

Cyclical SD Review

July 2023

Overview:

Five years ago, the Presbytery of San Diego committed to a five-year funding plan for church planting. This was in response to the Presbytery's strategic vision to be missionally focused through a commitment to church planting and the strengthening of existing churches through revitalization. To implement this plan for church planting, the Presbytery entered a partnership with Cyclical, a church planting organization with extensive experience and resources. For the past five years, this initiative for church planting has been supported from the Presbytery reserves amounting to \$500,000 resulting in the provision of grants, staff support, coaching, and cohorts for those within the Presbytery's expression of Cyclical known as "Cyclical SD."

Review of Cyclical SD:

The Advisory Committee of the Presbytery instructed the Cyclical SD Committee to offer a review of Cyclical SD's work now that the five-year funding plan has come to the end of its life cycle. As part of this review, The Reverend Eileen VanGieson (Christ La Costa), The Reverend Megan Cochran (Westminster, Point Loma), and The Reverend Dr. Chris Kohlbry (Retired) assisted the Presbytery's Executive Director, The Reverend Dr. Sean Chow in this review. All three pastors are current members of the Cyclical SD Committee. It was imperative that the focus of this review be on the programmatic nature of Cyclical SD and not on the vision of church planting in San Diego Presbytery.

We are grateful for the work of many people that have worked endless hours in support of developing a culture of church planting in the Presbytery, whether it was from a congregation or an interested leader. It is their passion that is the foundation of where we as a Presbytery are headed in church planting. Thank you again to The Reverend Daniel So, the Presbytery's Director of Cyclical SD, for leading us to this place.

The timeline of the review was to complete it before a Presbytery wide restructuring was to be introduced to the Executive Council at its August Meeting. The review started in April and concluded in July. The review consisted of conversations with the Cyclical Director, Presbyterian Mission Agency 1001 Regional Associate The Reverend Shawn Kang, and the Review Team. These honest and open conversations raised questions about the overlap in 1001 and Cyclical resources, the Presbytery's five-year metrics, ongoing funding, support within the Presbytery, and how to cultivate the culture of the Presbytery moving forward. By reflecting on these questions we learned that there is a disconnect between the Presbytery and Cyclical. While the leadership of the Presbytery five years ago found that this was the direction to go the ensuing years of leadership changes and a pandemic has shifted the narrative. This is not to say that the Presbytery has changed its priorities away from church planting, but the last few years has seen unprecedented change at the congregational level. This must give us pause in thinking about our current programmatic structure in fostering innovative ministries.

In doing a review of Cyclical SD it would be easy to look at what metrics were established and assess the success/failure on those numbers. Cyclical SD has established New Worshiping Communities, led cohorts of leaders, and supported these leaders in important ways. This cannot be denied or minimized. For a full measurement of the value of the program of Cyclical SD, though, we need to look beyond the quantitative measurements and assess the qualitative measurements.

One of the articulated expectations for Cyclical SD was not to focus on the quantity of New Worshiping Communities realized in these five years, but to create an ecosystem within our Presbytery in which New Worshiping Communities could thrive. This is a question that we can easily answer. It is our estimation that we have not created an environment in which church planting and innovation can thrive. Currently, there are pockets within the Presbytery in which church planting is embraced, but as a Presbytery we have not fully embraced the scope and commitment needed for church planting. One church gives financially toward Cyclical SD and a few are involved with the program aspects of Cyclical SD. This is not the fault of Cyclical SD, its committee, or its Director, but one in which we equally are responsible. After five years, more than a simple programmatic change is needed. As a Presbytery we have fallen short of our values. A Presbytery-wide focus on being relational, spiritual, and missional needs to be a priority. Those values are lived out in priorities in congregational vitality, church planting, and a missional focus. In a post-pandemic culture that accelerated shifts that were already happening, the Presbytery must be able to not only start new expressions of faith but invite innovation.

Recommendations:

Simply because we are in this position, does not mean our commitment to church planting has been diminished. Instead, we believe the engagement of the Presbytery needs to be increased. To that end, we offer the following recommendations for going forward:

1. Engage 1001 New Worshiping Communities and other resources in the denomination and beyond which best serve the Presbytery with no or minimal expense. Individual program fees may still exist.
2. Combine the Discerning Congregational Vitality Committee and Cyclical SD- Revitalizing of churches and church planting have a collaborative relationship with one another. Each has incredible knowledge, experience, and tools that each other can use with the same end goal: to reconcile people back to God. Our Presbytery has two distinct committees that are doing similar processes but with different outcomes. Instead, these committees should work together to serve both our churches and innovative ministries. A great result of a healthy church is a New Worshiping Community because healthy churches are engaged in the context around them and respond to needs. There needs to be increased communication between the two. A vision for a new way forward needs to be created with will be through the Advisory Committee in the months ahead.

3. Fund a part time Director of Innovation and Revitalization not to exceed \$150,000 over the next two years from investments.
4. Modify our current relationship with Cyclical Inc. Continue to use as a resource for networking. This modification will see the Director of Innovation and Revitalization develop a program and strategy independent of our current Cyclical relationship.
5. Hire a coach with experience in working with Presbyteries to develop structures, accountability, and vision to aid in the development of the Innovation and Revitalization Committee. Cost to not to exceed \$2,000 per year.
6. Actively engage churches in the Presbytery to:
 - a. Find, develop, and nurture potential NWC leaders and ministries.
 - b. Foster contextual ministries for churches
 - c. Encourage resources from 1001, Presbytery, and beyond.
 - d. Be missionally focused and provide the resources to live that out.
7. The Innovation and Revitalization committee will:
 - a. Be the primary committee charged with supporting and encouraging congregations and ministries of the Presbytery.
 - b. Develop workshops, tools, and resources to aid in the development of NWC's, revitalization,
 - c. Manage grants from the presbytery, synod, and denomination.
 - d. Have oversight of financials of all ministries of the Presbytery.
8. A presbytery wide re-commitment to NWC's and a focus to reach those in diverse ethnic groups. A commitment to the development and support of 10 NWC's in the next five years, with half being in minority populations.