

One of the hardest things about exploring the opportunity to invest in a new missional opportunity is that the process never follows the same pathway twice. However, learning about the process two churches took to invest in a missional legacy after their closure may help you design a process that works for your congregation.

Pioneer CRC (Cedar Springs, Mich.)

Pioneer CRC considered a number of options for distributing their resources once they decided to close. Through conversations with a coach from their [Resonate Regional Mission Team](#), investing in a new church plant emerged as their central idea.

Step 1

Pioneer CRC decides it wants its assets to be used for a new ministry (likely in their ministry community). It's a way to have a continuation of their ministry story in their community.

Step 2

Classis Grand Rapids North and Pioneer work toward an agreement that each would be willing to sign.

- It's difficult to rush a church plant timeline. The Spirit needs to raise up a qualified leader, and sufficient time for assessments and conversations is needed.
- A written agreement could state timelines and goals for use of the assets that both parties could agree to.
- Classis and others help as needed with the processes of drafting agreements, closing a church, etc.
- Classis supports a celebratory, honoring closing of the ministry with thanks for how God used it.
- Classis forms a team that helps it follow up the agreements that have been made.

Step 3

The classis leads the process of recruiting and deploying a church planter.

Today, Pioneer's legacy lives on through a growing church plant in Cedar Springs called Rise Up Church. Rise Up currently meets in the Cedar Springs Middle School, and its members are active in the local Chamber of Commerce and maintain a presence in the community. Their weekly worship gathering is growing, with people who are new or returning to church. Praise God!

Comstock CRC (Kalamazoo, Mich.)

After initial confusion and ambiguity in conversations between the congregation and their classis, the process of Comstock CRC's closing gained some traction with an agreement to take the following steps.

Step 1

Comstock CRC decides to close and wants its assets to be used for a new church plant as a way to continue their ministry story in their community.

Step 2

The congregation informs Classis Kalamazoo of its decision. The classis and the church work toward an agreement that each is willing to sign about the intended use of these resources.

The agreement should name the assets that are being given to the classis. It should state Comstock's intended purpose for these assets, with as much specificity as they wish. There should be a clause that states that if, after a designated period of time, the specific ministry cannot be initiated, classis would have the right to use the funds in a different way. There's an understanding that, once closed, Comstock can't legally control these funds, but classis agrees to honor the requests to the best of their ability.

Example: Comstock CRC is giving Classis Kalamazoo \$150,000 and its facilities for the purpose of planting a multicultural church to be led by an African American pastor by March 2021. If an African American church planter is not found in this time period, funds may be used to support the planting of a church with a different characteristic as led by the Spirit.

Example: Comstock CRC is giving Classis Kalamazoo \$150,000 and its facilities for the purpose of planting a church in their current location that focuses on connecting with the local neighborhood and with students in the public school system. If an approved planter and parent church is not found by August 2020, then these funds should be made available for church planting in the Great Lakes region.

Step 3

Responding to Comstock's decision to close, classis will proceed with appointing an oversight church that will receive memberships and fulfill other responsibilities for helping a church to close, as indicated by the [Church Order](#).

Responding to Comstock's decision to invest its resources into church planting, classis agrees to create a designated fund to collect, hold, and disburse these resources. Classis also creates a church planting *Partnership Team*. This team should include the following: at least one member of the Classis Home Missions Committee; at least one representative from the parent church (when identified); at least one member of the [Resonate Great Lakes Team](#) (serving as an ad hoc member); and *possibly* a member from Comstock CRC who's interested in the missional reimagining of the church. (It's crucial that this person is open and ready to envision for the future instead of hoping to recreate Comstock CRC.) Eventually this team could include members of the community who can bring wisdom to the new church. It will include the church planter when identified.

Step 4

The *Partnership Team* begins to work together to

- secure a parent church. The parent church *may or may not* be the same as the oversight church assigned to Comstock at its closing.
- do some initial demographic studies, with assistance from [Resonate](#). Name what the needs are in the community that they hope this new church will address. Is there a particular demographic they hope to reach? Are there partners in the community that they hope this new church will work with?

Example: Here are some demographics that are important to consider in the Comstock neighborhood:

- The area is almost 50 percent singles (35 percent never married; 15 percent single from being divorced/widowed). Traditional established churches tend not to be safe places for singles. A ministry could emerge that focuses on this population.

- 62.2 percent of the people in this area aren't involved in any religious community. Five years ago this amount was 60 percent, so the percentage of people who aren't churching is trending upward.
- Comstock Township is putting a lot of effort into community improvements. Their website is a treasure of information that could help shape this community. There's a lot of interest in things that the church building could provide space for, such as an "indoor exercise facility" and "more activities for youth" (among the top three community needs). Might there be a need for affordable day care, given the percentage of singles?
- search for a church planter. [Resonate](#) helps with the assessment process for potential church planters and can do some marketing for recruitment. The best church planter may actually be found among one of the churches in classis! One way the entire classis can be involved is by praying for and recruiting the planter.
- develop an initial budget for the first season of the church plant. Compile a list of the partners and the resources they're willing to contribute. Determine the initial salary for the church planter and the program resources available to the church.
- communicate, communicate, communicate updates with Classis Kalamazoo and invite the churches of classis to participate at various levels.

Step 5

The *Partnership Team* hires a church planter (who has been assessed and endorsed by [Resonate](#)). The planter works with the team to develop a vision, a timeline with benchmarks, and a budget for the church plant. This information feeds into the Partnership Agreement form (available from your [Resonate Regional Mission Leader](#)), which is approved by the parent church, the classis (via its Home Missions Committee and/or Classical Interim Committee), and [Resonate](#). The approval of this form, and the notation of such in the classis minutes make this emerging church official in the CRC and makes [Resonate resourcing grants](#) available to the church.

- The planter begins the agreed-upon work, including the following:
 1. Visiting classis churches and classis meetings to share the vision of the church and to invite others to participate in various ways.
 2. Visiting and praying for neighbors and community partners to listen and discern what God's doing in the neighborhood and how this new church can participate in it.
 3. Coaching and training via [Resonate](#).
 4. Gathering a core group of people who feel called by God to live into this church planting vision together.
- The *Partnership Team* continues to meet monthly. The purpose of these meetings is for accountability, encouragement, and support. Agendas will focus on three items:
 1. How's the church plant doing in terms of meeting its benchmarks?
 2. How's the church plant budget doing?
 3. How's the planter and their family's spiritual, relational, and physical health?