engagé

A Journal for Church of God Leaders

Winter 2012

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Tribute to a Church Planter

This is the second issue of Engage dedicated to a theme of church planting. It may seem like overkill, but the truth is, without new church plants, the Church of God—or any denomination, for that matter—puts its future in jeopardy. Just like America... where would the country be if not for the vision of entrepreneurs brave enough to take the plunge into the relative unknown of starting a new business?

I am reminded of my own family’s experience with church planting. I spent my elementary school years in Hawaii where my father, Dr. Robert E. Fisher, served as state overseer of the mission state. In the seven years we lived there, our family started seven churches together. On many Sundays, Dad preached, Mom played the piano, my brother and I were ushers, and my sister was the congregation. I have fond memories of those years, but I never knew the real burden that I’m sure my parents felt venturing into unchartered waters in the cities of Ewa Beach, Hawaii Kai, Kaimuki, Maili, Pearl Harbor, Wailua, and Wahiawa.

Only heaven knows the multitude of lives touched by the courage of my dad to begin these churches. Of all the leadership posts he held in his ministry, I have come to realize that pastoring these seven tiny churches in their infancy may be his greatest legacy.

God bless all church planters, past, present, and future. This most risky ministry venture may indeed reap the greatest heavenly rewards.
In the summer of 1980, Peggy and I felt a definite call of God to plant a new church on the south side of Birmingham, Alabama. It is hard to believe, but that was almost 32 years ago. Thirty-two years—the time when the Church Growth Movement was at its peak, Charismatic revival fires were burning throughout America, and people like Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker were television celebrities. It dawns on me that I am living on the same planet, but in a different world.

Back then we were dealing with AIDS/HIV, camcorders, VCRs, and talk shows. The United States Constitution celebrated its 200th birthday. Iran held our citizens hostage. Inflation soared to double-digits, along with interest rates. We watched TV via thirteen channels, without the Internet or cell phones. Ronald Reagan was standing in the wings, and it was during the 1980s that MTV was born.

Someone asked me, “As much as the world has changed since you and Peggy planted the church in Birmingham, would you do things differently today?” The answer is an emphatic “YES!” The coming of Christ, postmodernism, and post-Christian America all demand doing things differently. The “sons of Issachar” must constantly adjust their methods to changing times. What different methods would I use today?

**DNA:** I would work hard to teach the initial core-group concept of reproducing leaders to plant reproducing churches. Christian Schwarz makes this observation in his book, *Natural Church Development:* “Hardly anything demonstrates the health of a congregation as much as the willingness—and ability—to give birth to a new congregation.”

**Core Groups:** Instead of locating, training, and resourcing seventy to eighty lay men and women to lead groups of ministries inside our church, I would work to build these groups into reproductive teams who would help me cover the city of Birmingham with new churches. Dr. Tim Keller calls this goal the Gospel Tipping Point: A gospel movement tipping point is an important goal. But there is another. When a gospel movement tipping point is reached, it may be that the ecosystem grows the body of Christ to the point that the whole-city tipping point is reached. That is the moment when the number of gospel-shaped Christians in a city becomes so large that Christian influence on the civic and social life of the city—and on the very culture—is recognizable and acknowledged.

**Exponential Thinking:** Alan Hirsch writes about this thinking and says, “The Word itself expresses something of the heart, as well as the mathematics, of the Missional paradigm. It conveys both a prophetic challenge to the prevailing ways of doing church in the Western world, as well
as an apostolic promise of real fruitfulness, should we take it seriously.”¹ In a new work, I would plant with the concept of becoming a church-planting movement within our city.  

**Contextualize:** As humans, we live in particular contexts: our family, our neighborhood, our town, and our country. We seldom give specific thought to them, but these contexts affect what we see, feel, and value, and what we believe without question is true, right, and proper. In a rapidly globalizing world, it is important that all of us give thought to human contexts and how these shape others and ourselves.  

**Multicultural Sensitivity:** I would use globalization to my advantage as I fulfilled the Great Commission. By “2050 almost 50 percent of the American population will probably be racial or ethnic minorities. . . . Three out of ten people in America are minorities, while 6.8 million people identified themselves as multiracial on the 2000 census form.”² Today, Birmingham has seen the Hispanic population double in the last ten years, while the Asian community has grown from 0.8 percent to 1.2 percent of our population. The global harvest is outside the doors of our cities.  

**Assessments:** When I started my church plant, Dr. Charles Ridley’s *Thirteen Knock-Out Characteristics for Church Planters* did not exist. Today, this research has provided immense wisdom to over 5,000 denominations and thousands of church planters. Today, we have an abundance of scientific research to aid church planters. The new Church Planting Candidate Assessment is one such tool. Such information would have been invaluable to me in choosing leaders to aid in the work. Ed Stetzer, in a 2003 study, found that churches that use assessment testing to choose their reproductive leaders were more effective at evangelizing the lost. Stetzer asserts that the assessment of church planters before investment is “arguably one of the most important church planting developments during the past 20 years . . . failure to initiate such a mechanism will result in weaker churches and a higher rate of attrition.”³  

**Coaching:** In a new work, I would spend more time reproducing myself into leaders. I would meet regularly with a mentor and coach them while we reproduced ourselves in our cities. In one study “church planters who met with a mentor or coach planted larger and more effective churches than those who did not. Church planters who met weekly with a mentor were 12 percent larger during the first year, 13 percent larger during the second year, 25 percent larger during the fourth year . . . and 100 percent larger than those who did not meet with a church planting coach.”⁴ The subject of coaching and mentoring is rooted in the DNA of Church of God church-planting endeavors. In our earliest years, church planting was reproductive, team initiated, and used as a form of effective training.  

**Training:** Training is imperative for a new church plant. If I were to do it again, I would be involved in the BootCamp program. “In one denominational study, those who did not participate in a BootCamp were leading churches that were 23 percent larger at year one than those who did participate in a BootCamp. However, planters who had participated in BootCamp were leading churches that were 30 percent larger by year three and 27 percent larger by year four.”⁶⁷  

Yes, I would change several things in a new church plant. Why use such precise measurement with an issue that is clearly spiritual in nature? All of these past years have taught me one thing very clearly; the greatest thing a church can do is not build new buildings or reproduce great leaders. It is the planting of a church, which will reproduce disciples and fulfill the mandates of the Great Commission. Satan knows that if he can stop a church from planting another church, he can stop exponential church growth. It is time for the Church of God to pray exponential growth through reproductive church planting. It is the single most effective form of church planting.  

Here is how you can help:  

1. Pray for new church planters in the Church of God. We can reach tens of thousands of people if we become a reproductive church-planting movement.  
2. Invest in the planting of another congregation. Ask God how you can help resource these new missionaries.  
3. Know that we are in the developmental stages of creating a new church-planting strategy complete with assessments, coaching, and training.  
4. Mentor a young minister who wants to plant a new church with our movement. We need everyone to accomplish great things.  

For more information, you may contact Dr. Michael Knight at www.cogplanting.org.  

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7 Ibid, p. 1.
PLANTING NEW CHURCHES
Our Future and Our Hope

by TIMOTHY M. HILL

DOES THE CHURCH OF GOD, despite its rich heritage of evangelism and church planting, face the possibility of drifting into a maintenance mode and losing its zeal for winning the lost? If so, how do we reverse the trend? The simple solution is to plant new churches. Planting churches has been shown to be the most effective method of reaching new people with the gospel and revitalizing a denomination.

If the Church of God does not advance its efforts in church planting and aggressively employ relevant- and cutting-edge methods to engage and coach prospective church planters, it will eventually fade away into irrelevance as a denomination. It is a proven fact that a denomination must maintain at least a new church-plant rate of 3 percent of its number of already active churches in order to keep ahead of the number of churches closed each year. For the Church of God, that would be about 180 new church plants annually.

During the past decade, the Church of God has averaged planting 145 new churches annually. Last year, we planted 89 new churches in the United States. However, around the world, a new church is being planted every six hours in World Missions areas. It is obvious then that we must renew our commitment to planting churches in the United States. Historically, it has been in our DNA and must resurface now as our most passionate enterprise. We must fine-tune our energies, efforts, and finances to help more people fulfill the Great Commission at a local level. Church planting is the most effective way to do it.

I once heard retired Brigadier General David Grange, in a speech about principles of strategic success, say, “When in battle, all guns must be in the fight.” May God inspire us all to unite in the battle and see our church-planting efforts multiplied.

David T. Olsen makes this observation:

Every group with less than a 1 percent planting rate—less than one new church for every 100 established churches—is declining numerically in attendance. For a denomination to keep up with the population growth it needs a planting rate of more than 2 percent each year—or 1 new church started for every 50 established churches. Many evangelical groups plant three or four new churches a year for every 100 established churches, which is why their attendance growth exceeds population growth.

Olsen also gives a “top ten” list of reasons why it is important for a denomination to plant new churches:

The Top 10 Reasons to Plant Churches

10. New churches lower the age profile of the American church, increase its multiethnicity, and better position the whole church for future changes.

9. New churches provide synergistic benefits to established churches. Research shows that denominations that plant many strong churches have more healthy, growing, established churches than those who plant few churches.

8. The continued growth of new churches will extend up to 40 years after their start. The growth that occurs in years 10 to 40 is critical for creating a strong base of churches for the future. The mainline denominations have lost the influence of a complete generation of new churches.

7. New churches provide a channel to express the energy and ideas of passionate, innovative young pastors. Church planting encourages the development of the expansionist gifts of ministry and leadership. Denominations that plant few churches unintentionally focus on training pastors in stabilizing gifts.
A denomination needs both stabilizing and expansionist gifts to be both healthy and growing.

6. New churches are the research and development unit of God’s kingdom. New churches create most of the current models and visions for healthy church life. Healthy cultural adaptations and theological vitality occur more often in a denomination that excels in church planting, because the ferment of new ideas and ministry solutions is more robust.

5. New churches are the test laboratory for lay leadership development. Because top lay leadership positions are usually already filled in the parent church, new churches provide a new group of emerging lay leaders the opportunity to grow and develop as primary leaders. In new church plants that do well, most lay members report that being part of the beginning of the new church was one of the defining spiritual events in their life.

4. New churches are historically the best method for reaching each emerging generation. While many established churches have the ability to connect with the younger cohort, each generation also seems to need their own new type of churches that speak the gospel with their own cultural values and communication style.

3. New churches are the only truly effective means to reach the growing ethnic populations coming to America. Every people group needs to hear the gospel in a way that makes sense to their culture. It is difficult for established churches to become diverse. Church planting can effectively create both ethnic-specific and multiethnic congregations.

2. New churches are more effective than established churches at conversion growth. Studies show that new churches have three to four times the conversion rate per attendee than established churches.

1. Because the large majority of Americans do not attend a local church, many more new churches are needed. In 2005, 17.5 percent of Americans attended a local church on any given Sunday. Seventy-seven percent of Americans do not have a consistent connection with an orthodox Christian church. The best and most effective way for the Christian church to keep up with population growth is to start new churches.

**CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY**

The Church of God is launching a new church-planting initiative intended to accomplish four goals: (1) recruit qualified church planters; (2) develop and train church planters; (3) address the financial challenges of church planting; and (4) address ongoing connectivity and nourishing of church planters.

A church-planting task force under the auspices of USA Missions is currently developing a strategy to be presented to the International Executive Committee and the Council of Eighteen for review and then presented to the 2012 General Assembly. Our desire is to leave the Assembly with a fully embraced and endorsed church-planting strategy for our movement.

We need to realize that God is very serious about the church and its work. Five things about the church make it the vehicle God intended for carrying the message of salvation to our world. These five things are: the church’s fellowship, favor, faith, fire, and future.

*The Church’s Fellowship.* Jesus said, “On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18 NKJV). What is the church? It is the *ekklesia* or “called out ones.” It is God’s church! Fellowship or *koinonia* is the joint participation of individuals for a common cause or purpose. Fellowship was God’s own desire, and with the nature of God in us, it is our desire also. The focus of the church’s fellowship should always be Jesus Christ and His divine purpose.

*The Church’s Favor With God.* The work the church must do for God demands that we have His favor. The angel’s announcement to Mary concerning favor says if you have the favor of God, there is nothing to fear. “Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God’” (Luke 1:30 NKJV). No problem is too great, no circumstance too insurmountable, and no situation too difficult if you have the favor of God.

In 2 Chronicles 26:4-6, three strong points concerning a young king named Uzziah give us insight on gaining the favor of God. “And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord” (v. 4); “And he sought God” (v. 5); “And he went forth” (v. 6 KJV).

If we are to have the favor of God in our efforts to obey the Great Commission, we, as a church and as individuals, must do right, seek God, and go forth with the message of salvation.

*The Church’s Faith.* Any movement is only as good as its foundational values. David asked, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3 KJV). It is obvious that only that which is built on a solid foundation will stand the test of time. During the past 2,000 years, the church has lived through persecution, scandal, and opposition, yet she remains strong.

Systems and movements built around men and a dogma or doctrine that is materialistic, carnal, and self-serving will die. But the church still stands because of her faith in the word of the living God. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Mark 13:31 NKJV). The church’s faith is the message our
world needs to hear. We must proclaim the gospel to this generation.

The Church's Fire. On the Day of Pentecost, fire from heaven fell on the church. “Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:3 NKJV). The fire of God is a sign of cleansing, purging, approval, warming, protection, life, and gifts. The fire that fell at Pentecost was the motivating force of the early church, which took a small group of 120 believers and caused them to reach multiplied thousands within the first week of the church’s existence.

People from all over Jerusalem were drawn to the Upper Room when the fire fell on the 120 believers. People today still will be drawn to the genuine fire of God in our midst. May it be so in our churches today!

The Church's Future. Don’t believe it when you hear that the church is going down. Thankfully, the Church of God is leading the way with the largest increase of growth across the country. In recent years, we have seen an increase of 183 percent, while many major denominations have suffered losses ranging from 8 percent to 45 percent. Our future is bright. Jesus said of the church, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18 KJV). What do you see when you read that verse? Many see the opposite of what Jesus meant. Some see the church standing with every ounce of strength it can muster to keep the devil from barging in. “Hold the fort” attitudes prevail everywhere. That’s not the visual we are to see here. Gates don’t move. They can’t get up and walk around. The visual Jesus intended for us to see here is the church moving against the gates of hell themselves. The point is that the gates of hell are not strong enough to keep God’s church out. God has given us power to pull down strongholds and bring the captives out. The church’s fellowship, favor, faith, fire, and future assure us of victory. “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4 NKJV).

The work of the church is reaching and reaping. “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe” (Joel 3:13 NASB). “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2 NKJV).

Can the church in the United States plant new life-giving churches and reach the last-days harvest? Yes, we can, as we go forth in the unity of our fellowship, walking in the favor of God, holding fast to our faith, filled with the fire of God, and trusting God for the future He has promised for His church. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV).

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The Value of CHURCH PLANTING

by WALLACE J. SIBLEY, Th.D.,
Secretary General, Church of God

The well-known statement that has been echoed around the church world is true: “The most effective way for an organization to grow is by planting churches.”

The benefits of planting churches are phenomenal: Souls are won to Jesus; People have a higher regard and respect for each other; Families work more diligently to remain together; Denominations are financially able to support missions and other benevolent endeavors because of increased contributions.

While planting churches, here are some of the things I have been able to accomplish with God’s help: (1) Rented the Masonic Hall; (2) Rented a vacant lot for the mobile chapel; (3) Moved the mobile chapel to various communities; (4) Organized a church on a front porch; and (5) Organized 41 churches in two years.

1 David T. Olsen, The American Church in Crisis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), p. 146.
2 Ibid, pp. 155-156.
Creating a Successful Church Planter

by MICHAEL B. KNIGHT

In the Closed Pages of time lies a gift for the future of the Church of God. Somewhere between 100 B.C. and 300 A.D., the Greeks and Romans were perfecting a craft that greatly influenced the young vivacious church of the New Testament—apprenticeships. It is a biblical concept: everyone from Moses to Jesus and the apostle Paul used the concept of apprenticeships effectively.

Too often we ask the question, “How do you make a church planter?” Only God can make a church planter. We cannot mass-produce church planters through a series of cookie-cutter events. While there is a plethora of new research on the qualities needed to be a successful church planter, no one but God can tell us how to make one. The development of a church planter requires the Spirit's wooing. A more important query focuses on a task that the Church of God has within its ability to control: “How do we as a denomination of leaders steer the brightest candidates through the call?” What should guide the conversation of an administrative bishop, a U.S. missions representative, or a senior pastor when faced with the potential recipient of such “wooing?” It is simple:

\[ C + D^4 + ACT = \text{A SUCCESSFUL BEGINNING FOR A CHURCH PLANTER} \]

C

Call: Church planting is a very important call that God places upon specific men and women. Quite simply, not everyone has been called and equipped by God to plant a church. Because of the great difficulty often associated with the ministry of church planting, it is wise to encourage only those who are sure of their specific calling to pursue planting a church. Mentors and coaches must examine the call and the planter.


There will be a struggle to discern the call of God. The adversary does not want God’s chosen to know, without a doubt, that he/she has been called. A mentor must look for perseverance in the planter’s life because that perseverance is proof of the call (Romans 5:4).

The church planter will begin to sense an internal call. The end result of this wooing of the Holy Spirit is that the planter has a deep inner desire to abandon his or her current ministry and vocation and pursue this new calling. Mentors must encourage the planter to pray and fast during this season (Isaiah 58) When one is called to plant a church, that individual knows it deeply. Mentors should aid in helping the planter to reach spiritual maturation.

An external call will be evident by wise and mature Christians close to the planter. For example, the planter should look for spousal approval and confirmation within the circle of leadership. Those who serve potential church planters as pastors, administrative bishops, and ministerial friends will be used by God to confirm the call in planters’ lives. If one is called to plant a church, someone else will be able to see the calling as well.

The church planter will exhibit the germination of an articulate vision. The leader must lead the planter from a vision that is fragmented or disjointed, to articulation of a plan.

There may also be signs of others who are contemplating the embracing of this new vision. Mentors should encourage the planter to embrace a team concept; it will increase the success of the plant by 50 percent.

D^4

Discovery. After a church planter accepts the call to plant a church, a process of discovery must begin. Planters will naturally begin to ask, “Why plant rather than restore an existing church?” Scripture mandates church planting, and research indicates that it is the most effective form of evangelism.

The next question is “Where?” The mentor should encourage the planter to go where the church is not, where
sin abounds, or where the population is exploding. Simple things such as studying the religious history of a city, prayer-walking its parks or analyzing the demographics of America’s fastest growing cities will aid the planter. He/she should determine what is needed and which church-planting model would best fit his/her personality. Mentors should encourage patience to hear from God as well as a diligence to research the possibilities.

Discernment. Church planting is a journey of stages, peaks, and valleys. Planters need continual guidance. The mentor should not assume planters don’t need guidance after their initial call. The mentor should answer questions such as, “Where should I go from here?” with concise clarity. The advice should include: encouragement to seek continual counsel, leading to a strong relationship with the state office, and encouragement to contact the National Church Planting Office for an assessment test.

Development. No modern Evangelical would ever think of sending a missionary to Lesotho, South Africa, without clearly thinking through the journey. Mentors should encourage the planter not to rush into service, but rather articulate the seeds of discovery and discernment.

To affect apprenticeship, the leader should meet regularly with the planter to earn the right to speak deeply into his/her life. The mentor and planter should visit the typical and most successful churches in the geographical area of the plant. The mentor should discuss issues of personality and character. Mentors should direct the planter to the master reading list of church-planting books and resources on the National Church Planting Website (www.cogplanting.com). The apprenticeship should also include a clear layout of the vision.

This stage should also include defining the DNA through purpose and vision statements. Creating clear core values and setting the administrative principles of money, government, and discipleship is crucial—as is creating evangelistic plans contextualized for postmodernity. Mentors should help the planters finalize the vision with the state office, set the launch date, and create effective marketing.

Dreams. A mentor should realize what every parent knows: “The birth of a baby is the beginning of the journey, not the end.” After the launch date, the planter will need a mentor more than ever. In the waves of success, the winds of friction, and the awkwardness of learning to walk, the kiss of Judas, and the joy of a new convert, the planter will need the wisdom of a mentor.

Proverbs 8 demonstrates that God creates by scientific principles. Church planting is a spiritual enterprise. However, it is also a science of principles. Three keys will greatly magnify the success of any church planter during the D4 process.

+ACT

Assessment. Assessments are instruments of stewardship for the mentor and apprentice. An extensive assessment process will aid in the coaching of a new church planter. The mentor should assess the church planter in several areas. A thorough assessment is an intensive, multiday experience that combines interviews, interactive exercises, individual and group presentations, and written evaluations by peers, assessors, and the candidate. These insights aid the predictability of potential success, help the planter know his/her true identity, and serve as a tool to clearly confirm the call. The North American Mission Board found that if a church planter has a “realistic” expectation of church planting, its likelihood of success increases by 400 percent.

Coaching. Church planters who meet with a group of peers increase their productiveness by 135 percent. Those who meet with a mentor/coach see an immediate difference in the size of the church plant. However, by year four those who met regularly with a mentor were more than twice the size of the plants that had no mentor. The national office believes in coaching and is dedicated to providing coaches for its planters.

Training: The tools and talents it takes to successfully manage an existing church are not the same tools and talents it takes to plant a new church. As a matter of fact, they are polar opposites. We would never send a missionary to a country without teaching him/her a new language, yet we think it’s appropriate to send an American missionary to an urban city without training. Leading the planter through a bounty of available training increases the likelihood of success by 250 percent. When planters are taught proactive stewardship plans, studies have shown a 178 percent increase. The payouts are enormous for the investment of training.

Dr. David Olson with the Evangelical Free Church says, “A denomination lays the foundation for its future by each year planting quality new churches equal to at least two percent of the number of congregations in the denomination.” The Church of God must plant a minimum of 65 churches in America each year (without losing established ones) just to keep our denomination steady with current growth patterns.

Multiple studies across denominational lines report an enormous statistical relationship with church-planting survivability and clear denominational systems like assessment, coaching, and training. God has placed an apprentice in your life for a reason. Lead him through this wonderful journey like a father holding his young son’s hand through a cool afternoon. The Kingdom will become better for it. ■

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The State of Church Planting Today

An interview with Paul Becker, president and founder of Dynamic Church Planting International

What is the state of church planting in America among denominations today?

There is incredible energy, passion, and enthusiasm about church planting in America today among many denominations. Never before have we seen so many resources, training, and networks of support available for church planting. God is definitely on the move.

Many denominations are placing more emphasis than they have in decades into the starting of new churches, which is very exciting. Research however shows that only 15 percent of denominational local churches are actually parenting new churches. We discover, that a large portion of church planting is actually being completed by a small percentage of churches.

In your opinion, what is the best approach to church planting today?

At Dynamic Church Planting International, we don’t believe that there is any one model of church planting that is the best approach for every context. As I read through the New Testament, I see many different kinds of churches being started by the apostle Paul. Scripture seems to focus more on the principles we should follow as we plant churches and the way that group of believers should function than an actual model of how every church should look and operate.

In times past, the mother-daughter method of church planting was effective. Is this model still viable today?

While I don’t believe that there is any one model that is best for every context, I certainly feel that it is very effective when a church is planted by a mother church. A mother church has the resources of leaders and workers, finances, oversight, training, and encouragement that can help plant churches which in turn will also plant churches.

Modern day Turkey is a great example of the importance of mother-daughter church planting. Most of the miraculous church planting recounted in the Book of Acts happened in the region of Turkey. Yet today it is a 99.8 percent Muslim nation with only 0.01 percent of the population being evangelical Christians.

In the second century as much as 60 percent of the region was one of the strongest Christian footholds in the Mediterranean region. What went wrong? The churches that were planted put an unhealthy focus on themselves and neglected a vision for the expansion of the greater kingdom of Christ by planting daughter churches.

Are church plants keeping up with church closings in America?

Research tells us that for every new church that is planted, four existing churches are closed. In spite of a heightened awareness and emphasis on planting new churches, research unfortunately points out that many denominations have yet to see an overall net growth.
What is the best news about the future of church planting?
Jesus has promised “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).” This verse doesn’t describe a fortress mentality where believers are huddled in churches trying to defend themselves against the attacks of Satan. Instead, this verse pictures believers storming the gates of hell. In church planting, we are in an offensive attack against the kingdom of darkness. Jesus is the Lord of church planting, and He is at work building the church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Why are you so passionate about church planting?
Nearly half the world’s population does not have access to a church like the one you and I love so much! People worldwide come to Christ but have no church to attend, no one to disciple them, no one to minister to their needs and no one to teach them to share their faith—they’ve become spiritual orphans!

In keeping with the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations, Dynamic Church Planting International (DCPI) understands that effectively reaching people for Christ requires disciple-making as well as introducing people to the gospel. Disciple-making requires the presence of healthy, sustainable, and dynamic churches within easy access for people. While we hear of multitudes coming to Christ around the world, there is a shortage of healthy churches. A primary factor in the shortage of churches is the lack of trained leaders who are equipped to establish new churches and disciple new believers. There is a church planting “training famine” in many nations.

That is why DCPI does what it does—find and train indigenous leaders to plant dynamic churches worldwide. Then, we equip these leaders to teach others. These trained leaders will go places we can never go, reach people we cannot reach, train in languages we cannot speak, and relate to their “people groups” as we cannot in order to plant churches to reach the world for Christ.

Website: www.dcpi.org; Email: Go the bottom of the site and click on the envelope.

The Value of CHURCH PLANTING

by Fedlyn A. Beason, Ph.D., Field Representative, Caribbean

Church planting has sustaining value, because (1) It is a biblical mandate, (2) It reaches new people, and (3) It engages the local church in the missional mandate.

Church planting reaches new people for whom Christ died. With a global population of more than six billion souls, the church must cultivate the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5-8), who demonstrated obedience to the Father. Church members are obliged to assiduously employ their gifts and resources to reaching as many individuals and people groups as is humanly possible. As people are reached with the gospel, then the question of what to do with them must be addressed. The obvious solution is the establishment of new churches.

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-Peter Wagner

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Planting Churches is not something I set as a goal when I first started in the ministry. It is something that evolved out of an evangelistic mission call upon my life. I believe evangelism and missions are not options for the believer or the church corporately. In the first few years of my first and only pastorate, we outgrew our first building, moved into a tent twice the size of the building, and then moved into a new building which was filled on the first service. In just a short time, it was evident something had to be done. We were having multiple services on Saturday and Sunday, and one of my associates did one of my three Sunday morning services. As parking and seating issues continued to intensify, a decision to plant our first church was made.

In November 2004, a little more than five years into my first assignment, we birthed our first satellite. My associate pastor, Dale Buchanan, preached for me whenever I was on a missions trip. I told him anyone he could persuade to go with him to pioneer a new plant had my permission and blessing. This set a pattern and a precedent for the next nine plants in the following seven years.

We learned a great deal in the next few years through trial and error, but our overall focus never changed. Our focus has always been the Great Commission and bringing souls to Jesus. I’m always telling my folks that we are involved in a fishing tournament. It’s not about individual accomplishments or who caught the most or the biggest fish. The more people I enable and empower, the better chance we have in winning people to Christ. Christianity, to me, is a team effort where everybody can win. It’s not about me or you; it’s about Jesus and about being fishers of men.

After being part of more than 250 church plants around the world, it would be hard to convince me that church planting is not important or necessary, both in our own backyard and in developing countries. Several close friends and family members of our church leaders are now coming to church as a direct result of new church plants. Those folks wouldn’t come to hear me even though their family members were leaders in my church. It wasn’t until they were given the opportunity to pastor a church that their family members would attend. Only so many top leadership spots exist in any church. I’ve seen over and over again people sitting on the bench in my church get a chance to really “get into the game” by starting a new church plant. As a pastor, I feel it’s my job to get a fishing pole in everyone’s hand.

Sometimes, planting a church starts with a place; sometimes it starts with a person. If our focus is on a place, it may be a location God has put on our hearts, and it is usually connected to a need. Usually, the place is identified by a major need or an open door that has become available. The person we plant churches with must have certain characteristics and qualities. The person we plant churches with must have certain characteristics and qualities. The person needs to be a godly example, called to the ministry, a person of influence, and a hard worker. Understanding and being loyal to our vision is something that is also essential. Without this loyalty, it will be a bumpy ride. Integrity and determination are also necessary, because temptation to quit and take shortcuts is always going to be there.
I believe there are always going to be places that need a church. As time goes on, I feel it will be harder and harder to find a person willing to plant a church. Ezekiel 22:30 states: “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none” (KJV). First Timothy 3:6 states, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (KJV). Sometimes the person God sends you to plant a church may not fit your perception or expectation of a church planter or pastor. He might be a five-foot-tall Indian without any formal education who lives in a little shack in the mountains of Panama. He might be a biker dude with a shaved head and a spider and a green snake tattooed on his head and neck. One thing for sure is that the person God has called will have a burning desire to catch “fish” and rescue the perishing.

I hope that as you read this article, you don’t discount its value because of its simplicity. If you have the right person and the right place, along with God’s power fueling the endeavor, the rest is just details. Please feel free to contact me if there is any way I can assist you.

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I T HAS BEEN SAID that these are the best of times and the worst of times. Truly our times have brought us many conveniences. Technology has given us the computer, the cell phone, iPods, and iPads. As we look around, one could build a case to say that these are the worst of times. For example, within ten days, my geographic area experienced an earthquake and a hurricane. We are bogged down in two wars thousands of miles away. Daily, we are reminded of famine and pestilences in many parts of the world, not to mention governments rising and falling overnight.

If the church is to survive, it must seriously renew commitment to reaching the post-Christian, post-modern and multiethnic nation that we have become. The Great Commission of Matthew 28 is still the mission of God’s church in the twenty-first century. Doing business as usual will not reach a world that has changed and is constantly changing.

A recent article in Christianity Today stated: “If denominations are to survive they must plant new churches.” Many people ask the question, “Why do we need more churches when we have so many already?” The truth of the matter is that we are losing ground in church attendance in the United States and Canada. The American Church Research Project reports that the percentage of people attending a Christian church each weekend decreased significantly from 1990 through 2007. Numbers from actual counts of people in orthodox Christian churches show that 20.4 percent of the population attended church on any given weekend in 1990. That percentage dropped to 18.7 percent in 2000 and to 17.0 percent in 2007. The population in the United States continues to grow, but those attending church on a weekly basis continue to decline. It is time for the church to arise and take the city!

To be successful in planting churches, we must break the current mind-set about church planting. To reach the present-day harvest, we need to plant approximately three times the number of churches we are planting. Perhaps the greatest challenge facing church leaders when it comes to church planting is the unspoken conflicts that exist over whose territory the new church will invade.

We have to realize that the area around our church is not our territory but part of God’s kingdom! We are territorial when we consider the lost “my sinners.” We are territorial when we do not want another church planted near “my” church. We are territorial when we see the harvest as exclusively mine. We are territorial when we think we can reach the harvest all by ourselves. Jesus looked at the harvest as His harvest. His command to us is to go into His harvest!

In contrast to being territorial, we have a Kingdom mind-set when we see the vastness of the harvest and realize we cannot reach everyone. We are Kingdom-minded when we see the harvest and realize that there are some people others can reach that we cannot reach. We are Kingdom-minded when we welcome others into His harvest. We are Kingdom-minded when our desire is to reach His harvest. We are Kingdom-minded when we pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest.
When we become Kingdom-minded, we will not care who gets the credit! When we become Kingdom-minded, we will see ourselves as partners with Him in the harvest. When we become Kingdom-minded, we will see ourselves as partners with our fellow laborer. Paul reminds us,

When one of you says, “I’m on Paul’s side,” and another says, “I’m for Apollos,” aren’t you being totally infantile? Who do you think Paul is, anyway? Or Apollos, for that matter? Servants, both of us—servants who waited on you as you gradually learned to entrust your lives to our mutual Master. We each carried out our servant assignment. I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plants, but God made you grow. It’s not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the center of this process but God, who makes things grow. Planting and watering are menial servant jobs at minimum wages. What makes them worth doing is the God we are serving. You happen to be God’s field in which we are working. Or, to put it another way, you are God’s house. Using the gift God gave me as a good architect, I designed blueprints; Apollos is putting up the walls. Let each carpenter who comes on the job take care to build on the foundation! Remember, there is only one foundation, the one already laid: Jesus Christ. Take particular care in picking out your building materials. Eventually there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you’ll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won’t get by with a thing. If your work passes inspection, fine; if it doesn’t, your part of the building will be torn out and started over. But you won’t be torn out; you’ll survive—but just barely” (1 Corinthians 3:4-15 TM).

Notice what Paul is saying! All of us are laborers for our mutual Master. Your church, my church, it all belongs to Him. Your city, my city, it all belongs to Him. Who are you? Who am I? We are but servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who deserves all the credit for anything that is accomplished? Not Paul! Not Apollos! Not Bill! Not you! It’s not your territory! It’s not my territory! It is His kingdom! We are His servants!

The words of Jesus from John 4 have never been more relevant than they are today:

As you look around right now, wouldn’t you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I’m telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what’s right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It’s harvest time! The Harvester isn’t waiting. He’s taking his pay, gathering in this grain that’s ripe for eternal life. How the Sower is arm in arm with the Harvester, triumphant. That’s the truth of the saying, “This one sows, that one harvests.” I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others (John 4:35-38 TM).

It’s harvest time! Jesus is coming soon! Let’s go forth into His harvest “arm to arm with the Harvester, triumphant.” All of it is His territory! He wants His church to go and make disciples. He wants His church to build up His kingdom! We have the mandate! We have the power of the Holy Spirit! Let’s unite together to win the lost to the kingdom of God! The time is now!

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The core value of church planting is compassion. Church planting is risky personally, financially, and socially. But, compassion turns risks into action. The term compassion in Luke 10:33 means “to feel something in your heart and be moved to action by it.” Compassion and church planting go hand in hand. Both are at the heart of Christ’s mission to the world. The value of church planting is that it is in itself the vehicle by which the Church of God brings the compassion of Jesus to the world. That’s why church planting must not be something we do, but it must be who we are.

by T. Wayne Dority, Administrative Bishop, Texas
HOW MANY OF YOU are pastoring churches and you believe you are doing everything God said? You have attended church growth conferences. You have prayed and fasted and still you see little to no results. Are the pressures of ministry beginning to wear you down? Wait! Before you allow another negative thought to invade your mind, allow me to share a revelation that will change your life and ministry forever. God increased our ministry from three people to well over 700 in twelve years.

In April 1994, my life would change forever! I would discover that I had a “date with destiny.” I had been on the Jacksonville Police Force for seven years. I had become secure in my career. I was bivocational in ministry and was preaching occasionally when the opportunity to pastor presented itself. I had an encounter with God that thrust me into ministry, changed my life forever, and birthed New Life Evangelistic Center Church.

I was traveling home from preaching at a church in a neighboring town. Unable to shake the intense burden I had for nurturing and developing God’s people, I heard the Lord’s voice. It was at that moment God spoke these words: “Today is the day, and now is the time.”

The words were clear and plain. They left no doubt that it was the Lord. I then looked to my right and discovered a vacant building. When I drove up to it, someone had written Psalm 24:1 in the dust of the weather-worn window: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein” (KJV). I asked the Lord: “How can I start a ministry with no funds?” When I looked on the ground, there was a $20 bill. It was at that moment that New Life Evangelistic Center Church was birthed.

I had an unusual excitement and zeal as I made plans to carry out this work that I was sure the Lord told me to do. However, little did I know there would be some giants in the land, and I was in for the fight of my life.

The first of many obstacles came when I told my wife. At first, she was not supportive. She thought I had gone too far and did not attend my first service, which was held in my home with only three people attending . . . four, if you count the dog.

The second obstacle was the building we wanted. It was not approved for ministry by the city. Third, my work hours as a policeman often conflicted with our church services. And last, people were not coming to our services.

I questioned God, because for more than a year, we struggled, winning only one family to the church. I told the Lord I was doing everything He said, and that’s when He spoke these profound words that changed me forever: “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that PROCEEDETH out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4 KJV).

Notice the word proceeds, the “ETH” at the end which means continually. God told me that I was doing what He said, but not following what He was saying. An example of this is when God told Abraham to kill his son. But, Abraham would have destroyed his seed if he only did what God said and not what He was saying. God later tells Abraham not to kill his son. WOW! How many of us are doing what God said in our churches, but have missed what He is saying? (Read Genesis 22:1-13.)

When we plant a church, we must:

• First, be sure God said plant it.
• Second, make sure we can hear Him as He tells us how to keep it fertilized.

Most pastors, I have noticed, try to pastor their churches after someone else’s pattern. Even though it may have worked for them, it could spell disaster for you.

I made this mistake early in ministry by trying to follow the matrix of other ministers which unknowingly placed me in a box. The moment God would tell me to move, it would cause me to move apprehensively, because it didn’t line up
with the matrix I was following. I soon realized it was not God I was following, but man.

Three things every pastor should realize in planting and growing a church:
1. Know that you are the farmer who has been called to plant.
2. Know what kind of farmer you are, because every pastor is unique and will reap in his own special way.
3. Expect to grow what you plant.

I made up my mind that I would live by the words that “proceedeth” continually out of His mouth, and I would move as He was saying, not just as He said.

My mindset changed. My wife came on board, and God had us move from Callahan to Jacksonville, Florida. In a matter of weeks, we had well over 80 people. We began having services in schools and later purchased a building that seated 150 people. We renovated that building, and six months later God said, “Sell it; I have something greater.” He also told me to resign my job of 12 years of service. I was obedient like Abraham, and God opened the door for us to purchase a larger facility that seated 300. The building cost $500,000.

I now had a nice building in a good neighborhood, and things were looking up. But God was not finished, because He told me to move again. That move would take me out of my comfort zone. The building was 60,000-square feet and more than $2 million. God always makes provisions when He gives a vision.

Just as I began to question God, a church came and offered us $1.4 million for our current building that we had been in only five years and had paid only $500,000. Once again God had proven Himself faithful.

We now have well over 700 members, and we are currently preparing to open our school, New Life Eagles Christian Academy, which will educate youth in grades K through 12. Wouldn’t you know it? Our current location is up for sale, and who knows what God will do next?

Every pastor who is discouraged needs to remember what God said to him/her in the beginning, and know what He is saying now. Sometimes God speaks just enough to move us to a place where we can hear.

Don’t be afraid to move outside the box or even change your box, because your “launching pad” may not always be your “landing pad.” Trust God and watch Him take you to levels and dimensions that others will only dream about.

God bless you!

Antonio C. Richardson is pastor and founder of New Life Evangelistic Center; Website: www.streamingfaith.com; He can be found on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.
FROM MY EARLIEST recollections, I can remember church planting was almost always done through the mother/daughter concept. That is not to take away from many, many dedicated men and women who went to areas and worked and carved out a work with no help at all. They went with a burden to see a church become active and viable in an area that was placed in their hearts and minds. The mother/daughter concept, however, is a tried and true way to open up a church in a region where the mother church feels is ripe for harvest.

The mother church must be totally given to church growth and have an outreach mind-set. Not only the pastor but also the entire church must share this vision of mothering a church. It must be part of their DNA from the beginning. They must be dedicated to reaching beyond their four walls and having a vision for winning the lost. Being able to start a church with a core of people who have already grown in discipleship at the mother church is invaluable.

The mother/daughter concept is much like raising a child. You are there to teach them how to walk, how to talk, and how to grow in wisdom and maturity. Eventually, if your leadership is done right, the child is ready to face life on his/her own. The same is true with the daughter church. When they are released, it is highly important that the mother church continue to cover them with prayer, because “the daughter will come home to do laundry” many times through the years. The mother church needs to assist, but then send them back to continue their growth process.

The mother church needs to keep in mind that their church is not viewed as a division but an expansion of the gospel. It is up to the pastor to quiet the fears of the congregation and to keep them focused on the main thing—the “Great Commission.”

The Book of Acts talks about the Antioch church in Syria and their church-planting ventures. The missionary journeys were all about the Great Commission and the spread of Christianity. It is because of the early church and church planters that we have churches in North America today! The early church went everywhere—to the rich, to the poor, to the Jews, to the Gentiles; it didn’t matter—they traveled extensively to see churches planted.

I recently read that since the 1970s when the church-growth movement became strong, the emphasis has been on the mother church getting bigger and bigger, not multiplying churches. We need to get back to mother/daughter church plants and see the Kingdom multiply. If vibrant churches are going to be started, then the whole church needs to be educated about church planting. They need to
look outside their own growth and start daughter churches that can impact areas they could never impact.

Many times church planters are afraid to step out because of the emphasis on large churches. Mother churches do not want to give members to a church planter, because their numbers might go down for a season. If we can get our minds off numbers and turn our minds to souls being saved, we can once again become a growing body of believers.

Most churches in North America are less than 100 in membership. They are not involved in mother/daughter planting, because they are waiting until they are a mega church before they can send someone out from their own church. Most of them will never be involved in church planting. If this had been true of Paul and Barnabas in the New Testament, North America would be totally unchurched. It is not the size, but the vision and purpose of the pastor and congregation of the mother church. “Little is much, when God is in it!”

In Kentucky, we have several mother/daughter churches. They are:

- **Solid Rock**—Pastor Jonathan Boling’s church is mothering a daughter church of Taylorsville where Marvin Redmon is pastor.
- **Wurtland**—Pastor Henry Montgomery is mothering a church in Smith Branch.
- **Hopkinsville, Northside**—Pastor Joseph Leek and his congregation have started the Morton’s Gap mission with Debbie Back as pastor.
- **Winchester**—David Douglas along with Mitchell Tolle at Man O’War Church are mothering The Mission where Ed Toler is the pastor.
- **Louisville, New Covenant**—Pastor Don Combs and his congregation are mothering the Nueva Iglesia de Dios church where Adolfo Rodriguez is pastor.
- **Madisonville, Covenant Community**—Pastor Michael Knight and his congregation are mothering the Louisville, Covenant Community church.

These daughter churches are progressing extremely well. The mother churches are continually giving help, oversight, prayer coverings, and financial assistance. You may ask: “Why should my church become involved in church planting?” The answer is, “For the glory of God.” Plus, the Bible sets the example for us, and what is most important is that people in America are unchurched. There are communities, villages, boroughs, towns, and cities that need a lighthouse of hope. Is your church ready to be a mother church?

Many resources are available that mother churches can utilize to give birth to thriving daughter churches. They can be found by contacting the Church of God International Offices at [www.churchofgod.org](http://www.churchofgod.org) (click on USA Missions and then church planting). I am personally involved in DCPI which stands for Dynamic Church Planting International. Their Website is [www.dcpi.org](http://www.dcpi.org).

Keith L. Ivester is administrative bishop of Kentucky; Website: [www.kycog.net](http://www.kycog.net); Email: kycobso@aol.com.

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**The Value of CHURCH PLANTING**

When we talk about building new churches, we use the term “planting.” The key word is “planting.”

“A seed left in the seed bag is of no value to anyone.” That seed must be planted in order to produce fruit.

The former seed has gone through its complete cycle…seed, sprout, plant, harvest…a new seed must be planted in order to produce a new crop.

Planting churches is just as important as the planting of seed is for the farmer in the springtime. No seed; no harvest.
Church Planting and the Great Commission

Raymond F. Culpepper, General Overseer, interviews George O. Wood, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God.

Why is church planting essential in fulfilling the Great Commission?

First and most important, it is the biblical pattern for the evangelistic expansion of the church. When Jesus gave the Great Commission to a small group of His disciples, the world population was approximately 100 million people. It was an overwhelming challenge. But the Great Commission is a potent mandate. A few years after Jesus gave this command, the Jews in Thessalonica described the disciples as those who “caused trouble all over the world” (Acts 17:6 NIV). In a world with no mass media, how did a small band of people from the obscure Roman province so quickly develop a reputation as influential world changers? The answer is that, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit, they planted churches. Everywhere they went they made disciples and formed new communities of faith.

The second reason church planting is essential in fulfilling the Great Commission is the evangelistic productivity of young churches. Every study I am aware of indicates that younger churches consistently demonstrate a higher level of evangelistic proficiency than older, established churches. For example, a study conducted by author and researcher Ed Stetzer revealed that the typical Assemblies of God church plant baptized an average of thirty-one people annually by its fourth year. In contrast, established Assemblies of God churches baptized an average of only nine people per year. It is a fact: Planting new churches results in more people coming to Christ.

The third reason church planting is essential to fulfilling the Great Commission is sociological. Like it or not, people tend to group together around affinities and cultural preferences. In the same way that Christ came to us and incarnated into our world, starting a new church affords us the opportunity to “incarnate” the gospel to reach a specific group that is isolated from the good news because of cultural characteristics that tend to isolate them from the broader culture. New churches act like bridges that convey the gospel to subcultural “islands” of people who desperately need Jesus.

They are not coming to us. Planting a new church is the best way to go to them.

The fourth reason is a pragmatic one. Research by David Olsen indicates that only 17.1 percent of Americans regularly attend ANY church. This means that on any given weekend, over 80 percent of Americans are NOT engaged in a corporate worship experience. The number of churches per capita continues to trend down. In 1900, there were 28 churches for every 10,000 Americans. By 1950, that number had dropped by 17 for every 10,000. In 2000, there were only 12 churches per 10,000; and in 2004, the ratio was down to 11 per 10,000. The church in the U.S. cannot afford to give up any more ground.

You have instituted an aggressive church-planting initiative; please share some insights with us.

When I was selected as the general superintendent, God placed in my heart an urgency to align our organizational behaviors with our organizational values. I wrote about those values in my book, Core Values. One of the values I wrote about was planting churches. Since we view church planting as “cardiac” to our ability to be on mission with Christ, we recognized the need to reallocate our resources to ensure broad organizational support for vigorously planting new churches. The result was the formation of the Church Multiplication Network. I think the results speak for themselves. In 2008, we opened 247 new churches. In 2009, we opened 266. Last year we opened 325, and we are on track to open 365 in 2011. What changed was that we got serious about being an organization that leveraged every organizational asset to help start new churches!

I think some guiding principles include:

1. Church planting has to be a top priority for the senior leader. It has been important for me as the key leader to consistently express my personal support for church planting. That holds true for our district leaders as well. Their influence is crucial.

2. Church planting requires organizational action at a national, regional, and local level. While my influence has been essential, words are not enough. We have carefully invested money and personnel in appropriate ways to create an environment where planting becomes a common activity
“We believe a healthy church will ultimately multiply by planting other churches. We lower unnecessary barriers to planting and encourage an organizational culture that supports planting.”—George Wood

of healthy churches. The Church Multiplication Network is a tangible way we have backed up my words and influence with action. Each of our districts has been challenged to act in a similar manner. All of our churches are encouraged to look for ways to multiply.

How have you motivated pastors and local churches to get involved in church planting?

We strongly encourage every leader to lead his church toward health. We believe a healthy church will ultimately multiply by planting other churches. We celebrate churches that multiply. We provide resources to support churches that multiply. We lower unnecessary barriers to planting and encourage an organizational culture that supports planting. Additionally, in an effort to be accountable to our stated values, I asked every district to prayerfully submit 2020 goals. The goals presented were truly “God-sized!” To be successful, we will need to do what we’ve never done before! We are now doing everything we know to do and relying heavily on the Lord of the harvest to help us achieve those God-given goals.

You were a pastor for many years and experienced remarkable growth. What were the key elements of your growth?

I’ve laid out those key elements in my new book, Road Trip Leadership (available at www.influencersources.com). Our growth was very steady for the seventeen years I pastored. One of the key principles that helped us when we were small is that we laid good foundations for the weight that the Lord would later place on us. Often in smaller churches, the mistake is made of saying or thinking, “Well, when we are larger, we will do such and such.” A prime example of our vision and planning is the early childhood center. We established policies of hygiene, check-in and check-out, volunteer and paid workers, teaching program—all when we had less than five children. When I left the church, we had 200 children every Sunday in our early childhood center. We were using the same principles and policies then that we did when we had less than five.

Another key principle was making sure that the worship services ministered both to the saints and to those on a quest. We sought to have our singing time a blend of the old and the new. Front and center always was the ministry of the Word that both declared what the Scripture said then, and what it says now, by way of application today. If the ministry from the pulpit is not relevant to young and old alike, then the church is going to have a hard time growing. We also took care of our physical facilities. I learned that lesson early on when I felt the Lord say to me: George, if you cannot take care of the lawn, how can I trust you with people?

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The Value of Church Planting

Planting new churches is a priority. Strengthening existing congregations in order that they grow and, in turn, plant other churches is also a priority! We must invest more of our resources into leadership development and training to sustain our growth, close fewer churches, and release a new army of reapers for the ripened harvest.

Making disciples is an absolute priority. We must have church planters who are sound in faith and doctrine, genuine in love and fellowship, and passionate about winning the lost for Christ. The global movement of people demands a fresh strategy for reaching them with the gospel and planting new churches.
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THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF CHURCH PLANTING
By Aubrey Malphurs
2011, Baker Publishing Group

ALTHOUGH AUBREY MALPHURS, senior professor of pastoral ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary, had already written a book about church planting (Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal, 2004), he understood the complexities of cultural change and challenges and decided it was time to write a different kind of church-planting tool—one that focuses on process, not model. He notes that “most current books endorse a particular model or way of doing church”—seeker-driven, seeker-sensitive, purpose-driven, cell churches, organic churches, etc. However, this new resource is simply a down-to-earth “nuts and bolts” general guide for planting churches which builds upon a fourfold process clearly delineated in Malphurs’ basic, but biblical outline: (1) Core Values, (2) Mission, (3) Vision, and (4) Strategy. The reader will note that after thoroughly laying his foundation in Chapters 1–7, he deliberately allocates the most of his practical instruction to the strategy aspect of church planting in the final seven chapters. Consequently, he not only answers “Why?” to planting a church, but also “How?”

Malphurs begins his premise for writing another book on church planting by jolting his audience with cold, hard facts about today’s church. He points out that 80 to 85 percent of churches in America are plateaued or declining. Referencing David Olsen’s research, he notes that 82.5 percent of the population did not attend any orthodox Christian churches in 2007, and that church growth is losing ground in ratio to population growth. He further informs that Americans professing no religious affiliation has doubled since 1990 and has shifted from the Northwest to the Northeast, indicative that the Christian, “historic foundation of America’s culture was cracking” (7, 8). He convincingly conveys that church plants have higher percentages of people won to Christ in a year—10 per 100 members for a congregation three years old or less, and 3 per 100 members for congregations 15 years old or older. It is further agreed that younger congregations are much more willing to “trust” their pastor and let him lead than older congregations. Most disappoint-
of faith,” he then recapitulates each segment of this definition in separate, but colorful paragraphs—“exhausting,” “exciting,” “venture of faith,” etc. Since this book is written to be a step-by-step course on how to start any kind of church, it is most important that the author make these guidelines easy to understand and easy to follow. Malphurs accomplishes this with the expert conciseness of a gifted educator and mentor.

Perhaps most important of all, Malphurs’ insights about church planting are derived from the biblical text itself, and not from the realm of corporate and business America. Therefore, his guidelines are adaptable to any culture or context. "No one has ever accused me of being Bible lite," he says. “I want to know first what the Bible has to say about a topic. Then within that context, I’m ready to move to the practical.” Consequently, any aspiring church planter can be sure the resource is theologically sound and scripturally faithful.

Finally, Malphurs has included in his book an appendix chock full of helpful instruments for “testing” one’s gifting and passion for church planting, including a spiritual gifts inventory, a passion audit, several temperament analyses, and various leadership assessments. He provides very basic, but practical tips for seeking support, financial and emotional, and offers conversation cues for engaging the appeal. Further resourcing in this section includes core value audits, sample mission statements, and expanded vision statements for those who need the root level boost to get the church planting process started.

Having pastored the church I planted 23 years ago, I could only wish this book had been written when I needed it most. However, that I am now involved in ministerial development and church-planting consultation for the Church of God in Eastern North Carolina, I will be recommending this book for every church planter I train. The hard work is done—just follow the instructions! Give it a read...then hand it off to a friend. THEN, go out and start a church!

Wayne Flora, D.Min., is founding pastor of the University Church of God in Greenville, NC. He has served in ministerial development in ENC since 1992 and as coordinator for 12 years. He is chairman of ENC’s Church Planting Consultation Team, offering guidance and training to aspiring church planters in the state.
PLANTING MISSIONAL CHURCHES
By Ed Stetzer
2006, B & H Publishing Group

DURING THE LAST quarter-century, a new church-planting book a week has been published—at least, it seems that way. If Ed Stetzer had chosen another subtitle for his contribution to the venue, Planting Missional Churches, however, he might have used, “The All-in-One, Everything-You’ll-Ever-Need, Tried-and-True, Comprehensive, Practical, Biblical, Proven, Questioning-Answering, How-to Manual for Planting Effective Churches.” Perhaps he considered that descriptive caption; nevertheless, he ended up using a shorter one: Planting a Church That’s Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture.

The publisher’s description says: “Planting Missional Churches is an instruction book for planting biblically faithful and culturally relevant churches. It addresses the “how-to” and “why” issues of church planting by providing practical guidance through all the phases of a church plant while taking a missional look at existing and emerging cultures.”

The book’s primary recommendation is that it succeeds masterfully in realizing its purpose. Its main drawback may be its encyclopedic approach: 29 well-defined chapters fill 371 pages. But if it is thought of as a textbook—which it is—it will be studied, restudied, put into practice, prized, and referred to often in the process of a church plant. It will likely be dog-eared and worn after the first couple of years.

The 2006 publication is the second iteration of the book originally published in 2003 under the title Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age. Its timely update indicates it is apt to become a classic resource, revised slightly as needed when conditions and/or vocabulary change.

Stetzer writes from the posture of an experienced church planter, having established new churches in a variety of cultural settings. His book reflects his learning from his successes and his failures. Not only a practitioner, he is also a researcher. The pages are peppered with illustrations from a broad range of church-initiating environs. He rounds out his excellent qualifications with a thorough and grounded understanding of the Bible and theology. His aim, as he puts it, is to plant biblically sound congregations. Chapter 3, “The Biblical Basis of Church Planting,” paints a reasonable and believable scenario of disciples walking through the New Testament world, leaving new churches wherever they passed. His portrait of the apostle Paul as a church planter unveils a standard to which all planters might aspire.

He challenges today’s churches:

The accounts and details we’ve considered in Acts demonstrate that Paul and other early Christians believed in and practiced church planting as a normal part of their lives—and specifically in response to the commands of Jesus . . . The life of Paul and the action of the early church demonstrate that church planting was a primary activity. Any church wishing to rediscover the dynamic nature of the early church should consider planting new churches.
Perhaps the distinctive message of the book is its emphasis on “missional.” The author believes church planters should use the methods of a missionary. Like those who go into other cultures in other countries, the planter should “exegete” the culture, attempting to understand it and adapt to it. Stetzer does not champion one particular method of establishing a new congregation (although a close reading might reveal a bias toward using a team approach with a “big bang” launch of the movement); but he insists that the church should “fit” its place.

“STETZER WRITES FROM THE POSTURE OF AN EXPERIENCED CHURCH PLANTER, HAVING ESTABLISHED NEW CHURCHES IN A VARIETY OF CULTURAL SETTINGS. HIS BOOK REFLECTS HIS LEARNING FROM HIS SUCCESSES AND HIS FAILURES.”

Is this the perfect book for church planters? Almost. In some of the more practically oriented chapters (Finances, Children, Small Groups), one might wish for more detail; however, a book’s thickness must be somehow limited, and Stetzer always offers enough to get the planter started.

Bottom line: If you are a church planter and want to have a single source of great help, this is the book for you.

TYPICAL QUOTES

- According to easumbandy.com: “Studies show that if a denomination wishes to reach more people, the number of new churches it begins each year must equal at least 3% of the denomination’s existing churches. Based on this formula, mainline denominations are failing to plant enough churches to offset their decline” (p. 5).
- Effective church planting is missionary work. Insightful church planters must begin by determining their mission—exploring questions of personal call and conviction—and by learning missions principles. Then they seek to understand the culture they’ve been called to reach (p. 115).
- Clean nurseries, staffed with quality people who serve in a safe environment, are much more welcoming than “a place to keep kids” (a small, unpainted room with old donated cribs). New churches should pay close attention to what quality child care looks like in the churches in their area and emulate what they see (p. 308).

Planting Missional Churches is a gift to the Church of God and other Evangelical movements that want to place in the hands of a church planter or church-planting team a thoroughly researched and workable tool to help them do their work well.

William (Bill) T. George, D.Min., serves as coordinator of education and publications for Church of God World Missions; Website: www.cogwm.org; Email: bgeorg@cogwm.org.

The Value of CHURCH PLANTING

Planting a church gives a new option for people in a community or region to connect with and worship God. It strengthens and expands the body of Christ by giving a new venue for God to reach and disciple people. Church planting creates a unique community of Christ followers with its own unique mission and DNA. The Book of Acts gives a model of vibrant, growing Spirit-led churches reaching new geographic locations and people groups. Unique, growing, Spirit-led church plants are as valuable and essential in the twenty-first century as they were in the first century.

by Travis M. Hovde,
Lead Pastor, Eagles Wings Community Fellowship, Minot, ND
Church Growth
READINESS QUIZ

Church growth is tough! You have to think big, face tremendous pressure, be creative, and solve difficult problems. You have to trust God without wavering!

The following quiz will profile your church growth readiness. Circle the appropriate letter (a, b, c, d) following each statement/question based on your goals, dreams, and outreach posture.

1. How many do you want to average in church attendance in the next 12-24 months?
   a. 25-100
   b. 100-200
   c. 200-500
   d. 500-1,000 and beyond

2. What is your ministry dream for the church?
   a. Hold what we have.
   b. Emphasize our doctrinal stance.
   c. Develop mature disciples.
   d. Reach the unchurched.

3. Which statement best describes your ministry position?
   a. I am waiting on another appointment/position.
   b. I don’t feel this church has potential.
   c. I have a clear vision for outreach.
   d. I am where God wants me to be.

4. How much money do you invest in personal ministry development each year (books, tapes, CDs seminars, study courses)?
   a. I depend on direct Bible study.
   b. $100 to $200
   c. $500 to $1,000
   d. $1,000 to $2,000

5. What expression best describes your ministry focus and energy?
   a. Most all my energy is spent on sermon preparation.
   b. My responsibility is to see that the laity is involved in ministry.
   c. I have a full tank of physical and spiritual energy.
   d. I am devoted daily to performing ministry.

6. What is your philosophy of church growth?
   a. Church growth is about being in the right place at the right time.
   b. If you have a vision, church growth will happen.
   c. Pastoral leadership is the nucleus for church growth.
   d. Church growth is a combination of leadership, vision, unity, faith, organization, worship, and outreach.

7. What is your attitude toward building relationships?
   a. If I teach and preach, relationships will follow.
   b. If people love the Lord, they will love each other.
   c. I work hard at fostering cooperation.
   d. I am responsible for bringing people together as partners in ministry.

8. What do you do when faced with church conflict?
   a. Wait patiently until it goes away.
   b. Seek an appointment or another church or position.
   c. Bring the church together in prayer.
   d. Find a scriptural solution without causing division.

9. When members criticize certain aspects of your ministry, how do you respond?
   a. I stand my ground, because I know I am right.
   b. I form a group of church members to stand with me.
   c. I honestly evaluate their point of view.
   d. I will meet with them, and together in harmony work out an agreeable solution.

10. What would you do if you were moved from your church without another appointment?
    a. I would complain to denominational leaders.
    b. I would ask the church to continue to support me until I was placed in another church.
    c. I would pray fervently for God to open another door.
    d. I would immediately begin to make contacts to find another pastorate.

How to compile your readiness score. Count the number of a’s, b’s, c’s, and d’s. Score two points for every a; four points for every b; six points for every c, and 10 points for every d.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-40</td>
<td>Restricted—Need growth vision overhaul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>Recovering—Developing growth attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-80</td>
<td>Responsive—Alert to growth possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-100</td>
<td>Ready—On path to steady growth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Well, it’s time for action! Look at your score. What does it reveal? Where do you want to go? How do you want to get there? Plan a COURSE of action.

• Cultivate a growth path.
• Organize for effectiveness.
• Unite for harmonious teamwork.
• Refresh by the Holy Spirit.
• Strategize in full motion.
• Experience Christ-exalting growth.

Now, it is ready, set, grow! —Floyd D. Carey
CHURCH PLANTING

THE STRATEGIC FOCUS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Covenant Commitment

I understand that church planting is a strategic focal component in the fivefold missional mandate embodied in the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ: **Going** (reaching), **Teaching** (converting), **Baptizing** (committing) **Mentoring** (discipling), and **Worshiping** (honoring God's presence: “I am with you”) [Matthew 28:19, 20]. As a pastor/leader, I have a personal responsibility to be a partner in God’s plan to expand His kingdom by planting new churches. Therefore, I make a covenant that supports the fivefold injunctions in the Great Commission:

1. **To Personal** openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to plant a new church.
2. **To Pray** for a specific community/city to be a fertile location for planting a new church.
3. **To Partner** with my state team, other pastors, and visionary volunteers in planting new churches.
4. **To Preach** on the Great Commission and emphasize how obedience to the fivefold mandates encompasses church planting.
5. **To Participate** actively in the vital support needs of church planting—vision-casting, faith-building, and fund-raising.

I ENDORSE THIS COVENANT WITH CONVICTED AND COMMITMENT.

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HERE DOES church planting begin? Is it recruitment, identification of location, assessment, or focus on a model? All of these are part of the process; however, the beginning of church planting is a matter of the heart. The very life blood of early Christians was evangelism. They were not aware of the definitive nature of church planting or various approaches. First-century Christians only knew that Jesus had commissioned them to share the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. They recognized without reservation their calling was to go and penetrate the world with the good news. They had never heard of the term church planting, they just knew they had a mandate from Christ to go. The end result was churches planted and organized throughout the world.

In the early history of the Church of God, there was not a department or defined program of church planting. Nonetheless, every church in existence today began as a church plant. Pioneers of faith had a purpose and passion to fulfill Christ’s directive and build His church. It simply started with a desire by saying, “We need a church in...” and off they went. Were their methods refined? No. In spite of this, they possessed essential ingredients for twenty-first century church planting—spiritual vision and passion.

Today, we have a plethora of resources—volumes of books, manuals, conferences, programs, and promotions at our disposal. We can dissect it, analyze it, talk about it, teach about it, and yet, are we planting churches? Statistically, we are either plateaued with zero new churches, or we are actually declining. This is current reality and speaks to us with clarity about where we stand. Right now, there is the greatest opportunity to touch a hurting, lost, and wandering world with the hope and love of Christ. Christ’s commission is just as real today as it was to the first-century church. Our motivation for church planting is not just an invitation, but a divine mandate to every believer by Christ.

**WHY PLANT NEW CHURCHES? VISION!**

Church planting is exhausting and hard work. Who wants to exercise deep faith and start at ground zero—no place, no people, no money, and most of the time what seems to be no resources. However, it is no different than visionaries who start new ministries, new businesses, or new anything. People who are committed to church planting are authentic visionaries who possess spiritual vision. Spiritual vision is the ability to see God’s presence, power, and plan in spite of the obstacles. Spiritual leaders get it, they see it, and they do it.
Church planting is a biblical blueprint for reaching the lost. It is an effective evangelism methodology and model for making disciples. It provides opportunities for new leaders to emerge and reach new generational communities and people groups. The one ingredient necessary is a called missional person who demonstrates spiritual leadership and significant preparedness for maximized success.

So what is a missional leader? Ed Stetzer says in Planting Missional Churches: “Planting churches should be about planting missional churches. But don’t confuse the terms mission-minded and missional. The first refers more to an attitude of caring about missions, particularly overseas. Missional means actually doing missions right where you are.” He further states, “A missional church is ‘on mission’...meaning being intentional and deliberate about reaching others.” Until we demonstrate a vision for missional church planting that is founded upon our spiritual leadership, we will read the books, attend the conferences, listen to catalytic voices, but never engage the process. Church planting begins with calling and commitment to Christ’s mandate.

PASSION FOR CHURCH PLANTING

Passion! We talk about it. We know it when we see it. Yet, do we possess it? If we do, what kind of passion do we have, and what is its level of strength? As a pastor, am I passionate about church planting? Or, am I passionate about being a church planter?

Passion is defined as “intense, driving, overmastering feeling or conviction.” Synonyms include words such as fervor, enthusiasm, zeal, obsession, infatuation, craze, ardor, and many others. In Pentecostal ranks, we allude to passion with phrases such as “burning desire” or an “unquenchable fire.”

Where is our passion for church planting? We hear about the programs and initiatives and view it as just another item on the ministry plate. As the church has grown, we allowed our passion for church planting to shift from pure spiritual dimensions to a broader more eclectic and blended passion of both internal and external facets? Externally, we are bombarded with the latest book, voices of influence, or trends. Church planting becomes just another “church thing.” Internally, passion is a spiritual issue which is related to our Christian core values of who we are in Christ and what He has called us to be and do. Christian passion is all about Christ.

In Acts 1:8 we read, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (NIV). In the last words of Christ before His ascension, He gave us a vision, a strategic plan, and a promise. His vision for us was first and foremost to be witnesses of Him. To be a witness of Christ requires experience of Him, a personal relationship with Him, and a commitment to Him. This is an imperative for church planting. Secondly, Jesus gave us a strategic plan to carry the gospel to our home circle of influence—our Jerusalem, then to the surrounding areas—our Judea and Samaria, and ultimately to the whole world. Finally, in order to accomplish this vision and implement this strategic plan, Jesus gave us the promise of the Holy Spirit—the empowerment for ministry.

Passion for church planting is about spiritual leadership. It is about the pastor of a church who becomes zealous about expanding his Jerusalem and fulfilling the missional mandate. It is about the church planter who has a driving conviction, a spiritual enthusiasm, an unquenchable Pentecostal fervency, intense zeal, and dedicated devotion to establish the body of Christ, a church, the called-out ones. When the dimensions of spiritual leadership become the common denominator for church planting, then we must embrace the models and methodology necessary to maximize a church’s success.

We are not feeble, frail, ineffective, powerless, or anesthetized believers. We are born again, full of hope, and Holy Spirit baptized disciples of Him who loved us and suffered the indignities of the cross for us. Our passion should always be about Jesus Christ, and our passion for church planting should always be about Him.

THE IMPERATIVE

Spiritual leadership stresses the importance of biblical principles with Christ as the foundation and model of leadership. It is not about a position or profession, but fulfillment of a calling. It is influencing people to God’s will.

Every leader should be engaged in church planting. It is said frequently, “I’m not a church planter.” What does that mean? Generally, it is actualized by leaders who currently maintain an existing congregation without motivation to reach beyond their four walls. Because of financial and other pressures, church planting may negatively impact their current church. For those entering ministry, it might mean, “I want a church that will provide full financial support and all the trimmings that come with a full-time position.” The genesis of church planting is commitment and passion, and then comes preparedness and resources. These variables are all interdependent.

It is critical that we understand the absolute importance and value of recruitment, training, resources, assessment, process, evaluation, and accountability. These are necessary for success. But, in the beginning and throughout the process of planting, building, and leading a church; remember, spiritual leadership is what keeps you focused and preserves one’s passion to fulfill God’s divine call of church planting.

Michael L. Baker is administrative bishop in North Georgia; Website: www.ngacog.org; Email: drbaker@nga.org.
As one of the fivefold ministries given to the church, my perspective as an evangelist belongs with that of the apostle, the prophet, the pastor, and teacher. Taken together, these five visions equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.

So, what does this evangelist see? I see two disturbing trends:

First, I see churches that are not increasing. They sit in communities where the population is growing, children are born, immigrants move in, jobs attract new families, government programs attract the needy, yet these churches remain stagnant. They are growing inward, forgetting the imperative of the Great Commission.

Second, I see megachurches growing for the wrong reasons. Thousands of seekers are attracted by a warm social environment but are not finding the pearl of great price. They are not embracing Christ as Savior and Lord, nor are they being made uncomfortable by the claims of His cross. How this distresses my soul!

But I will not react in anger. My feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. I am a bearer of good news. My message to both erring churches is, “Return.” I am not pointing a finger or calling for breast-beating, fasting, prayer, humiliation, or a vow to do better. No, I am simply saying, “Return.”

I am always struck by the picture of Jesus standing at the door of the church in Laodicea: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:19-20 NKJV).

What is He doing there? He is knocking! This image from the Book of Revelation was not given to the wonderful church of Philadelphia. No, it was given to the church of lukewarm, compromising, Spirit-ignoring believers. And what does this picture tell us? It tells us that the Laodiceans, in all of their error, were not far from the real thing. All they had to do was turn, open the door and He would come in. Jesus had not left them. They had left Him.

**BECOME THE REAL THING AGAIN**

And so, in the Spirit of Christ knocking at the door in Laodicea, I say to churches that have lost their zeal for evangelism: “You are not far from the real thing. Let soulwinning return as a priority. The church of Jesus Christ is not a pleasure boat, but a lifeboat. Entertainers are neither needed nor wanted. From the captain to the cook, all hands are needed on deck for soul saving. The church that doesn’t save the lost is lost itself.”

What is the secret to keeping the evangelistic fire alive? First, I believe we must cast ourselves in utter reliance upon the Holy Spirit. Oh yes, many say this, but what does it really look like? I believe when we rightly trust the Spirit, all of our methods, programs, denominational loyalties, and long-held traditions become secondary—even expendable. If the Lord chooses to let a sacred cow or two die, we let them go, because we utterly depend upon the fire of the Spirit for life, for breath, for every sinner who repents. He is the only true “soulwinner.” He is the fire. We have the great privilege, through the “foolishness of preaching,” to be stewards of His fire.

When I was a young missionary in Africa, I dutifully saluted my “fathers” in the work. They taught me what was considered to be the proper methods of missions, tried and true, proven for longer than I had been alive. I could not lightly dismiss them. Yet it made my heart ache to see how few responded to the rigid picture those fathers painted of our gracious Savior.

It was almost as if we handed the baby Jesus to the world wrapped in legal documents, covered in rules and regulations that obscured His very nature. I longed to see the vast multitudes of precious African people rejoicing in Christ, but under such trappings, I was not surprised that so few came to...
Him. The tried and true methods of the traditional missionary endeavor had become a boneyard of dead, putrefying religion.

God took a hammer and chisel and began working on me. Things didn’t shape up overnight. I learned lessons one by one. New dimensions of the Holy Spirit opened up, and each one was an astonishment to me. Signs and wonders began to occur, and things began to change. One would have to read my autobiography, Living a Life of Fire, to fully appreciate the sequence the Lord took me through.

With each lesson, I found myself opposed by those who clung to methods, programs, denominational loyalties, and long-held traditions. In each case, there came a time to break free of such, and follow the Spirit in the pursuit of souls. It was emotionally wrenching to go through it, and that is why many do not travel this road. They buy a false security in the company of death.

Utter dependence on the Holy Spirit sometimes can cause us to look like troublemakers, but that is not what is happening. You must simply love Him and esteem Him above all others. Let the chips fall where they may. There is no formula for instant success “on the cheap,” I’m afraid, and I am not offering such here.

But I can offer my testimony. I have seen over 1 million people record decisions for Christ in a single meeting. I have seen 55 million embrace Jesus in the past 10 years. On it goes. Our crowds are greater than ever. Multitudes are being healed and filled with the Holy Spirit. It is harvest time. The Book of Acts was not the peak performance of the power of God, but the first sampling of the possibilities for His followers in the Holy Spirit. Trust Him! Accept no substitutes.

By breaking free of the tried and true, we have seen whole countries shaken by the power of the gospel. If this can be the result of the things God has shown me, my hope is that God will show you also. May you receive that heart revelation of the matchless glory of His power, a power beyond anything the Holy Spirit. It is harvest time. The Book of Acts was not the peak performance of the power of God, but the first sampling of the possibilities for His followers in the Holy Spirit. Trust Him! Accept no substitutes.

All the angel could say was, “Now send men to Joppa and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter.” This mighty seraph from heaven had to bow to Peter’s higher privilege of carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ to Cornelius. We only can accept, with wonder and humility, the fact that it pleases God to call and to send people like you and me. We humans are privileged. There should be no reluctance on our part to do this work.

It has always been the same. God used not one, but four evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—to write down the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such a pattern is linked, in my mind, to the four men in the Old Testament who carried the Ark of the Covenant.

Carriers of the gospel change from generation to generation, but the gospel remains the same. We are here now, and today is our turn. God has called us. Each of us. The gospel needs to be taken to the ends of the earth. I sometimes wonder if the millions I am reaping today were not meant to be divided among many others who turned away from His call.

I do not believe that it is God’s plan to allow hell to be bigger than heaven. Although Scripture speaks in Matthew 7:13 about “many” who are on their way to eternal destruction, they must be intercepted by men and women preaching the original gospel. Hebrews 2:10 reveals that provision has been made to bring “many sons to glory,” and Revelation 7:9 speaks of a successful conclusion to this idea. Jesus told us to make disciples of all nations. These were not empty words.

—Continued on page 58
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD success defined in seven simple words? Here goes... “He serves God’s Purpose in His Generation” (Acts 13:36). To effectively do ministry, we must try to know and understand the generation to whom we are ministering. This key concept is reinforced in a simple statement found in 1 Chronicles 12:32: “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times” (KJV). The magnitude of the Millennial Generation alone makes this book well worth the time and effort. How prepared are we to identify, attract, win, and disciple Millennials? Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer, a father-and-son team, set out to find what defines this generation.

Who and What Are the “Millennials”?

Examining this generation, the Rainers uncover many facets of this group of young Americans that set them apart from their counterparts: the “Baby Boomer” Generation and “Generation X.” The “Millennials”—the group of people born from 1980 to 2000—are the largest generation in American history, a title previously held by the Baby Boomer Generation of 1946–1964.

The Millennials: Connecting to America’s Largest Generation illustrates that members of the Millennial Generation are unusually close to their parents. The Millennials were raised by their Boomer parents, and that impacts the Millennials’ views on just about everything. The authors look at not only the raw statistics of their research, but also possible explanations of why Millennials, for the most part, have closer relationships with their parents than adults in earlier generations, and they explore possible reasons for this. For example, Millennials are not satisfied with attaining high-paying jobs and buying “stuff”—they want to make an impact. Inside the pages of this exceptional book, the authors offer some insight into this statistic as well.

The authors do a remarkable job of describing how the Millennials view money, work, family, religion, the media, and more. Many of the observations that the authors make simply serve to confirm what most people would probably already expect. For example, members of the Millennial Generation use their cell phones a lot and use Twitter, Facebook, etc., to stay connected to their friends and family.

Some of the more interesting findings:

- Millennials are on track to become the most educated generation in history.
- Millennials are predominantly an agnostic generation.
- Millennials view family as most important in their lives.
- Millennials enjoy having a mentor in their lives.
- Millennials have great respect for older generations.

Since Millennials are delaying marriage, on average, until after age 25, perhaps they will defy the odds and not wind up divorced, like their parents. However, children of divorce have a unique perspective about marriage that could make it impossible for them to make a marriage work. While over 80
percent of Millennials believe they will only be married once, they also (perhaps naively) believe the government will be able to pay for their retirement!

**Millennials and Their Bearing on Church Growth and the Future**

The Rainers gracefully acknowledge that no amount of statistical analysis could ever predict what God will do in and through a generation. So, while the work is helpful to show us that those born between 1980 and 1991 (the book limits itself to the older Millennial Generation) are looking to make a difference in the world, we cannot fully know what the Lord might do with such a generation. As the authors make clear, this generation is the *least churched* of any in American history. At the same time, this generation’s Christians are as radically committed to Christ as any generation in memory.

One of the descriptions of Millennials that is loaded with tension is “spiritual but not religious.” That statement holds both good news and bad news for the future of the church. The Millennials seem to have a deep and genuine thirst for spiritual things and to experience God. So, for the church, we find a very thin line between their potential response and rejection, embracing and embarrassment, community and cult. One thing the church undoubtedly must do is love them authentically, and be cautious about harsh judgment and religious legalism.

**My Impressions of the Book**

I am not a “statistics and numbers geek,” but I can easily detect that the writers of this book are. The presentation might have been strengthened with the inclusion of graphs, charts, pictures, or other visuals when there are so many statistics to consider.

This book is a valuable contribution toward understanding the values and attitudes of Millennials. Some of the interview questions were open-ended, such as, “What’s truly important in your life?” Other questions were quite precise and easier to evaluate, such as “What technology tools do you like and use?” The authors are evangelical Christians, but appear to have successfully kept any biases separated for their understanding and presentation of results.

The book presents a captivating snapshot of the views and priorities of American young adults on a wide variety of themes. Some readers may be skeptical of some of the conclusions about how the Millennial Generation is almost destined to change society for the better. I suppose much of that depends on whether they can grasp the love, hope, and positive future found only in Jesus Christ.

**B. Randall Parris, D.Min., currently serves as the Youth Missions (YWEA /Leadership) Development coordinator Website: cogyouthanddiscipleship.org; Email: rparris@churchofgod.org.**
As your church begins to realize the need for a new worship facility, you can begin to experience an overwhelming sense of anxiety and fear. However, we know this is not God’s will. Second Timothy 1:7 reminds us that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind” (NKJV). Our team of professionals has helped hundreds of churches through this process successfully. We feel that it is best to view this process as a journey. With this in mind, the question most commonly asked is, Where do we start? It is imperative you select a design-build consultant (we refer to this person as a guide) to walk you through each step of the journey.

**STEP 1: CHOOSING A GUIDE**

A guide is a person who leads anyone through unknown or unmapped country. As you follow your guide, the first step should be selecting the best leadership suited for your project. The people—architects, engineers, and construction consultants—will set the tone and affect the outcome, quality, and cost of your project. It is imperative that your budget amount is established next.

I have consulted with many pastors and church leadership teams who have previously experienced the horror of spending many months of planning and hundreds of thousands of dollars on architectural plans, only to discover that the cost exceeds their ability to fund the project, leaving the leadership team and the congregation disillusioned and angry at the loss of valuable resources. This is why it is imperative to have a fixed budget and maintain it through each step of the process. A guide can help you account for your overall cost and ensure that you stay within budget.

**STEP 2: SELECTING A DESTINATION**

Once your budget is established and your team is selected, you are well on your way to developing the critical path of your future worship facility. Your guide will assist you in determining your worship-space...
needs, developing a design based on your church’s DNA, determining where your new facility will be constructed, and define and reevaluate your budget for the total project. Now you are ready to begin the design process.

**STEP 3: THE DESIGN PROCESS**

After completing a needs analysis and overall budget, you will be ready to design your new worship facilities. During the design process, your church’s needs are translated into a viable solution that can be communicated to your congregation and, ultimately, to your construction team. I feel the best way to accomplish this is the design/build method in which the builder, design team (architect, engineer), and the church are all under one contract from the very beginning of the project. This cooperative team effort reduces misunderstandings and prevents adversarial relationships from occurring.

How does this work? Specifically, the design/build method focuses on combining the design, permit, and construction phases in order to streamline the traditional design/bid/build process. The design/build method strives to bring together design and construction professionals in a collaborative environment to produce the most cost-effective design and to simultaneously complete their tasks. Sometimes, this can be referred to as value-engineering. With this method, the church, the design team, and the design/builder work together to determine what methods and materials will maximize the church’s value.

**STEP 4: FINANCING THE JOURNEY**

Once your building documents (architectural and civil plans) are in place, you will be prepared to present them to your congregation and lending institutions. Again, it is critical that your guide walks you and your leadership team through securing funds for your project. In today’s banking environment, it is extremely difficult to obtain large loans without professional help.

**STEP 5: CONSTRUCTION**

Once construction begins, the church will start to see the results of your labor, and the congregation’s excitement about the project will begin to grow. Your guide should keep you completely informed during the building process. We believe that weekly updates are absolutely necessary during this phase to guarantee your project is completed on time and within budget.

The design/build method will give you single-source accountability. Rather than hiring several contractors and consultants, your church has just one entity to deal with. Design revisions, budgeting, permitting, jobsite issues, construction questions, change orders, and billing can all be routed through one source. Additionally, the design/build method steers projects away from the “finger-pointing” that is often commonplace in construction projects, and allows the church to turn to one source with questions or concerns. Also, it is important that you limit your liabilities by obtaining a builder’s risk insurance policy, as construction sites can be very dangerous. In the United States, there are typically over 1,000 construction-related fatalities a year. Worship facilities can be subject to many different risks while under construction. They can catch fire, be damaged by high winds, or fall victim to other forces such as theft or vandalism. In many cases, the church itself is responsible for these liabilities, instead of the contractor.

**STEP 6: COMPLETING THE JOURNEY**

One of the most overlooked areas of cost is commonly known as FF&E (fixtures, furniture, and equipment). This includes your audio-visual package, office furnishings, telecommunications, sanctuary seating, coffee shop/gathering place needs, etc. Failure to properly plan for this area in your overall budget can cause your team and congregation to be disappointed in the worship experience of your new facility. We suggest 10 percent to 20 percent of your total budget be included for this area. Today’s worship facilities require a significant amount of time, energy, and financial resources. However, with proper planning, the building process should not be feared but embraced.

**Wes Hardin** is owner of PAR Church Builders; Website: www.parchurchbuilders.com; Used with permission.

**insights & trends**

**PASTORSWIVES.ORG** offers community and resources to help these brave “first ladies” of church life. The site provides discussion forums, devotionals, conference details, and practical articles—all geared for women in this unique and challenging role.
I have been in ministry since 1981. During this time, I have personally discovered that members who are discipled according to the Word of God grow and flourish in the things of God. I have been blessed to minister in the inner city, and the majority of our members come from deplorable conditions. Most were hardcore drug addicts, but by the grace of God they surrendered their lives to Jesus. The leadership of the church was ready to lead them in discipleship, which in turn, brought an excitement and enthusiasm to reach others by telling them what the Lord had done for them.

I personally mentor church members. Discipling and mentoring are both vital in the twenty-first century. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gave the mandate “to go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV). As our risen Lord spoke over two thousand years ago to the first disciples, He is speaking today to pastors and church members. He is speaking through the Holy Spirit to continue His mandate to “go and make disciples of all nations.” Discipling is biblical teaching to observe all things Jesus has commanded.

MENTORING

Along with a sustained discipleship program, it is vital to create a mentoring ministry that utilizes the talents and gifts of the experienced pastor and older saints to help establish young believers in their walk with Christ. While discipling looks more at spiritual development, mentoring helps develop the social development of character and conduct. For example, mentoring can be done one-on-one to help develop a Christian within a social environment such as work, school, self-development, self-awareness, and reaching individual goals. Examples of mentoring in the Bible are seen in the relationship between the apostle Paul and young Timothy and with the older women instructing and teaching the younger women (Titus 2:3-5). Mentoring is an experienced person teaching a younger person from their own life experiences, thereby giving wise counsel and guidance.

MANDATE

We have a mandate from our Lord to “go and make disciples.” Church leaders must develop a discipleship program that fits the needs of the local congregation. Again, it is essential that a well-constructed mentoring program be developed. Discipleship and mentoring includes all ages. People will experience life to its fullest as they grow and mature in the will of God through discipling and mentoring. The Church of God under the leadership of Dr. Raymond Culpepper (general overseer) has chosen to meet the mandate through a biblical emphasis on prayer, the Great Commission, and the quest for trust. It is time to reach the harvest and bring souls into the Kingdom. The door of opportunity is open for discipleship and mentoring!

Brenda R. Anderson, M.A., is pastor of Victory Praise Church in Washington, D.C.; Website: www.victorypraise.homestead.com; Email: victorypraisecog@earthlink.net
28 DAYS of REACHING OUT in PRAYER

March 4–25

An Intercession Emphasis for Touching the Unchurched

Important: Even though this prayer emphasis is listed for March, it can be used at any time by a local church.

PRAYER IS THE POWER of the church! Prayer brings us into the presence of God, issues His peace, and cultivates prosperity in every area of life. Prayer is also the “reaching-out” power of the church. It produces conviction for sin, creates a desire to seek the Lord, and inspires change in loyalty and lifestyle.

The 28-day prayer campaign is designed to bring local congregations together to pray for outreach vision and involvement—focus on reaching the unchurched for Christ. The plan is very simple: the emphasis will include four weeks, and each week prayer will center on one of four areas of outreach. Guidelines and suggestions are listed for each week. The prayer emphasis for each week can be listed in the church bulletin or all four weeks can be distributed in the form of a brochure.

DAILY PRAYER TIME

Each day church members will begin prayer time by praying the Jabez Prayer:

Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I might not cause pain [that I may bring glory to Your kingdom] (1 Chronicles 4:10 NKJV).

The prayer is both personal and corporate. It revolves around the four specific areas of outreach on which the emphasis will focus—Blessings, Enlargement, Protection, and Kingdom Enrichment.

After praying the Jabez Prayer, look at the subjects for the week. Observe the suggestions, make a list of names, locations, or activities, and then spend quality time in intercessory prayer.

FIRST WEEK: March 4–10

Pray for the Ministries of the Church.

• Make a list of the ministries of the church. Be sure to include all ministries—from the nursery, to nurturing programs, to new converts.
• Record the names of ministry leaders, workers, and helpers in each department.
• Divide the ministries into five or seven days. Pray for specific ministries, activities, and personnel each day during the week.
• Ask God to bless outreach effectiveness, discipleship training, spiritual fruitfulness, and contribution of workers.
• **Contact** four or five ministry leaders or workers via a phone call, letter, or personal conversation. Express appreciation for their vision, commitment, and service to God and His church. Let them know you are praying for them.

SECOND WEEK: March 11–17

**Pray for Unsaved Family Members and Relatives.**

• **Ask** God to disturb your spirit concerning your own flesh and blood who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
• **Prepare** a list of unsaved parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, etc. Write a personal note by each name.
• **Seek** God for their salvation. Ask Him to strike conviction in their hearts and to send witnesses and wake-up calls across the path of each one.
• **Call** at least five of the individuals on your list. Talk about their wellbeing and state you are praying for them.
• **Select** at least one or two and invite them to attend church with you. Arrange to have lunch with them. Believe the Lord for a life-changing decision.

THIRD WEEK: March 18–24

**Pray for the Children and Youth of the Community.**

• **Purpose** to make an impact on children and youth who are close to you. Write down the names of five of them for whom you will earnestly pray.
• **List** the names of elementary and junior high principals and some of the teachers. Pray for school safety, leaders, and the development of students.
• **Prepare** a list of high schools. Pray for students, coaches, and school programs. Ask God for a spiritual awakening among students.
• **Select** one school for prayerwalking. After school, or one day during school, walk around the school and pray for God’s provisions and protection. Prayerwalking “helps you to draw nearer in order to pray clearer.”
• **Talk** to one or two students. Share that you are praying for them and their school. Inquire about problems and opportunities.

FOURTH WEEK: March 25–31

**Pray for Neighbors, People at Work, City Leaders.**

• **Select** several families in the neighborhood to pray for daily. Invite a family to have a meal with you. Share literature about the church and upcoming activities.
• **Engage** in prayerwalking in the neighborhood. As you walk, pray God’s blessings on each home.

At the conclusion of the 28 Days of Reaching Out in Prayer, your Christian life will be richer, the church will be stronger, and the lives of hundreds of individuals will be purer. The four tracks of prayer outlined—Church, Family, Children and Youth, and Neighbors (workplace and city personnel), is a pattern you can use on a regular basis. It is foundational in touching the unchurched.

**Even though dates have been set for this emphasis, a church has the option to set a different time to promote the prayer campaign.**
The 74th Church of God
INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

EVERY TWO YEARS, the Church of God looks forward to gathering together to celebrate God’s goodness through fellowship, worship, praise, relaxation, and church business. Due to the popularity and ease of the venue, the General Assembly will be conducted in the beautiful and family-friendly city of Orlando, Florida, for the second consecutive time.

Orlando has a lot to offer Assembly delegates, from a convenient and versatile conference venue to plenty of nearby hotel space. Like past locations, there is also a multitude of dining choices, but Orlando also offers what it is most famous for—family entertainment in abundance. Places like world-famous Disney parks, Universal Studios, Sea World, and the Holy Land Experience offer ways for the family to enjoy themselves on the front or back end of the Assembly.

Registration and Hotel Reservation Forms

Official registration opens January 9. As with any Assembly, the first order of business is registration and hotel reservations. The forms on the following pages give complete instructions. Once completed, these forms can either be mailed or faxed to the proper venues. However, the quickest and most efficient method for accomplishing both of these items is by logging on to the Church of God website (www.chuchofgod.org) and clicking on the “General Assembly” link on the home page. Online reservations/registration opens January 9.

Important Items to Remember

The Assembly will take place in the North/South Building of the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC).

- Registration is required for admission to observe General Assembly business sessions.
- Parking is available adjacent to the OCCC for $14 per day with in and out privileges. There will be no shuttle service between hotels and the OCCC.
- Hotel reservations are being coordinated by The Housing Connection via www.chuchofgod.org.
- The Orlando International Airport is located approximately 12 miles from the OCCC.
- Please observe all deadlines and stipulations as indicated on the delegate and hotel reservation forms to ensure a complete and pleasant registration process.

See you in Orlando!
Church of God 74th International General Assembly
DELEGATE REGISTRATION
July 24-27, 2012 - Orlando, FL

NAME  Please type or print all information legibly.

Last: ___________________________ First: ___________________________ M.I.: ___________________________

Date of Birth: ___________________________ 

☐ Hearing Impaired  ☐ Physically Challenged

Address (Street or P.O. Box): ___________________________

City: ___________________________ State: ___________________________ Zip: ___________________________

Country: ___________________________

SPOUSE NAME  (if attending and registering)  Please type or print all information legibly.

If Minister, Please List File #: ___________________________

First: ___________________________ M.I.: ___________________________

Date of Birth: ___________________________ 

☐ Hearing Impaired  ☐ Physically Challenged

CONTACT INFORMATION
Day Phone: ___________________________
Fax: ___________________________

Email Address: ___________________________

RANK
A  Ordained Bishop
B  Ordered Minister
C  Deacon
D  Minister of CE
E  Minister of Music
F  Layperson Son of Church
G  Widow of Minister
H  Non-Member

OFFICE USE ONLY
Date: ___________________________

Am. Paid: ___________________________

CK #: ___________________________

CG Batch: ___________________________

Assignment: ___________________________

STATUS
A  Full-time
B  Part-time
C  Retired

GA Minutes S2 Article VI
1. International General Assembly Members

The International General Assembly is composed of all members and ministers of the Church of God 16 years of age and above. Members and ministers of the Church of God present and registered at the International General Assembly shall comprise its voting constituency.

Lay Delegate Affirmation
Must be completed to register as a LAYPERSON.

Local church where you are a member:

Church Name: ___________________________
City & State: ___________________________

Regional Office Name: ___________________________

I affirm that I am a member of the above church.

Signature: ___________________________

Lay Delegate Signature: ___________________________

Spouse Lay Delegate Signature: ___________________________

Please Note
If paying by Check or Money Order, do not Fax.

Mail Registration Form to:
GA Registration
PO Box 2430
Cleveland TN 37320

Make Check or Money Order (US Funds ONLY) Payable to:
GA Registration

OFFICE USE ONLY

YOUTH  (ages 15 & under)
Print names and ages of children AGES 15 & UNDER ONLY attending with you. These registrations are complimentary.

Name: ___________________________ Age (15 & Under): ___________________________

Name: ___________________________ Age (15 & Under): ___________________________

Persons aged 16 or above listed in this section of the form will NOT be registered. Young adults ages 16-19 must complete a separate form from their parents and sign the Lay Delegate Affirmation because they have voting privileges.

FEE
Pre Registration
Due by 6/18/12

Onsite Registration
July 24-27, 2012

Retired Minister Registration
Registration is FREE for retired ministers and their spouses or widows.

Individual: $79
Married Couple: $99
Young Adult (age 16-18): $25

$0 Retired Minister/Couple or Widow

Retired Minister Registration is FREE for retired ministers and their spouses or widows.

Please check one box only.

PAYMENT
Registration cannot be processed without payment in full.

☐ Check
☐ Credit Card
☐ Visa
☐ MasterCard
☐ American Express
☐ Discover

Please Select Amount Paid By Check, Money Order or Credit Card
☐ $25
☐ $40
☐ $79
☐ $99
☐ $100
☐ $125

Card Exp Date: ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________

QUESTIONS?
Contact our Registration Office by email GAR@churchofgod.org or phone 1-800-323-RCOG (7264) Monday-Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm Eastern.

Go to www.churchofgod.org to apply for HOUSING and complete your registration ONLINE (please do not duplicate your registration by registering online and sending this form).

The pre-registration DEADLINE is 6/18/12. Registrations submitted after the deadline will NOT be processed. Onsite registration will be available in Orlando.

Delegates should receive confirmation within three weeks of registering. Credentials will be mailed to all pre-registered delegates at least 10 days prior to the General Assembly. Registrations received after the pre-registration deadline will be returned.
INSTRUCTIONS:
Reservations can be made in one of the following ways:

INTERNET:
https://resweb.passkey.com/go/COG2012

TELEPHONE:
Toll-free: 888-757-7816
International: 801-214-7284

FAX THIS FORM:
801-355-0250

MAIL: The Housing Connection / GA2012
175 S. West Temple, Suite 140
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

DEADLINE:
Reservations must be made by June 26, 2012, or until the discounted rooms sell out, whichever comes first.

REQUESTS & CONFIRMATIONS:
Special requests cannot be guaranteed. Hotels will assign specific rooms upon check-in, based on availability. The Housing Connection will send an e-mail confirmation for your reservation. Please review all information for accuracy. Please contact The Housing Connection if you don’t receive a confirmation or have questions.

TAX RATE:
All rates are per room and subject to 12.5% tax (subject to change).

ROOM DEPOSIT REQUIRED TO SECURE RESERVATION:
All reservation requests must be accompanied by a credit card guarantee or check in the amount equaling a deposit for one night’s room and tax for each room reserved. Forms received without a valid guarantee will not be processed. For room deposits in the form of a check, please make check payable to The Housing Connection.

CANCELLATION POLICY:
Reservations cancelled after June 26, 2012 and prior to 72 hours before arrival date will be subject to a $50 cancellation fee for each room cancelled charged by The Housing Connection. Deposit of one night’s room and tax will be forfeited entirely if cancellation occurs within 72 hours of arrival date.

CHANGES:
Contact The Housing Connection for changes/cancellations through July 16, 2012. After this date, please contact your confirmed hotel for changes/cancellations.

MULTIPLE ROOMS:
Complete one form for each room requested. Multiple reservations will not be accepted under one name.

GUEST INFORMATION

Arrival Date________________________  Departure Date________________________

First Name________________________ M.I.____ Last Name________________________

Email (required)

Daytime Phone________________________ Fax________________________

Church/Office________________________

Address________________________

Address 2________________________

City________________________ State/Province________________________

Zip/Postal Code________________________ Country________________________

HOTEL SELECTION (No shuttles provided)

Room Type: □ Single (1 bed) □ Double (1 bed) □ Double (2 beds)
□ Triple (2 beds) □ Quad (2 beds)

Hotel Choice: Please list 4 hotel choices with hotel code in order of preference.
See listing of Official Hotels on Hotels Map.

1. __________________________  2. __________________________

3. __________________________  4. __________________________

List all room occupants: (max four persons per room)

1. __________________________  2. __________________________

3. __________________________  4. __________________________

□ Check here if you have a disability requiring special services

Special Requests: __________________________

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Your hotel reserves the right to charge this card a deposit for one night’s room and tax for each room reservation on or after June 26, 2012. This credit card must be valid through July 2012.

□ Amex □ MasterCard □ Visa □ Discover

□ Check payable to The Housing Connection  Check #_____

Card #: ________________________ Exp. Date: __________

Name on Credit Card: __________________________

Signature: __________________________
Trust is the foundation of the Christian life—trust in God, trust in the church, and trust in each other. Trust is vital to the mental, emotional, and spiritual life of a believer. I am thankful for The Quest for Trust Response Kit. The age-level material has impacted our congregation and community.
—Randy Smith, lead pastor, The Healing Place Church, Trussville, Alabama

I highly recommend The Quest for Trust initiative. Using age-appropriate resources key areas of ministry have been targeted—our families, our congregations, our communities, and our leadership. The state office was able to provide packets for all of our pastors. I have been blessed by the overwhelmingly positive response. Trust is a foundational principle in church health and outreach.
—Kenneth R. Bell, D.Min., administrative bishop, Pennsylvania.

The Quest for Trust is a tremendous resource that brings clarity as to how the body of Christ is to function. The initiative has enhanced the unity of our church. I highly recommend it.
—Laurence Wall, pastor of Newport, Vermont, Maine.

Ernest Hemingway once said, “The best way to find out if you can trust someone is to trust him.” The Quest for Trust emphasis reminds us as partners in ministry we must constantly act in ways that demonstrate our trust in God and in each other, and that conveys our own trustworthiness. Dr. Culpepper’s first initiative, Prayer, emphasized the Great Commitment; the second focused on The Great Commission; and the third, The Quest for Trust, underscores the Great Commandment. The Quest for Trust is a full-gospel catechism for understanding biblical relationships.
—James E. Cossey, D.Min., state administrative bishop, Michigan.

I serve on the board of directors of an organization called Operation Transformation—“churches working together for a changed community.” We are making a positive contribution toward developing trust between the local church and the government. The Quest for Trust material complements and adds guidance and support in reaching our goals.
—Richard L. Shelton, lead pastor, Riverside Tabernacle, Fort Gratiot, Michigan.
To shepherd the same flock for 27 years, you have to say to the people “Trust Me!” then you have to prove it by setting an example of integrity, discipline, and mentoring leadership. The Quest for Trust material shows how to be an example of trust for pastors and church members. Trust principles for children and youth are also set forth. I have been in ministry for over 58 years, and I believe the trust material is foundational for every local church.

—Dwight Aldinger, pastor, Stafford, Garrisonville, VA.

The administrative bishops of both South and North Georgia purchased The Quest for Trust Response Kits for all of their pastors.

I met with the pastors on each district and gave them The Quest for Trust Response Kit. I have witnessed throughout the state an increased trust level between the laity and clergy for church unity and growth. I commend the Executive Committee for this scriptural initiative.

—A. Ray Garner, administrative bishop, South Georgia.

Providing the Trust Response Kit for our pastors was an investment in leadership. To perform God’s work effectively and progressively in leadership on a state level and in local churches requires trust and interdependence, partnership in ministry. The results have been overwhelming.


I find The Quest for Trust resources to be very valuable. I am preaching sermons on trust on Sunday morning, our Life Groups discuss the material in their sessions, and the material for children is taught in Sunday school. It has brought a closeness in our congregation.

—Calvin Woodring, lead pastor, Elkton, Maryland.
Furthermore, there are no emergency arrangements found in Scripture in case the gospel fails. It won’t! More people are being saved, healed, and baptized in the Holy Spirit today than ever before in human history. We are not called with the outcome of an uncertain war hanging in the balance. We are called to share the victory and the spoils.

God’s invincible secret is the cross of Christ, which frightens every demon in hell. Heaven will be an eternal and dominating monument to the victory of the gospel. My words are a welcome to join a conquering army, not a plea to support a hopeless and desperate resistance against overwhelming odds. Our Captain never lost a battle, and He never will.

BE PART OF GOD’S SOUL PURPOSE

For this purpose, God has laid down the basic means for the salvation of souls. Human schemes have not been the answer, and if we follow them, we will see the present generation die in their sins. The mighty commission of Christ to His church is a call to the war against unbelief, using the sword of the gospel as our weapon.

We need more imaginative approaches rather than doing things a certain way just because that’s the way they have always been done. Methods which have made little impact in the past are not likely to produce an impact now. Plodding along mechanically might be called faithfulness in the zombie land of the missionary boneyard, but our primary concern in evangelism is effectiveness, not this type of so-called faithfulness.

I am concerned, because there surely must be limiting factors hindering the gospel. These limiting factors possibly are the accepted methods of evangelism, which are still unchanged. They could even be doctrines and sentiments which tell us to “leave it all to God.”

Some insist God’s method of winning the lost is revival, but they fail to carry out the Great Commission in the meanwhile. Some think that if people are to be saved, they will be saved anyway. Suppose such theories are wrong? After all, they surely are! What an awful risk, to rest the eternal destiny of souls upon a controversial interpretation of Scripture or the turn of a Greek verb. We must err on the side of obedience to the Great Commission.

And so, I urge you, be a part of it. Return soulwinning as a priority to the church. I believe the best is yet to be. The whole world will resound with the praises of our God and Savior. In all nations and in every tongue, confession will be made that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Reinhard Bonnke is the founder of Christ for All Nations (CfAN) and is principally known for his gospel crusades. He has conducted citywide meetings across Africa with as many as 1.6 million people attending a single meeting. Since the start of the new millennium, through a host of major events in Africa and other parts of the world, the ministry has recorded 55 million documented decisions for Jesus Christ. He is also recognized for hosting Fire Conferences in many parts of the world that are aimed at equipping church leaders and workers for evangelism. His ministry teaches an online self-study course aimed at inspiring Holy Spirit evangelism and publishes follow-up literature as part of its discipleship-training program that has been translated into 103 languages and printed in 55 countries. More information about Evangelist Bonnke can be found on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Used with permission.

insights & trends

WOMEN GIVE MORE THAN MEN. According to the Center on Philanthropy, women give significantly more to charity than men. Nonprofit groups have stated that women are the driving forces behind many of the gifts they receive. There are several reasons for this: more women are working, their incomes have increased, and more have college degrees. The percentage of women who make more money than their working husbands is now about 26 percent.

—Impact: Does this relate to local church giving? How can it be recognized and emphasized?

AVENUES FOR CHURCH GROWTH. A survey by the Barna Group/Alpha USA revealed the top three areas of church ministry senior pastors wanted to see develop and grow in the coming twelve months: Outreach/Evangelism (46%); Specific Ministries (youth, children, men’s, etc., 32%); and Spiritual Growth (28%).

—Impact: You have to reach the unchurched before you can train and teach about spiritual growth.
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