

NCD Update and Overview

2/11/09

This brief report summarizes recent and planned NCD activities by the Presbytery of Denver.

Background and Objectives

Here is the reality that lights the fire of New Church Development activities within the Presbytery of Denver.

- Nationally, PCUA is losing 30,000 attendees per year. Our new churches are growing, but we do not have enough of them. Our new churches are only adding 3,000 attendees per year.
- Our churches are clustered where populations used to be concentrated. While declining geographic areas are sometimes over-churched; growing areas are under-churched.
- Across all denominations, new churches are growing, and those denominations that are starting new churches in significant numbers are growing.

We are engaged in response to the Great Commission -- *Go and make disciples ...*. We serve ever mindful of the parable of the good and faithful servant – the one who invested his master’s talents and got a return. There are risks in new church development, and some “less than successes” are to be expected. However, we are taught to take risks, to behave wisely and to be aggressive in seeking gains.

If not an aggressive NCD effort by the Presbytery of Denver, then where? The area served by the Presbytery continues to grow. We have communities with growing populations that are currently under-churched. Thanks to the events that led to the formation of the Colorado Trust, we have financial resources. And, we have talents. We must invest.

The Presbytery’s NCD efforts are focused on four goals:¹

1. Promoting racial/ethnic congregations and initiatives – creating worship environments and vibrant worship communities that reflect, celebrate and serve a multitude of cultures.
2. Promoting experimental and emergent church initiatives – deliberately experimenting with innovative approaches that, if successful, may be meaningful for other existing as well as new churches.
3. Responding to neighborhoods in transition – investing in initiatives that anticipate and respond to changes in the communities we serve.
4. Investing in new church developments in growth areas – actively starting NCDs in those neighborhoods, communities and counties which are growing and do not have as many current alternatives.

¹ NCD activities are a subset of the Presbytery’s Long Term Initiatives. Other initiatives within Long Term Initiatives focus on assisting churches with key investments to move forward, assisting churches in crisis, and working with churches in transition.

Ongoing Initiatives

An exciting “portfolio” of racial/ethnic initiatives is under way. Some investments of time, money and talent are bearing fruit already. Others are just beginning. Taken together, these initiatives represent a significant commitment:

- *Hanmi* – In January 2002, Hanmi, the Presbytery’s Korean congregation, became a new church development within the Presbytery. In January, 2009, Hanmi became a church and member of the Presbytery. Gus Park is pastor. The spirit of Hanmi continues to grow, to mature and to impress those who come in contact with it. Members of the congregation participated in an intensive leadership training process; attendance continues to grow, congregational giving remains high. The congregation continues on its special journey.
- *Iglesia Presbiteriana Valverde* – Led by Jorge Barbaran, this congregation continues to meet at 430 South Tejon Street in Denver. This congregation is also part of the South Metro Saints Covenant Community.
- *Thornton Hispanic initiative* – Working with First Presbyterian Church of Thornton, Amy Mendez supports a Hispanic fellowship group.
- *Divino Salvador* – First Presbyterian Church of Aurora supports a growing Hispanic ministry, led by Lemuel Velasco. At Aurora First’s invitation, the Presbytery is in discussions as to how it can partner with this effort.
- *Music support for Hispanic ministries* – Grace Echauri, an international opera soloist who also has experience enhancing Presbyterian music initiatives for Hispanic congregations in the New York area, has agreed to spend a year in Denver working to enhance music support in our Hispanic congregations. Ms. Echauri will also be part of events designed to increase linkages between Hispanic and Anglo congregations.
- *All African Initiative* – One key focus for Paul Neshangwe will be to conduct a probe as to whether (and, if so, how) the Presbytery should begin an All African initiative. This work is just beginning; however, Paul’s presence has already led to networking opportunities.
- *Vietnamese initiative* – Dr. Tu Bui, a Presbyterian pastor from Vietnam, is leading a Vietnamese initiative in the Denver area. St. James is hosting this group. This effort is exploratory and is at a very early stage. The effort is benefitting from a \$5,000 exploratory grant from PCUSA. Also, the Presbytery has contributed funds for Vietnamese language Bibles.

The Presbytery is also providing support for *The Threshold*, a cooperative effort with the American Baptist Congress. Co-led by Ashley Seaman (a PCUSA minister) and Brad Berglund (an ABC minister), The Threshold is seeking to develop new forms of worship and to organize a congregation around this approach. The Threshold meets at Highland Park Presbyterian Church.

Liaison Teams have been organized to work with these ongoing initiatives to provide appropriate support and coordination, assess progress, and make adjustments in approaches where needed.

Our Next Investments

The NCD Task Force has worked to prepare for the next investments in growing, under-churched areas. The group has:

- Explored approaches that have worked for other denominations
- Met with Chuck Wysong, an experienced and successful church planter
- Had a member attend the PCUSA's national NCD Pastor Discernment meeting
- Had a member attend the PCUSA's national training for NCD coaches
- Met with a number of pastors and other leaders within the Presbytery to get their ideas and suggestions on next steps
- Assessed potential areas for new church planting within our service area

Numerous questions – and numerous opportunities – lie ahead. What is the best overall approach? What is the optimum sequence of steps? How should the approach vary depending on the specific circumstances? What is the right role for the Presbytery to play? What is the right role for churches within the Presbytery to play? Where should we develop new churches, when? These are the issues the NCD Task Force is focusing on.

Where should the next churches be planted? Exhibit 1 shows at the county level where we appear to be “under-churched”. Arguably, we should have one PCUSA church per 85,000 residents. (While we wish it were considerably higher, and we should not settle for this low a percentage, PCUSA members now represent roughly 1.2% of the population.² This planning standard represents roughly 1 PCUSA church per 1,000 PCUSA church members.)


² Source: The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (<http://religions.pewforum.org>). The Center published what is generally regarded as the largest survey ever conducted of religious practices and beliefs in the United States in 2008.

As Exhibit 1 indicates, we fall below the planning standard of 1 PCUSA church per 85,000 residents in 4 of the 12 counties served by the Presbytery of Denver: Adams, Arapahoe, and Summit. Not by coincidence, three of these are also the fastest growing counties. Douglas is adding the most new residents per year, followed by Arapahoe, then Adams. Meanwhile, Summit County is on the list because there is no PCUSA church in Summit County.

Exhibit 1. Counties Served by the Presbytery of Denver
(highlighting counties with less than 1 church per 85,000 residents)



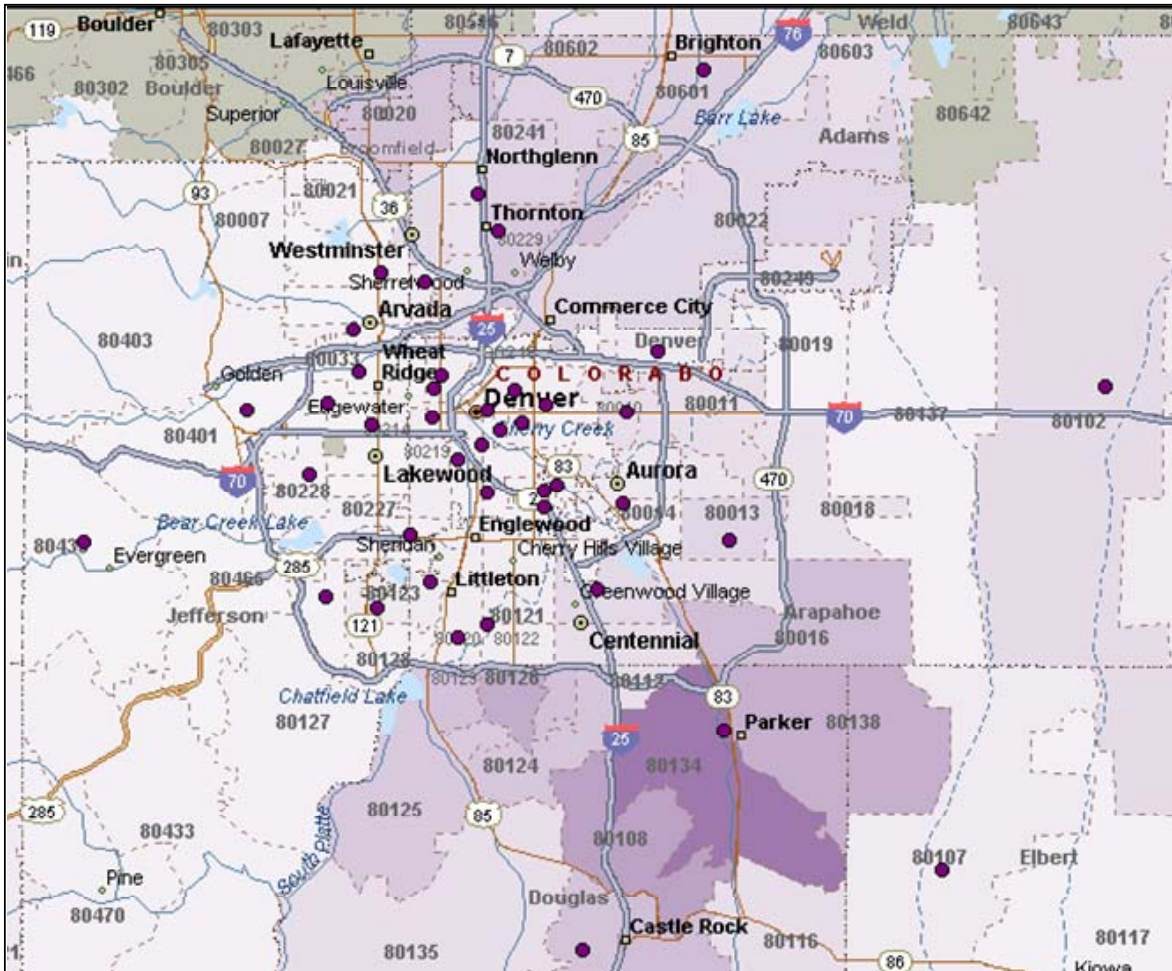
Key

 "Under-churched"

(Less than 1 church per 85,000 residents)

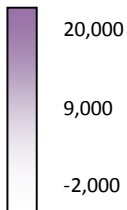
Exhibit 2 shows a more detailed picture of growth for the greater Denver area. Zip codes are shaded based on the amount of growth projected between 2006 and 2012. The dark purple zip codes have the highest growth rates. The white zip codes show stable or slightly declining population.

Exhibit 2. Growth by Zip Code within the Greater Denver Area
(shown with the locations of Presbytery Churches)



Key

Change in Population: 2006-2011 ● Existing Presbytery of Denver Churches



The locations of existing Presbytery of Denver churches are overlaid on the map showing growth by zip code. What emerges is a clear pattern. With few exceptions, our churches are clustered close together and are located in areas which are stable or declining. We have few churches in the areas that are growing fast.

Based on work to date, seven target “areas of interest” have been identified. Each of these areas shows promise. The areas are described below:

1. *Highlands Ranch* – This area has long been considered prime for new church development. We have no churches South of C-470 at this time. The current population within 15 minutes drive time of the Tattered Cover bookstore in Highlands Ranch is 319,000. Another 19,000 are expected to arrive between 2008 and 2013. Other churches in the area (Grace, Columbine, First Presbyterian – Littleton, St. James, and Genesis) are north of C-470.³

While this area is of high interest, there may be no need to start a new church. Grace has optioned an attractive piece of land and is planning to relocate there.

2. *E-470 / Gartrell* – This area, which is growing mostly to the east of E-470, is expected to grow to the size of Lakewood. The current population within 15 minutes drive time of the Starbucks at E-470 and Gartrell is 231,000. Another 43,000 (half enough to support yet another church) are projected to arrive by 2013. The three other churches on the periphery of the 15 minute drive time map – Providence, St. Paul and Covenant – also have rapidly growing service areas. The fastest growing part of this area (east of E-470) has only two churches of any denomination – one Mormon and one Christian Reformed.

It is recommended that an NCD be initiated in this area in 2009. A development plan is being prepared and is described in a separate document.

3. *Summit County* – There is currently no PCUSA church in the county. One reason is the sparse permanent population. The population within 20 minute drive time of the Starbucks at Frisco is 18,000. Several members of other PCUSA churches have second homes in Summit County. Some former members also attend other churches in the county. The form of development in Summit County would need to be different than in areas that have larger, denser populations. Still, the area deserves a closer look.
4. *DIA Northwest* – DIA is spurring growth in multiple directions. However, the airport itself may be a natural barrier between the developing nearby communities. The area within a 15 minute drive time of the Starbucks at Tower Road (near E-470, and between the DIA exit and I-76) had 44,000 residents in 2008, has an estimated 88,000 residents now, and is projected to have 103,000 in 2013. The closest PCUSA church (Thornton) is quite a distance away.

³ Population estimates presented in this report, including estimates within drive times of specific locations, have been developed using the Claritas demographic analysis service (www.claritas.com).

5. *Lone Tree* – This new community, located southeast of the intersection of I-25 and C-470, also appears to be “under-served” by our denomination. The area is already densely populated. The population within 15 minutes travel time of the Safeway at Lincoln and Yosemite was 384,000 in 2000, is estimated to be 483,000 now, and is projected to be 514,000 in 2013.

Portions of this population are within 15 minutes drive time of other PCUSA churches – e.g., St. James, Covenant, Providence, and the new Grace site. However, the population base can serve several churches. Furthermore, the Town of Lone Tree, by itself and/or in combination with Centennial, seems to be functioning increasingly as a community with its own identity.

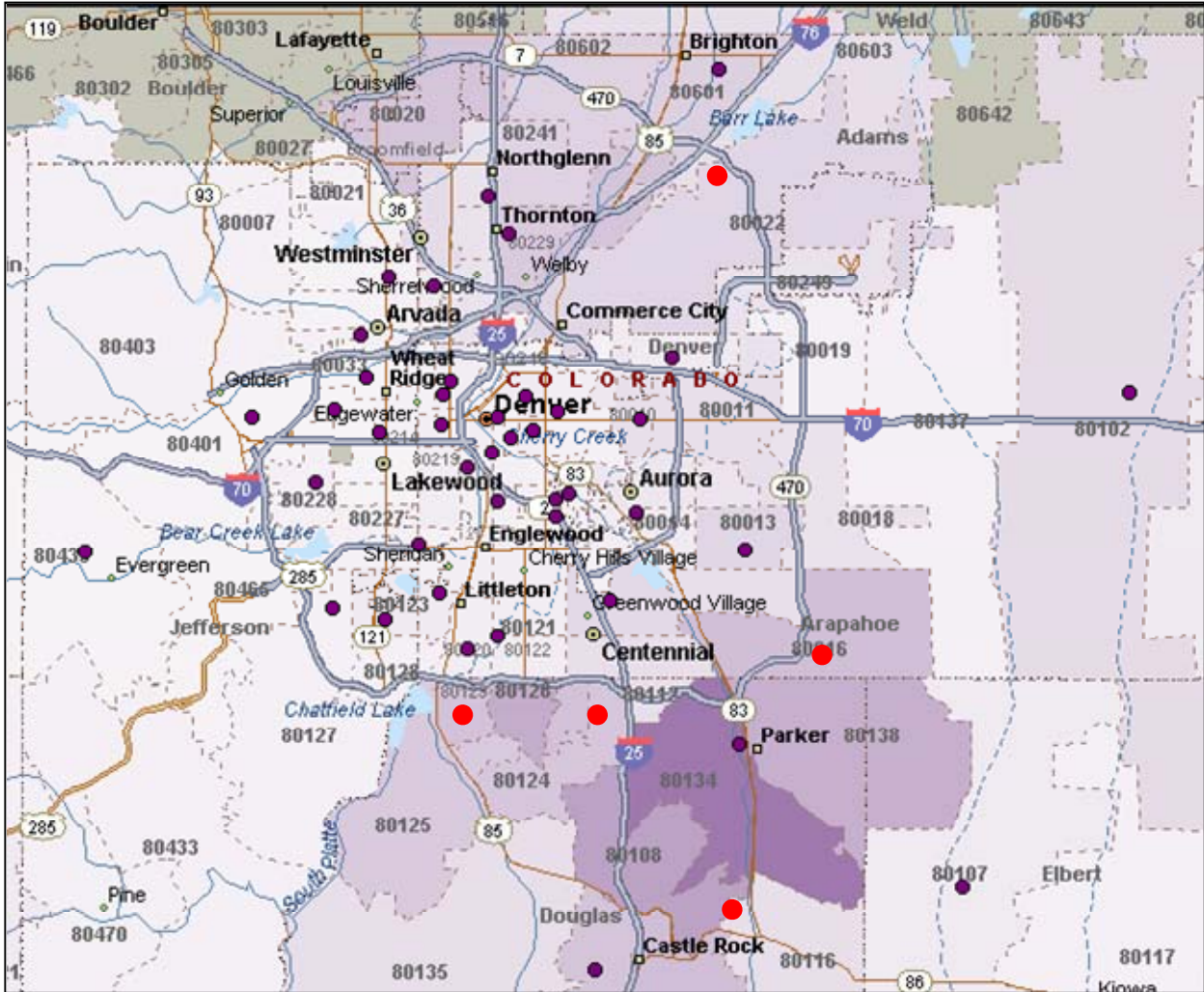
6. *Franktown* – The areas south of Parker continue to grow rapidly. Franktown just over 15 minutes from Parker (Providence), Castle Rock (New Hope) and Elizabeth. The Franktown area is on the list, but not at the top of the list. The population within 15 minutes drive time of the Wells Fargo branch in Franktown was 37,000 in 2000, is estimated at 67, 000 in 2008, and is projected to be 77,000 in 2013.

Exhibit 3 (on the following page) overlays five of these six “areas of interest” on the map used in Exhibit 2. (The other target area, Summit County, is not on this map.) Each area needs a closer analysis, followed if appropriate by a more detailed development plan, before church planting is pursued. Only one area (E-470/Gartrell) is recommended at this time.

One additional area within Denver has also been discussed. Working with the co-pastors at Montview, the Task Force has considered whether some form of “mission extension” (maybe not a church but something else?) should be planned for the rapidly growing Stapleton community (the redevelopment in and around the former airport property).

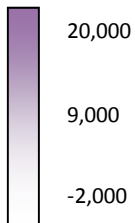
Exhibit 3. NCD Areas of Interest

(shown in relation to growth patterns and existing churches)



Key

Change in Population:
2006-2011



- NCD areas of interest
- Existing Presbyterian of Denver Churches

Next Steps

As NCD efforts continue, the hope is that, not only will the Presbytery support new initiatives, but that existing congregations will provide their support. Support may come in a variety of ways – financial support, the giving of individual talents (e.g., financial expertise, organizational expertise, CE expertise, music, ...), and the giving of group talents (e.g., music performances).

As these opportunities develop, we hope you will help. In the meantime, the NCD Task Force asks the following:

- Do you support in concept the directions being taken?
 - Are you comfortable with the Presbytery's pursuing the six specific geographic locations described above areas of interest for church planting? (Note: Each initiative would be subject to a more detailed feasibility analysis and would have its own development plan, which would be subject to approval, before proceeding. A development plan has been drafted for only one of the six areas, E-470/Gartrell.)
 - Do you have other suggestions or recommendations (including, but not limited to, other recommended locations for consideration)?
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