

CHURCH PLANTER COLLECTIVE

SO YOU WANT TO



PLANT a CHURCH?

edited by

**AARON PERRY**

# SEEDBED SHORTS

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# PREFACE

I was once like you. I thought about planting a church. I had first heard the phenomenon as a teenager. Coming from a small town with “too many” churches that couldn’t always maintain a vibrant faith community, I dismissed church planting quickly. I thought, “Why plant a church when we already have so many?” Fortunately I also belonged to a church that loved Jesus, that had an organizational memory of lives changed and a strong network of devoted families. As quickly as I dismissed the thought of church planting, I found it had taken root.

A wise pastor used a metaphor to help the image grow: What’s the fruit of an apple tree? With no less guile than Eve, I took the bait: An apple, I said. The pastor had me. He knew he had me. He leaned in close and said, “No. The fruit of an apple tree is another apple tree.” I knew then that churches were supposed to plant churches.

In my late twenties, I thought about it. But church planting is not my call. At least, it isn't my call yet. But, it may be yours. What’s the fruit of a church planter?

Another church planter. Maybe that's you. Perhaps you're called to scatter church planting seeds, water the seeds that are already sown, or be the warmth that helps the seeds grow.

With this Seedbed short, we want to help you discern the call of God regarding church planting from real church planters—planters who have developed a theology of church planting that stands the test of real life and who have earned the right to speak directly to prospective church planters. Listen to them. And through them, listen to the Holy Spirit.

Aaron Perry, PhD

*Editor, Church Planter Collective*

# INTRODUCTION: *FAC ET SPERA*

- Matt Leroy -

**O**n a trip to Charleston, South Carolina a few summers back, we stepped into a cool little antique shop. You know, the kind of place that is so high end that you instantly discover you have no right to even make direct eye contact with any of the furniture, much less look at the price tag and pretend you aren't calculating how many months' worth of mortgage that armoire would set you back. But it's too late now, because you are already inside, and the awkwardness of having the shop owner look upon you with disgust is slightly better than immediately admitting defeat, apologizing for the mistake and backing out the door. Yeah. That kind of place.

At the front of the shop sat a sculpture that caught my eye. It was a young man with a bag of seeds slung over his shoulder. His arm was stretched out and reaching back, as if he were sowing the seeds, flinging them out over the soil. On the base was an inscription: *FAC ET SPERA*.

The shop owner saw me eyeing the piece and walked over. Surprisingly, she didn't ask me to leave. Instead, she smiled and warmly explained, "Work and Hope." *FAC ET SPERA: Work and Hope.* What a fitting inscription. The seed is sown and watered by the sweat of the planter's brow. But the harvest is out of our hands.

## Why Plant Churches?

The following brief essays highlight a variety of reasons for planting churches. The reasons are often similar, but they also vary. Part of determining your own calling is sensing your own reason for planting a church. Be wary of what reasons you have for planting a church. Strong leaders without clear senses of their own internal motivations can do great harm. Be honest with yourself as you engage the reflection questions at the end of each essay. Finally, embedded in these essays is a theology of church planting. As you read, begin to think about your own "God-logic" of church planting. How does what you know about God, who you know God to be, and your



own personal relationship with God influence what  
you think of church planting?

# 1. WHY PLANT CHURCHES?

- Chad Brooks -

One of the first questions I am asked when people hear about my appointment to plant a church is, “Isn’t there already a Methodist church in Sterlington?”

“Yes, there is.”

“Then why start a new one?”

Here is where the rubber meets the road. The average church plant will bring 6-8 times more new people into faith than an older congregation of the same size. Newer people groups and situations require new methods and new churches. New churches are able to streamline and focus ministry in unique ways that existing churches can’t.

This isn’t just institutional reproduction. Starting new churches is evangelism.

If we want to introduce new people to Jesus, we have to start new churches. Plain and simple. Starting a new church isn’t just a desire for something new or cool, but it is about reaching new people for Jesus. I don’t want to pour years of my life and expend tremendous resources for “just another worship

option” for church folks. It is about following the call to be part of something led by the Holy Spirit. For people who are already followers of Jesus, our highest calling is fulfilling the Great Commission—to follow the pioneering of the Holy Spirit and break new ground, go to new places, do new things and reach new people. God is calling not just Meredith and me, but others to be part of this new church. I don’t know who these people are yet, but I have been praying for them for the past year.

I also deeply believe that God is calling me to begin this in the Sterlington area. Not to be better or newer, but to go to a new mission field, meet new people, and introduce them to Jesus. We will follow the call of God with abandon. We will endeavor to create environments for them to experience God, possibly for the very first time and to help them discover the God-given purpose and call in their lives. We will work to create a culture of holiness and sacrificial love. We want to meet with God, see and experience His kingdom, and be part of doing everything we can to pull it into our place and time—“your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

This is why we are planting a church.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Can you identify with Chad's desire to introduce people to Jesus?
2. Do you have a spiritual burden for a specific place, demographic, or people group?
3. Does being part of something new excite you? Why or why not?

## 2. BEFORE YOU PLANT: 6 CHURCH PLANTING QUESTIONS

- Matt Leroy -

**I**nterested in planting a church? Wrestle with these questions first.

### 1. Why do I want to plant a church?

If it's because you're frustrated with your current church, don't do it. If it's because you think this is the trend, then please don't do it. If it's because you have figured out a better way to 'do church' after 2,000 years of saints getting it wrong, then for the sake of everyone around you and your own soul within you, do not do it.

If it's because your heart is breaking for a people or a place, this might be your calling. If you have an unshakable burden, then listen. If you sense the Holy Spirit drawing and pushing and shaping and prodding, then obey. If you have heard God calling you to go, then gather your courage and go in His strength. If you answer this question well, then you

have set into motion the solution for nearly every other question you will face.

## **2. What if I fail?**

I've heard some church planters repeat the mantra, 'Failure is not an option!' Guess what, they're wrong. Failure is a very real possibility. The numbers are staggering proof. For me, I knew this was a real calling when I embraced the reality of possible failure, and knew I had to do it anyway. When I got over what others would say if it didn't work, grow or last, when I gave up on the fear of what a failure would mean to my future prospects and how that would look on my record, when I was willing to obey even if it meant failure—that's when I realized that there is no failure when I move in obedience to His will, even if the launch falls flat, the people don't come, or the doors close.

## **3. Who is my team?**

You need a team. You have to have a team. Don't even think about trying this alone. But, be

obsessively picky when you choose your core team. Who embodies the DNA of the church you want to plant? This team will set the framework for who you will become. Resist the temptation to gather warm bodies so it looks like you have momentum. The wrong team members will choke momentum. Who gets it? Who lives it? Who would you trust with your life? Who has the passions and gifts that complement your weaknesses? Who would you want beside you for the most difficult, testing, threatening, and rewarding adventure of your life? That's your core team.

#### **4. What is the mission?**

Why are you here? What is the driving motivation of this local and specific expression of The Church? What is the unchanging anchor point as you innovate and experiment? What is the God given, Jesus centered, Spirit empowered mission? Your vision and your mission are not the same thing. Vision is a compelling image of where you are headed. It is writing future history. Mission is the clear, simple driving force that will get you there. Vision

is out ahead of you. Mission is behind you, with two hands in your back, pushing you forward. Vision is imagination. Mission is memory. Your mission will root you in purpose and clarity when your future vision is clouded and out of reach. It will hold you on course when both failure and success hit, when discouragement and expanding opportunity distract. Vision is what you hope to become. Mission is who you are every single day.

*Note:* Your community should know you by your mission. But remember that on a personal level your mission is not your identity. Sounds confusing, but here's what I mean: your identity as a church and as a leader is in Christ. That is who you are. You are not your church plant. You are not your mission. You are His and He is yours, regardless of the outcome or influence of the church.

## **5. Where will I plant?**

The poet Alexander Pope said, "consult the genius of the place." His is great advice for planters. In this calling, it is vital to cultivate a strong sense of place.



A theology informed by the Incarnation should produce a kind of spiritual ecology and geography. The soil matters. Listen to the culture. Learn the language. Observe the natural rhythms. The culture doesn't get to shape your message. It doesn't change your mission. But, it should have a say in how you express it. How can you proclaim the gospel in a way that is authentic to the place? If the gospel is planted in your soil, what would grow up? What does a truly local church look like in your context?

(Oh, and you should google Wendell Berry's essay on the difference between a path and a road.)

## **6. How will I measure?**

How will you gauge the progress of the mission? How will you know if you are moving in the direction of your Spirit-inspired goals? If you are planting in an unconventional way, in an unchurched culture, or among a people on the margins, then please don't measure your progress by the same old conventional means. Counting attendance and counting the offering alone will not give you or your support

team a realistic picture of what God is doing in your midst. Sure, count attendance. People matter, and attendance is a measure of who is connecting with your mission. But, curate the stories of those people and celebrate the ways grace is transforming them. Count the offering because it points to how people are surrendering their hearts, practicing generosity, and investing in the Kingdom. But celebrate the pennies that your homeless friend dropped in the plate out of an all-in spirit of sacrifice.

How will you measure? Create new ways that truly gauge your mission, and choose to communicate that. Measure salvations, baptisms, discipleship, conversations, community, engagement, strategic partnerships, questions, coats and cups of hot chocolate given away. Celebrate stories from the real lives of real people. But whatever you do, don't measure by what someone else is doing. Comparison steals your joy and undercuts your calling. That is their story. Celebrate it and be true to the stirring story God is writing through you. It's tailored to you. And trust me, you're going to love it.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about failing as a church planter?
2. What measures would mark success for you?
3. What hidden motives might you have for planting a church?

### 3. WHY ARE WESLEYANS STARTING NEW CHURCHES?

- Bob Crossman -

**A**s Christians with a Wesleyan heritage, we are not starting new faith communities and churches to compete with the Baptists, Assemblies of God, or Latter Day Saints, nor are we starting new churches to ensure the survival of a denomination. Rather, Wesleyans are starting new faith communities and new churches across the land because it is the Wesleyan thing to do.

New church planting is faithful to our DNA as Wesleyans. John Wesley and his early companions (Francis Asbury, Philip William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, and Thomas Coke) all had a passion to disciple those who were already active in church. However, their passion didn't stop at the church doors. They also had a passion to disciple those outside of the church walls—for the downtrodden and for the lost who needed a Savior. That passion drove them to give their time and energy to preach outside in the city parks, to preach by the exit doors when the factory shift changed, to preach at the coal

mine entrance at 5am as miners walked to work, and to send circuit riders out into the wilderness of the American Colonies looking for settlements that did not yet have a church.

It is faithful to our DNA as Wesleyans to start new churches and new faith communities with a passion for those in our pews, as well as a passion for those who are not yet in any pew. For me, a second compelling reason for planting churches comes from Jesus' invitation found in Luke 15. In Luke 15, a crowd was wondering why Jesus was spending so much time with sinners and outcasts. Jesus turned to his objectors and told them a parable. He said,

*Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep." I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:4-7)*

That parable compelled me to start a new church in Conway, Arkansas. Today, Luke 15 compels me to be part of a movement to start 1,000 new Wesleyan churches across America by 2020. I believe heaven will rejoice as these new churches search and find the ‘lost sheep.’

A third compelling reason for planting comes from Jesus’ command found in Matthew 28. In his parting words before He returned to heaven, Jesus said, “...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Those words are called “The Great Commission.” I believe we should start new churches and new faith communities because we have a great commitment to the great commission. Our local churches are invited not only to make disciples at home in ‘Jerusalem’ but also to start new churches in ‘Judea and Samaria’ (Acts 1:8). We are also faithful when we follow the pattern of the Antioch church (Acts 13), sending our pastors to start new churches in new mission fields across town and across the state.

A fourth compelling reason for church planting is the fruit we are already witnessing in the early stages

of this recently revived Wesleyan church planting movement. There is an interesting fact about new churches. We may wish it were not this way, but it seems to be true. Rick Warren writes, “The single most effective method for fulfilling the Great Commission that Jesus gave us is to plant new churches! Two thousand years of Christian history have proven that new churches grow faster, and reach more people, than established churches.”<sup>1</sup>

If we want to accept Jesus’ invitation to find the lost sheep, to be about the business of welcoming the prodigal sons and daughters back home, or to obey Jesus’ command to make new disciples, then one of the best ways to do that is to start new churches.

I am thankful that revitalization of our existing churches is a priority in our Wesleyan conferences. I am also thankful that so many Wesleyan conferences and local churches are catching the vision to support the planting of new faith communities to spread scriptural holiness across the land.

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1. Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, *Viral Churches*, forward by Rick Warren (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2010), page xi.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. If you are a Wesleyan, how important is the fact that church planting is part of your heritage?
2. What are you currently doing to reach lost people for Jesus? If you are not active in evangelism now, how can you continue discerning church planting?
3. If you are part of the leadership of an established church, how can you support church planting?



## 4. CHRIST-CENTERED CHURCH PLANTING

- Winfield Bevins -

**W**hy do we plant churches? The answer is simple: Jesus Christ is the reason we plant churches. The foundation of church planting and the entire Christian faith is Jesus Christ. Churches fall into error whenever they move away from Christ as their foundation.

Sadly, I have seen people try to plant churches for many different reasons. Some have tried to plant churches out of pride. Some for fame or recognition. Others have tried to plant churches out of strife or envy. Christ must be the reason and the foundation of every new church plant.

There is no other rock or foundation to build our church upon than Christ himself. Jesus told Peter, “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). Paul reminds us that He is the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). Make sure that your church

planting endeavors are built upon the solid rock of Christ.

## Christ Centered Movements

When we look at the pages of church history, we see that every major Christian movement begins with a life changing encounter with the living Christ. Think about it. Moses met with God in the burning bush. Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus. Wesley encountered Christ at Aldersgate. Augustine encountered God under a tree. Luther encountered Christ in the Bible. St. Francis encountered God at the cross. St. Patrick encountered God in a dream. Church history is full of stories of individuals who had a life changing experience with the risen Christ that forever changed their life.

In [\*Movements That Change the World\*](#), Steve Addison says, “History is made by men and women of faith who have met with the living God.”<sup>2</sup> Are we any better or different than them? We need to have the same life changing encounter with Christ that

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2. Steve Addison, *Movements That Change the World: Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 37.

inspired the great heroes of the faith if we are going to plant churches.

Church history warns us that new churches must always keep Christ at the center of everything they do or else they will become institutionalized. C.S. Lewis said, “There exists in every church something that sooner or later works against the very purpose for which it came into existence. So we must strive very hard, by the grace of God to keep the church focused on the mission that Christ originally gave it.”<sup>3</sup> The thing that Lewis is warning against is institutionalization. The cure is to constantly keep our eyes on Jesus and to remain faithful to the original mission of the church, which is the call to make disciples.

As the Methodist movement continued to grow in size and influence, Wesley observed that the movement was following similar patterns of institutionalization. He lamented that this was the natural course for them to follow. He felt that a grim fate might befall the Methodists if they ever lost their zeal. He wrote:

“I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America.

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3. Cited in Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 55.

But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.”<sup>4</sup>

## Proclaiming Christ in New Church

Experts say that church planting is the number one way to reach unchurched people and make new disciples for Jesus Christ. C. Peter Wagner says, “Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise, statistics show that it is much harder for traditional churches to reach the unchurched. Therefore, there is an even greater need to plant churches that reach the unchurched in our nation. Church planters are modern day missionaries to North America.

From the beginning, church planters must share their faith with others. Sharing our faith is the duty of every believer. This is commonly called evangelism. The word evangelism comes from

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4. John Wesley, “Thoughts Upon Methodism,” from *The Works of John Wesley* (vol.9). (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 527.

5. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1990) 11.

the Greek word euaggelion, which means gospel or good news. We are all called to share the good news of Jesus' love and forgiveness with the world. It is not as important how we share our faith. What's more important is if we share our faith. There are many different ways that Christians can share their faith with others.

## **Prayer and Evangelism**

Sharing our faith with others begins with prayer. Pray that God will give you the right opportunity and words to say to others. You would be surprised how many opportunities there are to share your faith with others. The Holy Spirit will open the hearts and the doors when the time is right. Many times, people never share their faith because of fear, but the Bible says that, "...the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7). The Holy Spirit will help you move past all of your fears and share your faith with boldness. It's like fishing; you don't know what the fish are biting until you cast your line into the water.

## Personal Evangelism

The best way to share the faith with friends and family is by personal evangelism and missional living. Being an authentic Christian day after day is the best way to lead somebody to Jesus Christ. To be a living witness does not remove a Christian's responsibility to share the faith; rather it gives the opportunity. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 to let your light shine before men. A Christian's life becomes a light for others to see God. Therefore, believers should show the world that our God is real through actions and deeds. In the words of St. Francis, "Preach at all times, but if you must use words."

## Our Greatest Duty

Upon departing for America, Thomas Coke asked Wesley what he should tell the people there. Wesley responded by saying, "offer them Christ." As church planters, we have nothing to offer people but Jesus Christ. Our call is still to simply to "offer them Christ." Let us end with the burning words of John Wesley, "You have nothing to do but to save souls."

Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most.”<sup>6</sup>

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your current commitment to personal evangelism and missional living?
2. How would you describe your current prayer life?
3. Find a trusted friend and share your thoughts about planting a church. Invite them to reflect openly and honestly with you about hidden motives you may have for planting a church.

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6. *Minutes of Conference*, 29 June 1744, revised 1745.

## 5. FIVE LESSONS FROM A METHODIST CHURCH THAT HAS SEEN 14,000 PROFESSIONS OF FAITH

- Paul Lawler -

I pastor a United Methodist Church that has been a part of planting over 140 new churches and seeing more than 14,000 first time professions of faith in the last 7 years. Methodists were once known for church planting. As Methodist circuit riders were equipped and sent out on mission, a passion for lost souls fueled the planting of new churches among throngs of un-reached people on the American frontier. In the early expressions of Methodism, church planting was as normal as breathing.

While serving as pastor of Christ Church, Birmingham, the majority of our church planting efforts have taken place in connection with a ministry known as [E3 Partners](#). In the same way Habitat for Humanity serves as a pathway for local churches to build inner city housing for the poor, E3 Partners serves as a pathway for the local church to reach new persons for Christ and plant new churches all over



the world. We have been a part of reaching people for Christ and planting churches in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Central and South America.

In early Methodism, many church planters were laity who prepared for ministry through the Methodist class meetings. In a truly Wesleyan fashion, most of our lay-ministers were developed and prepared for serving on a church plant team through involvement in an intensive discipleship group. Thus, it has not been the ordained leading the charge of planting new churches in the ripe fields of the world, but the laity.

We have learned much as we have been engaged in global church planting. Here are five of the lessons we have found to be incredibly valuable in making disciples and planting new churches.

## **1) Church Planting Fuels Local Church Renewal**

When we require a church planter to hold a seminary degree, with the average debt level of a United Methodist seminary graduate totaling \$49,303.00, the time has come to explore ways we can equip the laity to plant churches.

The genius of the early Methodist movement was the empowerment of the laity to do significant ministry. The laity can be equipped and unleashed to engage in great works for God. This is far more in line with the way a New Testament church is supposed to function. It is also more in line with early Methodism.

Some have affectionately named our church plant efforts “discipleship on steroids.” As people are trained and engage in the ministry of the gospel, discipleship, and church planting, participation in the mission of Jesus is transformative for both the recipient and the sharer of “good news.”

As we have labored over the last seven years, we have seen the following signs of renewal:

People have more gospel conversations than ever before and the church is growing.

The church has awakened to new expressions of mission on a local level ([source](#)).

We have witnessed a fresh proliferation of small groups and missional communities.

We have witnessed a greater participation of persons in their 20s and 30s who desire pathways of making a difference in the world.

At regular gatherings by the church family for times of prayer, the church has discovered the

following: When we pray, God sends power. When we do not pray, there is little power.

We have launched new worship venues and new worship services on our campus.

We find that as the church has awakened to local and global mission, God seems to take care of basic needs at home. Church building debt is coming down.

All the signs of renewal described above are not credited to church planting alone, but church planting has been a major factor in renewal. As critical masses of people have experienced life change in stepping out of their comfort zone and sharing the gospel of Christ, numerous lives have been transformed and the church is experiencing a renewal.

## **2) Church Planting Helps to Clarify Our Motives**

Each of us has one life to live. Thus, the following question becomes paramount: “Am I going to steward my leadership in a way that maximizes or minimizes the number of persons reached for Christ in my lifetime?” As a pastor, if I only think in terms of what can be done through traditional denominational

structures, I am painfully aware of the slowness of our present process. So much more can be done. If we delve into our history, the Wesleyan way once became a movement because it was highly adaptive to rapid disciple making and church planting. Wesley stepped out of the traditional confines of the church and to the coalmines to share the gospel of Christ, because the motives of his heart had clarity. His priority was reaching people for Christ.

Terry Teykl once said, “We need a spiritual awakening in our United Methodist Church, not to save the institution, but to save the lost.”<sup>7</sup> Often, when we engage in saving the lost, the church ends up experiencing renewal. Church planting clarifies our motives by prioritizing our focus in reaching new people for Christ and planting new churches.

### **3) Church Planting Keeps us Dependent on God**

When we engage in sharing the gospel and planting new churches around the world, we are often serving outside of our comfort zones. It is

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7. Terry Teykl, "Why Pray?" Lecture, Asbury United Methodist Prayer Conference, Huntsville, Alabama, 2003.

outside our comfort zone that we are less dependent on ourselves and more dependent upon God.

In many areas where we serve, people suffer greatly for following Jesus Christ. Seeing this reality and experiencing it up close, as many within our church family have over the last seven years, changes one's perspective. It causes you to treasure Jesus more as you witness people follow Him with a willingness to suffer for Him. People within our church family are more prayerful and joyful in their dependence on God.

#### **4) Church Planting keeps us Focused by Superseding the Distractions of Denominational Division**

Sadly, many within United Methodism are so convinced we are on a sinking ship, they no longer try anything bold for the cause of Christ. By God's grace, Christ Church has refused to think this way. We have chosen not to miss the mark by compromising the calling and commands of Christ while the clock is ticking.

We have chosen not to become so distracted by division that we lose our sense of God-given mission. We recognize we have one life to live and give for God and others. We are mindful of John Wesley's words, "You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most."

We have a mission and a focus that has not succumbed to allowing denominational division to distract us from the mission of Jesus Christ.

## **5) Church Planting Re-Kindles the Best of our Heritage**

As a denomination, the patterns that got us where we are will not be the patterns that take us out of where we are. In other words, the patterns we have embraced as a denomination the last 30 to 40 years will not be the patterns that will take us into a preferred future. We must embrace the deep change necessary to go forward.

In the autobiography of Methodist Circuit Rider, Peter Cartwright, we are reminded of how a great

price was paid by those who served before us. Rather than staying in a large city and serving an established church, Cartwright went where the fields were ripe with un-reached people. He faced people who attacked him, exposure to the elements, sickness, and theological divisiveness. Regardless, Cartwright persevered. As Cartwright persevered, he saw thousands come to know Jesus Christ. New churches were established. The Kingdom of God advanced.

Did our spiritual father, John Wesley, not do the same? When the established church was resistant to hearing the gospel, Wesley went where the fields were ripe. With both Cartwright and Wesley, renewal was the result. We have a rich heritage of church planting, predicated upon taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ripest fields on earth.

While most would agree the United Methodist Church is in need of a turn-around, perhaps Dr. Teykl was right; “We need a spiritual awakening in our United Methodist Church not to save the institution, but to save the lost.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which benefit of church planting most appeals to you: Local church renewal, clarified focus, God-dependence, or church unity?
2. “Church planting is about reaching lost people rather than saving an institution.” What do you think about this statement? For Wesleyans, institutions are important. How are you tempted to overemphasize institutions? How are you tempted to ignore institutions?
3. Is there an unreached people near you? What are you doing to reach them now?



## 6. CHURCH FOR THE UNCHURCHED

- Bryan Collier -

There are two walls in our office area that keep our focus on what Jesus has called us to do. One wall has twenty pictures of people of all colors, ages, and nationalities. Those twenty pictures represent the twenty-thousand people in Tupelo who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus or a connection to a community of faith. They are the reason Jesus planted us in this region. The church is the only organization that exists for people who don't even go there yet. We exist for the twenty-thousand.

The second wall holds a quote from a pastor in the Midwest. It says, "To reach people no one else is reaching, we must do things no one else is doing." These two statements hold in tension what I believe to be the mindset of those who would reach the unchurched in their area—a clear picture of who the unchurched are and a commitment to reach out to them on their terms.

One of the problems Christians have in reaching people who do not have a personal relationship with

Jesus is that, after having been a Christian for a while, they don't know anyone who is not a Christian. They spend most of their time with Christians, and sooner or later, Christian behavior becomes the expected norm—so much so that they cannot tolerate anyone who does not act like or sometimes even think like a Christian. The church that would reach the unchurched must ask itself, “Do we know any unchurched people, and how are we focused on them?”

It is easy to understand why Jesus had to emphasize that he came for the sick, because religious leaders forgot that truth in light of their preference for the whitewashed. The church that would reach the unchurched must make every effort to connect to the unchurched. It must go to where the unchurched are rather than hoping the unchurched will come to them. This begins with the pastor. Simply said, the pastor must set the example for what they want to see in the church. If a pastor spends all his time with church people, don't be surprised if the church, under his or her leadership, does the same. The church that would reach the unchurched has the unchurched on their minds—they think about them, they pray about them and they go to where they are.

The church that would reach the unchurched also surrenders all its preferences (short of the Gospel) for the needs of the unchurched. The church needs an incredible amount of patience with people who are coming to faith. While we should never tell people that a lifestyle of life-taking habits are acceptable, we should walk with them in patience as God coaxes them toward his life-giving way. My point is that we cannot expect people who are not Christians to act like Christians until they are Christians. Furthermore, we cannot expect new Christians to act like mature Christians when they aren't. They don't know they shouldn't act a certain way, go certain places, or do certain things until someone tells them and the Holy Spirit convicts them!

What expectations does your church have of the unchurched that are keeping the unchurched from connecting to you? Being able to suspend "the rules" and do things that no one else is doing in order to reach people no one else is reaching is key to connecting with those to whom Jesus sends us.

Reaching the unchurched is not clean, neat, or easy. In fact, it is messy and difficult, but it is the work that Christ has given the church. The church that would reach the unchurched has them on its

mind and heart, and it would do anything (short of abandoning the gospel) to reach, connect with, and disciple them.

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. Who is the last unchurched person you reached for Christ?
2. What unchurched persons are you actively evangelizing currently?
3. Do you agree that church people can become limited in their non-Christian connections/friendships?

## 7. LEARNING FROM GLOBAL CHURCH PLANTING

- Winfield Bevins -

**E**vangelist John Stott said, “We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.” We live in a truly global and multicultural world where we must be missionally minded and globally engaged Christians.

As we look at the world around us, there is a tremendous need for global church planting. Roughly one third of the people on the planet are still without a local church. The need for planting churches in global urban centers and unreached peoples is growing daily. There are over 2 billion people on the planet who have never heard of Jesus. That is 13,000 unreached people groups who are waiting to hear what God has done for them. Many of these lesser reached peoples are from restricted access countries and locations resistant to the Christian message.

The West is quickly becoming one of the largest mission fields on the planet. In the United States alone, there are over 130 million unchurched people.

With over 337 languages, the United States has become one of the most multicultural and multi-lingual nations on earth. The challenge of reaching these people groups is due to the growing diaspora of people from other nations who have come to North America. These men and women are often difficult to reach cross-culturally, due to various language and ethnic boundaries.

Nations such as Africa, Asia, and South America are beginning to send missionaries to re-evangelize the West through church planting! British author Martin Robinson talks about some of these church planters from developing countries who are now coming to the West. They have come from nations like Brazil, Haiti, Mexico, Nigeria, Dominican Republic, and Ethiopia to name a few. If we are going to reach the West again, we have to seriously engage in cross-cultural church planting.

## **Global Church Planting**

Despite the decline of Christianity in the West, the church is growing at an explosive rate in the Southern Hemisphere. The growth rate of global Christianity

is absolutely amazing as church planting movements have reached hundreds of millions of people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America through tens of thousands of new congregations that have been planted to keep up with the growth. Consider the following statistics. In the last 100 years, Christianity grew in Africa from 10 million in 1900 to 360 million in 2000.

The growth of global Christianity is taking place through various church planting movements around the world. Church planting strategist David Garrison defines a church planting movement as, “a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweep through a people group or population segment.” There are a lot of things we can learn from the global church by looking at what God is doing through church planting movements.

According to Garrison, the following 10 characteristics are common to every church planting movement. There are many noticeable similarities to the lessons of the Wesleyan Revival.

*Extraordinary Prayer*  
*Abundant Gospel Sowing*  
*Intentional Church Planting*

*Scriptural Authority*  
*Local Leadership*  
*Lay Leadership*  
*Cell or House Churches*  
*Churches Planting Churches*  
*Rapid Reproduction*  
*Healthy Churches*

The global nature of the church reminds us that the Christian faith is made up of millions of men and women who live in hundreds of countries and speak thousands of different languages. We are deeply connected to other believers from around the world. You and I may never meet these believers, but we are still a part of the same great family and body of Christ. I have brothers and sisters in Christ who live in Africa, China, and Russia.

The Bible paints this beautiful picture of the global nature of the church: “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.” (Revelation 7:9).



It will take all kinds of new churches to reach all types of people for Christ. The church is like a mosaic or tapestry that is made up of many colors. Each piece makes it a beautiful masterpiece. Today, there are many different expressions and types of church plants. Some new churches meet in buildings while others meet in homes. Some church plants meet in bowling alleys, funeral homes, YMCAs, schools, and some even meet outdoors. Some new churches are traditional, some are contemporary, and some are home fellowships.

A commonality is that each new congregation of believers is gathered in a local expression of being the church wherever they are. The church in Africa looks different than the church in Texas because each one is called to be the church in its unique context and culture. One of the best experiences of my life was spending a summer traveling across the countryside of Peru. I was able to visit and worship with dozens of different new churches throughout the country—churches in cities, jungles, and in the Andes Mountains. Each of the churches was a little different, but they all had one thing in common: they worshiped Jesus Christ.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What do you believe the global south has to teach the Western church?
2. “It will take all kinds of new churches to reach all kinds of new people for Christ.” What do you think about this statement?
3. Ten characteristics of church planting movements were listed. Which stands out the most to you? Which of these are currently at work in your life?

## PART 2: FROM CHURCH PLANTER TO PROSPECTIVE CHURCH PLANTER

*Nobody knows church planting like church planters. They have lived the dreams and the nightmares. They have navigated storms, hurdled pitfalls, and even fallen a time or two. Imagine you had the opportunity to speak one-on-one with any of these church planters about church planting and the words written are the words they chose to share with you, a prospective church planter. Use the reflection questions to apply the truths to your life and to help your discernment process.*

## 8. ON AMBITION

- David Goss -

One of the first Scriptures I memorized was a very obscure one. I don't quote it very often because it seems to be so out of favor with the times and with the church planting culture to which I belong. It's 1 Thessalonians 4:11a—"...make it your ambition to lead a quiet life..."

Here's the context in v. 9-12:

*Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

It appears that Paul is exhorting those who would “excel still more” to graduate to this ambition—quiet humility.

I don’t know about your preaching schedule for the upcoming year, but I would be surprised if it included a series on the ambition of quietness and humility. That sort of thing doesn’t exactly draw a crowd, does it?

Yet, humility is a foundational virtue for those who would shepherd and lead God’s people. So often, it seems there is just as much prideful ambition among up-and-coming ministers and church planters as there is in any other vocational field. This should not be.

I have certainly recognized it in myself.

Lord, forgive me.

Francis de Sales wrote, “The King of Glory does not recompense his servants according to the dignity of the offices they hold, but according to the measure of the love and humility with which they exercise them.”<sup>8</sup>

Recently, I was meeting with a group of pastors in our area, and we represented as many different

8. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life* (c.1609)—referenced in Gary Thomas, *Seeking the Face of God* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994) p. 137.

denominations and backgrounds as we could. We had a charismatic, a Baptist, a Chinese EV Free, a Free Methodist, and a female FCA campus minister. Somehow the title of Henri Nouwen's classic book, *In the Name of Jesus*, came up in our conversation. Every one of us had read it and treasured it.

I was surprised at this. I heard, "Oh yeah, that's what I read to feed my soul," and "Nouwen helps keep me in check." I appreciated the honesty, but it also made me think about the tendency that we ministers have to move away from the priorities of humble service and, as Nouwen puts it, "irrelevance."

He writes, "I am deeply convinced that the Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self. That is the way Jesus came to reveal God's love."<sup>9</sup>

Nothing else to offer?! Are you kidding? What about our competence, hard work, strategic plan, leadership team, multimedia, professional worship leaders, and polished speaking skills? All the stuff I have worked so hard on?!

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9. Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (The Crossroad Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1989), p. 17.

We must remember that Jesus *always* shunned the adoration of the crowd. He withdrew to solitary places and poured Himself into a few disciples from obscure backgrounds. He took on the form of a servant and washed feet.

May the trajectory of our ambition in ministry always take us down—down to our knees in prayer and in humble service.

Gary Thomas wrote, “[H]umility is the anchor of our calling and vocation. Pride can turn us against our own purpose in life by filling us with ambitious yearnings that cause us to neglect our true call for today...Tomorrow’s dreams are a poor substitute for today’s obedience.”<sup>10</sup>

Thomas continues, “Without humility we can fall prey to deceitful desires that hinder our present effectiveness. It is noble to desire to do great things for God; but when our desire for future ministry blocks us from our present task, we should prayerfully consider whether the desire is God’s inspiration or Satan’s distraction to keep us from living a fruitful life.”

May we stay humble in our ambitions and fulfill our divine vocation.

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10. Thomas, *Seeking the Face of God*, 137.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How important is humility to church planting?
2. Would you describe yourself as an ambitious person? Why or why not? Would your closest friends describe you as an ambitious person?
3. Why do you think ambition is dangerous for a church planter?



# 9. TOP TEN THINGS SATAN WANTS YOU TO BELIEVE ABOUT NEW CHURCH STARTS

- Carolyn Moore -

1. Your fellow ministers will totally support what you're doing.
2. You have the best church vision anyone has ever invented, and folks will flock to you because of it.
3. A goatee, faded jeans, and a t-shirt are all you need to be successful (and maybe a drivin' bass player).
4. If you have energetic preaching and good music, people will flock to your church.
5. God's blessing comes in the form of numerical stats (he might also want you to believe that numbers don't matter at all).
6. If you (as a pastor) work 50% harder, God will bless you 50% more.
7. If you (as a member of the community) get involved in a new church, your life will improve overnight.

8. Your worth rests in how much better (or worse) you are doing than others in your network, community, or conference.

9. Never mind how happy the folks around you are, you are doing a terrible job.

10. Your new church will either be the best in the history of all church plants everywhere, or the worst failure. There is no in-between.

And the one thing the enemy wants you to believe above all else: He is not a threat.

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. Which of these lies are you most tempted to believe?

2. Which part of the list would you disagree with?

3. Have you engaged with spiritual warfare in a ministry context? How did you effectively battle the enemy?

## 10. PLANTING IS A PATH

- Matt Leroy -

When we first set out planting Love Chapel Hill, one of our key theological influences was Wendell Berry. No, he is not a pastor. But he is a poet and a farmer. He is a deep well of wisdom on the subject of sowing, planting, and harvesting. So we leaned in to what he had to teach us. After all, when Jesus unveiled his vision of a flourishing Kingdom, he repeatedly employed the farming imagery of sowers and seeds, fields and harvest. Are you with me, church planter?<sup>11</sup>

We were particularly impacted by his insights on the difference between a path and a road. It's found in an essay titled 'A Native Hill' in a collection called, *The Art of the Commonplace*.<sup>12</sup> His wisdom sparked this micro reflection, applied to our calling of incarnational church planting.

The purpose of the road is efficiency.

It is essentially a bridge designed to move you from one place to the next with the most ease possible.

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<sup>11</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, ed. Norman Wirzba (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2003).

All obstacles have been removed in its construction. It plows through and paves over and sidesteps the process. Flat and convenient to navigate, avoiding contact with the landscape.

But a path is different.

It is designed to move with the contours of the landscape. When a path encounters an obstacle, it does not remove it. It moves around it. Its purpose and format is not efficiency, but journey. It does not sidestep the process, it embraces it. The path is slow and requires the toll of patience, and often requires assistance in navigation.

This is not a question of whether or not we need roads. Trust me, I want roads.

This is simply to say that a road is one thing and a path is another.

And an incarnational planting of the Gospel in new soil is a path.

Move with the landscape.

Embrace the process.

Be ok with slow.

Breathe deep.

Journey.

Enjoy.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you react to Matt's poem?
2. How do you think you would react to the flexibility of a church plant?
3. What have you led that you might describe as a path rather than a road?

# 11. IN THE SPIRIT OF JOEL

- Carolyn Moore -

*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.*

*(Acts 1:8b)*

*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

*(Galatians 3:28)*

**A**s a woman church planter, I stand at the intersection of Acts 1:8 and Galatians 3:28. As an evangelist, I am actively engaged in developing new systems for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in my Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. As a woman in church leadership, I embrace the freedom of Galatians 3:28, believing with Paul that in Christ all are gifted and called to serve.

Ten years ago, I moved to Evans, Georgia (part of Augusta) with my husband and daughter to start a United Methodist church. We were a parachute drop, so Mosaic started in our home, then moved to an office

complex, then a school auditorium. We will celebrate ten years of weekly worship in February. Our average attendance is 225. Our folks are mostly working class. The typical person at Mosaic is a single mom with teenagers, a young family struggling to make ends meet or a single person with addiction issues. We have worked hard over ten years to develop healthy leaders from among those God has sent, and God has been slowly, quietly, but very faithfully building us up. Our people have a burning vision for changing the spiritual atmosphere of our community.

We own and occupy a 20,000 square-foot warehouse. We host a thriving pantry, a community outreach ministry on the third Saturday of every month (a concept inspired by Grace Church in Cape Coral, Florida, pastored by Jorge Acevedo). We have a strong recovery culture and Spirit-filled, evangelistic worship. We operate a satellite ministry in downtown Augusta that focuses on low-income and no-income adults with disabilities.

I love my role as a church planter. I have loved every minute of doing this and can't imagine leaving this to return to a traditional pastoral role. This intersection of Acts and Galatians is indeed a unique and

interesting vantage point from which to view the future of the American church.

George Barna reports that between 1999 and 2009, the percentage of women pastors doubled; yet, the rate of growth among women church planters has not kept pace.<sup>13</sup> Most studies put the percentage of women planters at less than ten percent of the total. That's probably the most liberal percentage I've seen. Most folks would put the total someplace closer to five percent.

Dave Olsen, who directs church planting for [The Evangelical Covenant Church](#), has studied thousands of female pastors in mainline churches and has followed the handful of female church planters in his own denomination. His conclusion? "Neither the church nor the culture is ready for women to plant churches."<sup>14</sup> Most would agree that church planting is still a male-dominated field. Because of theological leanings, most church-planting networks are "men-only" clubs.

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13. "Number of Female Senior Pastors in Protestant Churches Doubles in Past Decade." <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/leadership/304-number-of-female-senior-pastors-in-protestant-churches-doubles-in-past-decade#.VunEmRirIUE>. Accessed March 16, 2016.

14. "The Final Church Barrier for Women: Church Planter." <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gifted-for-leadership/2009/april/final-church-barrier-for-women-church-planter.html>. Accessed March 16, 2016.



What does that mean for those of us who choose to answer this call to do a new thing? On one hand, we're faced with a steep challenge. How do we best affirm the call of women who are uniquely gifted to start new churches? On the other hand, our challenge is thrilling! My ten years as a church planter have been the most rewarding of my life. The fields are white for harvest and every hand is needed. We want women who hear God's call to planting to have every resource at their disposal so they can bear much fruit. And we hope they'll have our example as a hopeful signpost on their journey. I have a great desire to see other women church planters enter the journey with better mentors, training, resources and support than were available ten years ago. And I want the voices they hear to be voices of encouragement and confidence.

In order to cultivate healthy leaders who can effectively plant, develop and sustain healthy congregations, we must be honest about the barriers that too often stand in the path of women. I believe there are several natural barriers to growth in churches planted by women:

1. *Leadership as a theological issue.* 50% of Christians don't hold our theological position on

women pastors. There are people I will never meet because I am a woman.

2. *Leadership as a cultural issue.* How do we want women in leadership positions to act? How do we want mothers in leadership positions to act? I think the answers to those questions are different for women than they are for men.

3. *Leadership as a resource issue.* Resources to equip women church planters are still very much in the developmental stage. Training opportunities are often geared toward a male audience. Women may find few mentors and coaches equipped to help negotiate the cultural biases influencing the communities within which we serve (especially in the regional South). In fact, we may identify few if any role models in our local context. Faced with these and other more typical lifestyle pressures, women church planters are challenged to succeed in an area of ministry that is difficult for even the best trained among pastors.

4. *Leadership as an institutional issue.* For all the above reasons, I maintain that growth for a female-pastored church plant may be different than growth for a male-pastored church plant. This isn't an issue of failure; this is an issue of pace. And yet, right now, it seems that the expectations placed on church planters

in many networks and denominations place women on a steeper climb because as I've said, we're drawing from a different pool and pushing against culture. The benchmarks don't allow for gender differences.

Is there good news for women who sense a call to plant churches? Absolutely! From a ministry perspective, we have an opportunity to offer a voice and example that may be sorely lacking in many communities. Consider these thoughts:

1. Non-Christians don't have the same theological barriers as those raised in church, which means women have a unique opportunity to reach truly unchurched people who will more likely visit and stay in a church planted by a woman. When we focus ministry and message on our call rather than our gender, folks who most need the gospel will likely find us, by God's grace, and respond positively.

2. Not every area of the country has the same cultural constraints. To be frank, "liberal" may actually end up being the friend of a female church planter. Our gender may open doors for us among those who deeply care about equality. It doesn't mean we ought to shift our theology to accommodate them on every point, but it may mean we get an audience

with more progressive thinkers that our conservative male counterparts may not get.

3. The current emphasis on being “missional” and building community works in our favor. When men and women both focus on mission and community rather than on pastor-centered ministry, we grow healthier, more productive communities.

4. A church planted by a woman is good and healthy for the Body of Christ, because it, too, reflects the values of scripture. I am assuming we Wesleyans are all equally committed to Galatians 3:28 and are all equally committed to making a place for everyone at the table. Female church-planters become a kind of visual aid for what the Kingdom on earth can look like.

5. We also encourage—simply by our witness—the cultivation of other women into leadership roles. These may be women who, like me, simply needed an example to follow in order to step in.

Our commitment to seeing the whole people of God empowered to preach the whole gospel is a commitment to deep healing in the Body of Christ. In the development of healthy leaders, both male and female, we need not fear. While the challenge is great,

God is in control. Ultimately, God will work through people, and his plan will be accomplished through the whole people of God. When we encourage, cultivate and make room for women in leadership among church-planting networks, we embrace the prophetic spirit of Joel and become partners in fulfilling the Word of God:

*“And in the last days it shall be,’ God declares,  
‘that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams;  
even on my male servants and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,  
and they shall prophesy.”*

*(Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17-18)*

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. What do you believe about women in leadership?
2. Have you ever taken a risk in leading where people thought you shouldn't? How did you react?
3. Describe a time you empowered an unlikely person in leadership. How did your people react? How did you respond?

## 12. THREE PROS AND CONS OF BIVOCATIONAL CHURCH PLANTING

- Rosario Picardo -

**D**eclining attendance numbers, increasing financial pressures, and dying churches across mainline denominations are evidence that the church needs a serious ministry makeover. The best way this can happen is through bi-vocational ministry and church planting, which uses a blend of both clergy and lay pastors. Truth be told, this idea is not anything new.

The New Testament's most famous bi-vocational minister is the Apostle Paul. In fact, Paul's occupation as a tent-maker was the genesis for the term "tent-making," which is often used in reference to those functioning as bi-vocational ministers. The biblical passage disclosing Paul's occupation is Acts 18:1-4:

*After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a*

*tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.*

Paul, as a tent-maker, would not have been too uncommon in the first-century religious context, for rabbis would often have to support themselves apart from the religious institution. Paul was falling in line with the rabbinical custom of combining one's study of the Torah with a marketable trade such as tent-making. And, as he traveled and ministered bi-vocationally, Paul planted churches.

When Paul left Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila, equipped with their tent-making trade and their Christian faith, went with him. Following in Paul's footsteps, they ministered bi-vocationally in the newly sprouting Christian communities. Their names are only mentioned a few times in Scripture (Acts 18:1-4, 18-26; 2 Timothy 4:19), and I personally wish we knew more about their story. However, whenever you see these characters come on the scene, it's obvious that alongside of working their profession, their faith was working to impact the community where they lived.

So what would this model of church planting require today? What are the costs and benefits of bi-vocational ministry? In this post, I want to share some of the pros and cons I've learned over the years about bi-vocational church planting.

## **Pro 1: The church saves (a lot of) money**

Simply put, it is not sustainable for churches to continue affording full-time ordained elders. Compared to the salary rate of ordained clergy, bi-vocational ministers are paid less than half of what clergy make. More often than not, they aren't paid anything at all and work a part-time job or hold a career outside the church.

Bi-vocational ministers save the church thousands of dollars. It goes without saying that in a time of budget cuts and financial concerns, this is a major benefit for churches. However, there is also a downside.



## **Con 1: Financial strife for the pastor**

While the church benefits from the little to no pay aspect, bi-vocational leaders (especially those with families) often experience financial tension trying to balance outside work alongside the demands of full-time ministry. This is one reason why bi-vocational ministers must be defined by these three things: a strong sense of call, community, and blessing in order to carry the weight of this kind of leadership.

## **Pro 2: Close community**

The leaders involved in a church planting team maintain a close bond with one another, which fosters spiritual and personal growth among the group. Vulnerability and accountability are essential for church growth because when the core leadership invests in their spiritual growth, the church will experience growth as well. The team community also acts as a support group through the frustrations and spiritual battles these leaders will undoubtedly face during the church planting process.

On another level, bi-vocational church planters are often employed in the very community where they are planting. If identifying with the people is a goal, their jobs offer excellent opportunities to make face-to-face connections, and their homes literally immerse them in the neighborhood.

## **Con 2: Difficulty setting boundaries**

With being in the community, boundary lines can become blurred, and limited time makes setting wise boundaries crucial for success. Bi-vocational Pastor Joshua Wynn explains it this way: “Learning to set boundaries [is a challenge].... Sometimes [the people I serve] will want to talk to me about the same thing over and over again for two to three hours at a time. Sometimes that can be distracting when there is someone else who really, really is hurting or in really major need or needs to be comforted or needs to be helped.”

Taking time to hear people’s stories without allowing them to drain your time with complaints, discerning when to say “no” to various commitments, and dealing with the opinions and preferences

of individuals are some of the most difficult interpersonal pieces of pastoral ministry. When you're working with people in need, sometimes it's a job that knows no end. To prevent burnout, guidance from experienced leaders and regular spiritual retreats are two excellent solutions.

### Pro 3: Church growth

Under a bi-vocational model, my last church, Embrace Church in Lexington, KY, experienced growth in all areas of ministry: worship attendance, baptisms, and professions of faith. The chart below highlights the growth of the church from 2012 to 2013:

	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Professions of Faith</b>	<b>Baptisms</b>
2012	265	40	10
2013	300	72	13
<b>% Growth</b>	13.2	80%	30%

A bi-vocational staff was not, of course, the only driving factor behind these numbers. However, it's important to note that in one year this church saw more growth than many existing churches in the

same denomination (United Methodist) have seen in ten years.

### **Con 3: Balancing church responsibilities, a full-time career, and family**

The reality of a having the majority of the staff at a church as bi-vocational pastors is that their time is limited between family, church, and working additional jobs or raising financial support.

Overwhelmed, burned-out, drained—unfortunately, these are negative effects all pastors experience at some point. As stated before, holding tightly to accountability groups, small groups, and weekly check-ins helps to diffuse these attacks.

A ministry makeover is an increasing necessity in the Church. Whether or not leaders are ready to take on the work of a makeover is a different story. It is work that not only takes commitment and grit, but work that requires, first and foremost, a heart that's sold out to Jesus. These pros and cons are not intended to sound like a cure with extremely negative side effects. The "cure" is not based in any one group of people, model, or idea. Makeovers happen when

people are willing to be remodeled. It's uncomfortable, messy, and requires selflessness and sacrifice. It's a whole-heart ordeal.

I have a strong hope that mainline denominations in the United States can once again produce thriving, healthy churches. Before the makeover can begin, we have to make the risky choice to start the renovation process. What if we were the kind of church that wasn't afraid to take that risk, to throw our trust into God's hands, and gather disciples from the very people we want to reach? Now that's a church I want to be a part of.

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. What is your initial reaction to being a bi-vocational church planter?
2. What pro is most appealing to you? What con are you most concerned about?

# **13. TOP TEN MISTAKES I'VE MADE AS A CHURCH PLANTER**

**- Carolyn Moore -**

**10. I thought the people who gave me advice  
before I got started were idiots.**

In his book, *Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, John Maxwell says the number one leadership hang-up is having a top-down attitude. That is an abuse of authority, and the result of an inability to listen. Ultimately, it is about pride, which means that #10 on this list is actually #1. All my biggest mistakes have sprung from the sin of pride—an inability to walk in the Christlike quality of humility, sharing power and allowing others to speak into my life.

**9. I thought the people who gave me advice  
after I got started were brilliant.**

And often, I measured my work by how good (or bad) it looked next to theirs. I have looked too longingly at glaring examples of success and have taken on

a sense of failure by measuring myself against them. Also, I've created a lot of failure by trying to be them.

## **8. I neglected the Sabbath and my family. And my soul.**

I have written about the critical need for Sabbath elsewhere (you can find at least two articles on Church Planter Collective). But, suffice it to say that this was a key issue for me, especially in the beginning. As for family, if I could pass along one piece of advice to this generation of church planters, it would be this: Count the cost you're asking your family to make. It is a sacrifice for them, and if things aren't great right now, it may be that this isn't God's time.

## **7. I have too often been tempted to sacrifice our long-term vision for short-term gains.**

Church-planting is a risky venture. It's risky for you and for the people who invest in your vision. That's the nature of doing a new thing. That risk can create a sense of desperation at times that causes us to sacrifice long-term vision for short-term gains. I

can testify that whenever I sacrificed in that way, the church suffered.

## **6. I have been too hard on myself.**

Jesus really meant it when he said, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32). If he has called you, it’s because he likes you, and he will use you.

## **5. I have often gauged the success of the ministry by my moods.**

This is only for people like me who deal pretty heavily in feelings (I’m an ENFP, heavy on the F). I tend to judge things by how I feel about them. If you’re like that, then the most important thing I can say to you is this: Feelings are not the same as facts.

## **4. I have relied on my gifts and skills, and have forgotten about the power of the Holy Spirit.**

(Or, I have not recognized the power of God when it was staring me in the face.) Jesus once told



some Pharisees that they erred because they didn't know the scriptures of the power of God. All my irrational fears and bad questions come out of that same ignorance.

### **3. I overestimated people.**

Do not appoint anyone to leadership who doesn't understand and live out the vision personally, including small group participation, membership and tithing. Do not apologize for asking others to invest at a deep level in this work.

### **2. I underestimated the spiritual nature of church planting.**

Ministry is a spiritual exercise, not a performance. It is an act of obedience, not a head-count. In the spiritual realm, there are battles. If your goal as a church planter is to win people for Christ, you will enter into that battle. It can be very intense.

## 1. I have not spent nearly enough time in prayer

Oswald Chambers says “prayer is the work.” Most of my big mistakes have happened because I got so desperate to see some movement that I couldn’t wait on the Lord. But, waiting on the Lord is 90% of church planting. It is about planning and envisioning and working and pressing in and giving it everything you’ve got...then waiting for the Father’s divine timing. Learning to wait on the Lord is the difference between success and frustration in ministry.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which mistake most surprised you?
2. Describe your reaction to Carolyn Moore’s humility in sharing these with you.
3. Think about something you led from its inception—a family, a project, a small group, etc. What mistakes did you make? How might those impact your discernment regarding church planting?

# 14. CHANGE AND THE CHURCH PLANTER

- Joe McKechnie -

**P**aul “Bear” Bryant, the legendary former football coach at the University of Alabama, was seemingly larger than life (he earned his nickname at the age of 14, when he wrestled a bear at a traveling carnival.) The following year, he tried out for the high school football team, and played in the very first game he had ever seen. He developed into a hard-nosed, physical player, earning a scholarship at the University of Alabama, where he demonstrated his toughness by playing a game with a broken leg. In 1937, Alabama played in the Rose Bowl and while out west, Bryant had a screen test with Paramount Studios to become an actor. He was offered a contract, but his new wife refused to move to California!

Bear Bryant followed his desire to be a college coach, and in 1958, he accepted the job at Alabama, where he would remain a fixture for the next 25 years. During the 1960’s and 1970’s, no college team won more games than the Crimson Tide.

In his first nine years at the helm of the Alabama football program, his team won three national championships and experienced unparalleled success. By the late 1960's, however, Alabama's football team began to falter, finishing two straight seasons unranked. Many fans started to wonder if Bryant had lost his touch. Many journalists assumed that the college game had passed him by. Even Bear was frustrated with his team's performance, and in January of 1969, he flirted with the idea of making a clean break and a fresh start, initially accepting a five-year \$1.7 million offer to coach the Miami Dolphins. He quickly had a change of heart and decided to stay at Alabama (the Dolphins ended up hiring Don Shula).

Bear Bryant realized that things had to change. His current course was no longer good enough. In 1971, he began a complete overhaul of the storied Alabama program, secretly switching from the more traditional pro-style offense to the newly developed "Wishbone" formation (many fans had called for him to do this earlier, but Bryant originally scoffed at such notions). This major transformation propelled the once-proud Crimson Tide back into the national spotlight, winning eight SEC titles in

a nine-year span and amassing three more national championships.

Bryant could have rested on his laurels; he could have fought the call to change. But his desire to grow was greater than his will to stay the same. The Bible speaks of God's desire to see each of us changed. 2 Corinthians 3:18 declares that we are being transformed into the likeness of Christ. In other words, once we are followers of Christ, the Lord continues to stretch us, grow us, challenge us, and guide us, all in the goal of making us more like Jesus.

God is in the life-changing business. He takes us, just as we are, and fixes us, heals us, and renews us. I know many folks who, unlike Bear Bryant, are satisfied with the status quo. Change can be unsettling, but God calls us to more. Better yet, He doesn't call us to do this on our own. Rather, He is the one who provides the transformation! How are you becoming more like Jesus? Can those around you see the change? As a Pastor, do I want to become more and more like Andy Stanley, or do I want to become more like Jesus? As a leader, do I want to become more like that innovative megachurch CEO down the street, or do I want to become more like Jesus? As a visionary, do I long to see a church made

up of humble, growing disciples, or do I wish my church looked more like that fast-growing congregation that everyone's talking about?

As church planters, we're all about change. We embrace it, and we forge ahead point blank into it. However, I have learned that before Jesus will use me to change the lives of those out there, he needs to change me—my expectations, my hurts, my fears, and my view of myself (and of Him). It's easy to become frustrated when the world around us won't change, at least not for the better. But, I must admit and repent that I am often more difficult to change than anyone I could ever meet.

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. Who are your models in ministry?
2. How have you fostered learning from Jesus in your spiritual life?
3. How might church planting help you focus on Jesus? How might church planting distract you from Jesus?



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