-balanced approach to fostering the leadership, support, and resources to build an ecosystem of energy and creativity along with intelligence and wisdom to help build sustainable NWCs when appropriate and a sustainable approach to fostering NWCs in DenPres.

The incubator model will stimulate creativity and collaboration amongst new and existing NWC leaders and existing congregations. Working closely with the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) staff of 1001 New Worshiping Communities, incubator leaders will be assessed, equipped, and supported throughout their time in the program. Assessment of potential NWC leaders to assess their God given gifts, learned competencies, and social support for NWC leadership. Training and education will be provided for community engagement, leadership development, disciple formation, stewardship, etc. The trainings will be given through periodic

## New Worshiping Communities Incubator Program

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workshops from presbytery staff and leaders, national 1001 leaders, as well as participation in relevant events offered by the denomination and other related entities.

Central to this approach will be the development of communities of practice of potential NWC leaders (those discerning starting an NWC), active NWC leaders (those starting NWCs) and congregational partners to NWCs.

Ideal candidates for the new NWCs funded through this initiative will be spiritual entrepreneurs that are self-starters and have a heart for gathering community and assess strongly in the 1001 Discerning Missional Leadership assessment process.

This incubator's approach to NWC ministry is a leader-first approach; investing in the NWC leader(s) who discern and test the spirits regarding the people to whom God is calling and the places to whom God is calling. That is different from, but not exclusive of what previous incarnations of “new church development” might call a location first approach. That means we will invest in the development of NWC leaders—both the point leaders and NWC leadership teams—in order to build their apostolic capacity to build relationships, community, and God-given hope.

Given the diversity found throughout the greater Denver area, there are many possibilities for new communities. Those communities might start with people who share a common interest (paddle boarding), common mission (i.e. active civic engagement), common language or cultural group (Telegu), common demographic (middle class, suburban parents of preschoolers). NWCs start for all sorts of reasons and they evolve in a variety of directions and forms—some may be called by God to become a chartered church, some might become a non-profit, some might simply remain a small or large group with that common interest, but they all focus on witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in myriad ways.

The New Worshiping Communities Lead Team in cooperation with 1001 NWC Ministry of PMA would potential avenues for exploration and all the resources a potential NWC leader or team may need to effectively discern God’s will and connect with the people to whom God is calling them, and help them develop the spiritual, human, strategic, financial and real property resources to pursue God’s calling.

While this is a leader(s)-first approach we also know there are some areas in and around DenPres that may be particularly fertile for NWC engagement. These areas include, but not limited to:

- Latinx community in Aurora
- Commerce City
- Lakewood
- East Aurora
- Area between Highlands Ranch & Castle Rock

# New Worshiping Communities Incubator Program

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## Expectations for Ministry

We recognize that all gathering of Christian community is called & gathered first and foremost by Jesus Christ, and guided, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. We understand this undertaking as one of constant discerning and listening to the new thing the Spirit may be doing in our midst. This is our primary expectation for any and all of our current and future NWCs.

We also recognize that the Spirit moves differently depending on the context. With this in mind, we set these expectations, not in set standards, but as guidelines to move ministry forward.

Leaders of the DenPres NWC Incubator will be empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit throughout this process. **Phase 1** will be dedicated to assessment of key leader(s), gathering a discernment team, getting to know the people and communities with whom and where they are called, and some disciplined experiments to test readiness for an NWC. The 1001 NWC ministry has fantastic resources for this phase.

**Phase 2** will entail identifying a core group of potential NWC startup leaders and developing strategic partnerships with community stakeholders and existing congregations. Leaders who are a part of the DenPres NWC incubator will be expected to have developed a concept and strategy for an NWC by the end of phase 2 of discernment and experimentation. By the end of phase 2 we will expect a mission and ministry plan for the NWC and determine the next phase of leadership and funding.

**Phase 3** would involve determining the shape the NWC will take beyond their “New” phase—is God calling it to become a congregation? Should it become its own non-profit organization? Should it be a ministry of an existing congregation or non-profit? What is the design to develop sustainability in leadership, spiritual development, and funding beyond phase 3?

Each of the phases (1-3) are also accompanied by a series of grant funding possibilities for the NWC from DenPres through the Hays Bequest and from 1001 NWC Grants through Presbyterian Mission Agency. These funds are in addition to the money the NWC may raise.

Phase 1: Seed venture grants

Phase 2: Investment venture grants

Phase 3: Growth venture grants

Grants may be available beyond phase 3 for leadership or property all of which is dependent on the mission and ministry strategy that emerges from phase 3.

# New Worshiping Communities Incubator Program

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## Approach to Key NWC Leaders

Leadership for NWCs will be, but not limited to Teaching Elders (TE). We recognize, however, that lay leaders may have the calling and skills to lead a NWC. In some cases, a lay leader may be encouraged to consider becoming a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) if they do not feel called to attend seminary. However, we will not exclusively look at potential leaders that want the designation of TE or CRE.

Leaders may provide leadership to the NWC full-time or part-time and may be compensated (with benefits) accordingly. And moving from part-time to full-time leadership and compensation may be graduated through the phases for several reasons

- 1) to build community-belonging and engagement into the NWC leaders' life infrastructure. There is no better way to do that than for them to work in or with the community they seek to serve (geographic, demographic and/or psychographic community) in a bi-vocational way until the NWC God is forming shows the signs of needing full-time ministry leadership.
- 2) To test the call and resourcefulness of the NWC leader(s). In some cases, NWC leaders who expect to be full-time from the start might not demonstrate the kind of inventiveness and orientation needed for effectiveness in this kind of endeavor;
- 3) The earliest stages of NWC life are often experimental and discernment oriented and part-time role matches that demand.

And we are more than willing to call the NWC leader full-time from the beginning if the plan for ministry at that point calls for it.

## Who Does What?

NWC Incubator Point Person: Rev. Fernando Rodriguez (Associate Presbyterian for Mission)

NWC Leader Recruiter, Assessment and Development of the Incubator: NWC Lead Team (currently includes: Fernando Rodriguez, Rev. Joe Mares (chair), Raquel Yslas, Rev. Sheri Fry, and Rev. John Yu).

## Phase Transition and Funding Approvals

Phase 1: Seed Venture Funding. DenPres discernment by the NWC LT alongside NWC leadership. LT recommends to C&I for funding. After review, C&I approves \$10,000 matching amount (upon PMA approval) and makes request for additional \$10,000 funding from Hays Bequest. Approvals and recommendations reported to Council.

Phase 2: Investment Venture Funding: DenPres discernment done by the NWC LT alongside NWC leadership. LT recommends to C&I for funding. After review, C&I approves \$30,000 matching amount (upon PMA approval) and makes request for additional \$30,000 funding from Hays Bequest. Approvals and recommendations are reported to Council.

Phase 3: Growth Venture Funding: DenPres discernment done by the NWC LT alongside NWC leadership. LT recommends to C&I for funding. After review, C&I approves \$30,000 matching amount (upon PMA approval) and makes request for

## New Worshiping Communities Incubator Program

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additional \$30,000 funding from Hays Bequest. Approvals and recommendations are reported to Council.

Funding Beyond Phase 3: DenPres discernment and funding consideration done by NWC Lead Team. Lead Team would recommend funding to Cultivation and Innovation (C&I). C&I makes final approval.

At any stage of funding, C&I can approve Hays requests up to \$30,000 without Council approval. Requests beyond \$30,000 need Council approval.

**Term:** We will support (at least) 3 years

**Funding:** Funding will be primarily provided by the Hays Bequest. We are in preliminary conversations to establish a budget that can support programming and ministry prior to the leader and NWC receiving a Seed Grant.

**Preliminary Effective Salary (for Teaching Elders):** \$60k (Full-time)

**Benefits:** Board of Pensions offers 5-year grant for NWC Organizing Pastors (301 designation) to cover Pastors Participation (Medical, Pension, etc).

Approved and in progress