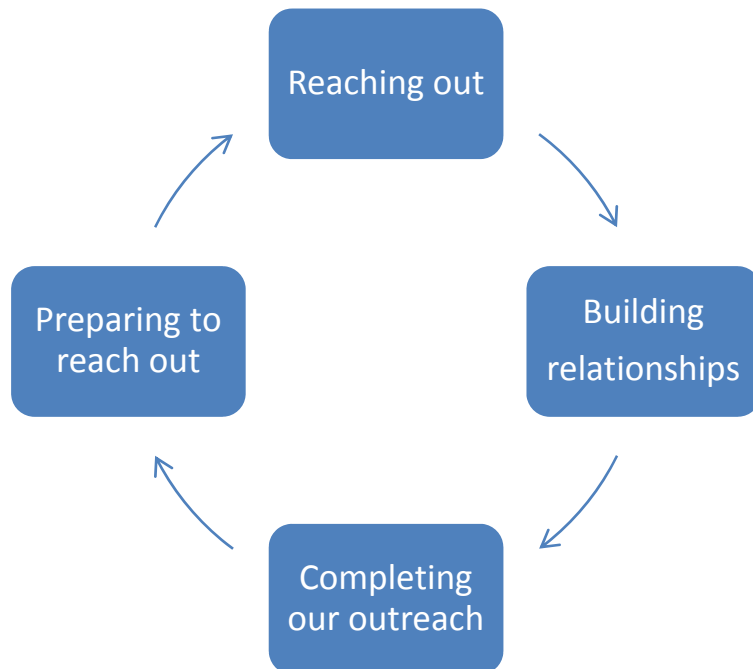


# Sending of the Saints Planning Guide



**"In 2008 and 2009, each NIC church—alone or in cooperation with another church or churches—is expected to help start at least one faith community or congregation in order to reach, disciple, and serve persons outside their existing congregations."**

A "faith community" or "congregation" would be an on-going group that consists of persons who regularly participate in worship, discipleship, and mission/service.

## Where is your church at on this cycle?

## What's its next step?

### A. PREPARING TO REACH OUT

- Questions to ask... 1) What is God "birthing" in us? 2) To whom is God inviting us to reach? 3) What do we need to do to develop an outreach plan? 4) What potential barriers will we need to overcome?
- Available resources... 1) A guide for praying for your community; 2) A guide for discerning God's will; 3) Demographic information; 4) Training workshops.
- Possible next steps... 1) Develop an action team; 2) Pray for discernment and your community; 3) Go through the SOS discernment guide; 4) Study one of the books listed on the SOS resource list; 5) Study your community's demographics; 6) Ask for a coach to help your team; 7) Attend the Sept. 21<sup>st</sup> workshop.

### B. REACHING OUT

- Questions to ask... 1) Who specifically is God calling us to reach? What are they like? What are their needs? 2) How might our church connect with them?

- Available resources... 1) Specialized training workshops; 2) Coach/consultant; 3) Networking with other churches doing a similar outreach.
- Possible next steps... 1) Intentionally pray for the effort; 2) Study the book *Operation in as Much*; 3) Launch an outreach ministry (e.g. kids club, ALPHA course, new Sunday school class or home Bible study targeting unchurched, Vacation Bible School, hobby-based affinity groups, new worship service, or even a new off-site congregation); 4) Have those in your target group help shape the effort by including some of them in your planning; 5) Take advantage of workshops, coaches, and churches that have done a similar effort; 6) Launch the effort and develop specific strategies to develop friendships and to share God's love with those reached.

### C. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- Questions to ask... 1) Now that we've reached them, how do we invite them—and their parents, in the case of children's ministry—into a deeper relationship with God and the church? 2) What steps can we take to strengthen our relationship with them long term? 3) What kind of faith community might we create that would be meaningful to them? 4) Do we need to start a new worship service or off-site congregation?
- Available resources... 1) Study groups using *Christian Believer*, *Disciple*, ALPHA, etc.; 2) Retreat/camp experiences and Emmaus Walks; 3) Mission trips and hands-on mission efforts; 4) Specialized training events; 5) Coaches and consultants.
- Possible next steps... 1) Assign people to pray for each new person reached and their families; 2) Encourage members to befriend them; 3) If they aren't already a part of one, invite them to help create a new faith community, such as a new Sunday school class, Bible study, home-based small group, retreat, or missional outreach effort; 4) Launch a new worship service designed just for them, or start an off-site congregation. 5) Invite them to a confirmation or membership class.

### D. COMPLETING OUR OUTREACH

- Questions to ask... 1) How can we celebrate and share the story of what God has done through us? 2) What have we learned? 3) What might be God calling us to do next? For those churches that feel as though they are ending their ministry and need to close, ask... 4) How can we close in a way that celebrates our years of fruitful ministry and frees us in a healthy way to each pursue what God has in store for us next?
- Available resources... See those listed in A above. For those churches ending their ministries, contact your district superintendent for guidance.
- Possible next steps... 1) Hold a congregational celebration of what God has done through our SOS effort; 2) Share our church's stories with the conference, such as through the Church Development e-newsletter/blog or *Together* UMC News; 3) Begin preparing to move to the "Preparing to Reach Out" phase of the SOS cycle (See A above.); 4) Begin exploring, with the help of your district superintendent, the possibility of closing your church if that's what you're sensing God wants.

Contact your district superintendent or Ed Fenstermacher ([ed@nicumc.org](mailto:ed@nicumc.org) or 800 783-5138) for more information.