

NEW Harvest

~ Equipping mission planters to multiply the harvest ~

Center for U. S. Missions

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Church Planting: A Historical Look

by Mike Rubl

History was not popular in high school. It felt like rummaging through “old things” in the attic that were no longer relevant. Courses in American History and World History were taken out of duty rather than passionate interest. At the seminary, Church History, though important, was seldom the topic of late-night discussions. Yet historical perspective is a powerful force which impacts and informs both present and future.



Church Planting has been happening for nearly twenty centuries. During this time, the rate of planting new churches has seen peaks and valleys; different kinds of churches have been planted; and the motivations, strategies and methodologies have swung like a missional pendulum. Church history provides a pertinent and insightful continuation of the exciting church planting story in the New Testament.

Church Planting is one component in a broader mission agenda: the arrival and expansion of the Kingdom of God (the reign and rule of Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of people) and the community of Word and Sacrament which results. Because church planting is descriptive (not prescriptive) of a much broader mission agenda, it



includes evangelism, discipleship, social action, cultural engagement, community transformation, and more.

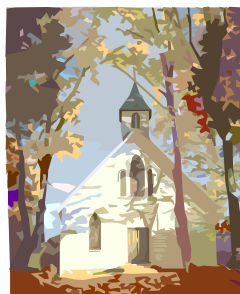
The work of church planting advocates is made more difficult by the fact that most saints in local congregations are unfamiliar with church planting and feel it is a new channel for kingdom expansion. They have no experience with it, nor even a faint recollection of how even their own congregation came into being. Church planting is not recognized as a practice as normal as prayer, preaching, youth ministry, and evangelism. Even the term “church planting” was not familiar to many as little as ten years ago!

It is always a risk to categorize, since over-simplification is usually not far behind. Yet there is value in gleaning from church history and sociology four main kinds of church planting.

1. Pioneer Church Planting, establishing churches in areas previously unreached by the gospel but now being evangelized and discipled, is undertaken wherever missionaries advance geographically.

2. Replacement Church Planting, establishing new churches in areas where churches had previously been planted but no longer exist due to persecution, change or decline, occurs wherever people groups are being re-evangelized.

3. Ecclesiological Church Planting is establishing more churches in areas where churches already exist, to express and embody distinctive doctrinal or ecclesiological convictions. Many Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal churches were not planted in pioneer territory, nor to replace churches that had closed, but to provide opportunities to express deeply held doctrinal and ecclesiological convictions.



4. Saturation Church Planting is the practice of establishing more churches in areas where churches already exist, to enhance the ability of these churches to engage in mission in these areas. The purpose is not to impact new areas, nor to recover lost ground, nor even to develop new kinds of churches, but simply to plant more churches in already church-ed areas. ■

For a deeper exploration of these thoughts, see *Church Planting—Laying Foundations* by Stuart Murray; Herald Press, 2001.

Ablaze! Covenant Congregations: Engaging Congregations to Multiply

by Yohannes Mengsteab

In every generation, Jesus calls Christians to be his witnesses “beginning in Jerusalem, Judea Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Lord gave this commission to disciples who were timid, hiding behind locked doors. Afraid for their lives, they could not muster courage to go out and be God’s people. So the commissioning to be witnesses was followed with an instruction to wait until they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit prepared the disciples of old, and prepares the disciples of today, to be witnesses wherever they go and in all circumstances. People who know Christ have hearts *Ablaze!* by the power of the Holy Spirit and cannot help but shine the light of him who saved them.

The Apostolic church went to Judea, Samaria and the end of the known world in a powerful way when the church was scattered due to persecution after the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1; 11:19-21). The disciples became witnesses, even martyrs, for the Gospel. The Jerusalem church multiplied as her scattered members witnessed to communities around them, and the Cross of Christ was planted in worlds in darkness.

Barnabas was sent to check out the church in Antioch. After observing their faith, he “encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts” (Acts 11:23). A covenant of sorts was entered in between his people and God. Hearts that were set *Ablaze!* covenanted to partner with God in His missionary enterprise.

Antioch then sent Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journeys (Acts 13: 2-3), and churches were planted in Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus and other places. These congregations multiplied by sending their people, some through persecution, and some for the intentional purpose of expanding the kingdom of God on earth. These early congregations held each other accountable “to remain true to the Lord” and keep their covenant promise to be the witnesses that God called them to be.

The work of the evangelization of the world was not given to angels, professionals or institutions. The mandate is given to each Christian as they exercise their faith in a community of believers. In other words, the congregation, as a body of these individual believers, is in the frontline of the expansion of God’s kingdom. Thus, the call is for

congregations to covenant with God and their fellow Christian brothers and sisters to engage in the expansion of the kingdom of God numerically and geographically, beginning in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

In her early years, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod grew as congregations took every opportunity to



expand their mission through planting congregations and preaching stations as the national frontiers expanded. God blessed the church with numerical growth and geographical expansion.

Today, as the U.S. population continues to grow and the number of believers continues to decline, the call to be in mission is as urgent as it was in the first century and will always be until the Lord comes. People who are not counted in the company of the believers are people for whom Christ has compassion (Luke 6:34). We should have the same compassion also.

Will you covenant to remain true to the Lord today? God is faithful and will remain true to himself – he is and will be with you always!

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is again called today “to remain true to the Lord” and send her members to multiply and expand God’s kingdom on earth. LCMS congregations have covenanted to one another to walk together for the purpose of mission and ministry to the ends of the earth, which is the meaning of a “synod.” However, there is a need to be more intentional;

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The Center, a partnership of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod World Missions, Concordia University, Irvine, California, and the LCMS North America Mission Executives, exists to provide research and training for mission work among unevangelized people in the United States.

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Want to know more about church planting?

by Mike Rubl

We encourage your congregation to give serious thought and prayer to advancing the Kingdom of God through planting a new church. The Cross of Jesus Christ is the “planting of God” ... and planting new churches is one of the ways *historically* that the Kingdom of God has grown and created new communities of believers in Christ. The process could include an exploration of which type(s) of church planting you will pursue, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Center for United States Missions offers an excellent seminar called *Daughter Church Planting*. This two-day seminar provides an opportunity for the Ministry Leadership Team of

your congregation to explore the possibility and review the procedures for the effective sponsoring and planting of a new congregation in your extended mission field. Contact your District Office or visit www.centerforusmissions.org for scheduled occurrences of this seminar.

At the site, click on Seminars → Seminars Available → Daughter Church Planting for more details on this seminar. Consider working together with other nearby churches to host it in your area.

The Center’s website has additional church planting resources. Click on Resources → All Resources by Topic. Under Church Planting, you’ll find:

- Links to 23 articles on church planting from our publications
- Listings of books and links on church planting
- “Apostolic Entrepreneurship,” a paper by Ken Behnken
- A link to *Caja de Herramientas*, a Spanish language church planting kit available for purchase. ■

Ablaze Covenant Cong., from pg 2

LCMS World Mission is asking at least 10 percent of LCMS



congregations to covenant with their districts to plant up to four congregations by 2017.

LCMS World Mission and

the districts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will also covenant to align all national and district church planting resources in support of these ***Ablaze!*** Covenant Congregations. ■

Rev. Yohannes Mengsteab is the National Director for New Mission Fields Development for LCMS World Mission. For information on being a Covenant Congregation, contact him at Yohannes.Mengsteab@lcms.org.

Vision of the Center’s National Worship Consultant by Mike Zehnder

“Come near to God and He will come near to you” (James 4:8). One of the key times we come near to the person and presence of Christ is during worship as we “fix our eyes on Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) These “grace encounters” of Jesus through Word and Sacrament are transformational.

It is my joy to begin this new National Worship Consultation ministry with the prayerful anticipation that under the Spirit’s power it will support the work of churches, districts and Synod to assist people to “come near to God.” (“The promise is for you and ... for all who are far off...” Acts 2:39)



The goal is to encourage congregations toward authentic, biblical and diverse worship of the living Triune God, expressed in Spirit and truth and with cultural relevance. Such worship will prepare, energize and fuel the congregation toward greater missional passion and effectiveness.

Specific ministry services available include seminars, on-site training, missional worship consultations (to begin or improve a particular mode of worship), assistance in identifying or placing qualified worship and music staff, and worship health consultations and coaching. Information about these services is available at www.centerforusmissions.org under Services and Seminars.

For more information or to request a consultation service, contact me at 949-854-8002 x1701 or at mike.zehnder@cui.edu. ■

New Worship Resource

Hearts Ablaze, a worship service written by Rev. Michael Zehnder, is designed to be usable/ adaptable for contemporary, blended and traditional worship. It includes text and music of songs. If you haven’t already checked it on the LCMS Ablaze website, see it at www.centerforusmissions.org, Resources → Worship. ■

More Church Planting Info & Resources

Congregations Reach Beyond Church For New Disciples

<http://www.techshopministry.org/interior.asp?mid=5780>

"So how can the church grow again? Congregational development leaders say the church must look beyond itself and its comfort zones to opportunities and needs of the marginalized--whether they are immigrants in Florida, impoverished residents of Appalachia, the homeless in Kansas City, residents of high-crime areas in Baltimore and Washington or even in the primarily Muslim nation of Senegal. In recent years, the United Methodist Church has reached out to all of these areas."

Article: "Each Church Start a New Church" at www.gbod.org → Evangelism → Newsletters → Offering Christ Today Online Archives → Special Edition 1998 "Each Church Start a Church"

"Looking globally, we see that The United Methodist Church of the Philippines has more than doubled since 1990—a direct result of starting new churches."

Dynamic Church Planting International, www.dcp.org, is a leading equipper of church planting ministries. Their purpose: "We exist to help you envision and effectively plant soul-winning, disciple-making, reproductive churches."

Church Plants, www.churchplants.com/partners.html, provides resources for those planting churches.

An article at John Mark Ministries, jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/15742.htm, gives "Three Good Reasons to Plant New Churches."

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