

# Getting Started

*A Church Planting Handbook  
for Laypeople*

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Third Revision

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by  
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## Introduction

### **GOTCHA!**

You're the adventuresome type—I can tell. Who else would sneak a peek at a handbook on church planting? Well, you're just the type of person who should be considering whether God is calling you to the ministry of pioneering a new church.

The purpose of this manual is to assist you as you consider the possibility of starting a church and to provide you with nuts and bolts information once you decide that God is calling you to this specialized ministry.

Now, there are some unique aspects of this manual that you need to understand from the start. First off, this handbook has been written for laypeople. I've got nothing against pastors (I am one!) and I don't mind if you share information with them but the fact is that most people involved in planting and leading new churches are laypeople. The information contained in this handbook will assist laypeople who: (1) are contemplating involvement in church planting, or (2) are involved in the initiation of a church planting project, or (3) are already active lay leaders in a recently planted church.

Secondly, while it is not my intention to be exclusive, this manual is written specifically for people who are interested in or involved in helping to start Evangelical Covenant churches. Christians from other groups will find a lot of transferable information but should recognize that the organizational procedures in other denominations will be slightly different.

Thirdly, this manual has been written with the help of 120 laypeople who have already helped start one or more Covenant churches. Their input has been invaluable.

## Chapter 1

### **What Experienced Laypeople Are Saying about Church Planting**

- *Do it! It's worth all the effort if the reasons and attitudes are right. You'll be stretched and grow. J.W., Washington*
- *This is not a project for half-hearted people. If you're not ready to give at least twice the time you have in the past, consider it a lost cause. The demands on your time and resources will be great, and very rewarding. M.B., Texas*
- *You need a heart for God, a life based on prayer and following his will, and a willingness to become involved beyond your imagination. A.K., Colorado*
- *If you want a challenge, are willing to make many changes, and feel the Lord is calling you to this mission field, then, I say accept the challenge and follow God's leading. There are many rewards in being a part of a young struggling church. J.P., Texas*
- *It's a great time for developing intimate relationships—but also a very time-consuming process. D.P., Indiana*
- *1) It takes total commitment. 2) It will take 100-200% more time than you think. 3) Do it!—It is a time of tremendous growth. T.K., Colorado*
- *The biggest surprise was to discover how much financial help the Covenant was! We undertook property purchase and building without a thought of any outside help...and the Lord blessed us through several grants and Frontier Friends. G.S., Washington*
- *It's not easy—and be ready for changes. It will be a very growing experience if the purpose is to reach new people with the gospel. R.P., Indiana*
- *I was excited about being there from the start and being able to meet new people. If you get to start in at the beginning, it just feels special. C.E. (a "new Christian"), Colorado*
- *Be willing to serve and be over-involved because if you just want to go along for the ride rather than help drive, you shouldn't be there. M.V., Michigan*
- *Be prepared to stretch your personal boundaries—of what you "can do." If God is leading you into developing a church you "can do" (and must do) more than you thought you were able to do. G.M., Rhode Island*
- *Get the children involved. A.J., Arizona*
- *I was surprised that people who haven't been going to church for years got interested. B.W., Minnesota*
- *Do it! It is the most rewarding experience I've ever had!! M.O., Colorado*

## The Challenge

There are a couple of recurring themes in the testimonies of people involved in church planting. The first is that it's hard work and the second is that it's rewarding. This shouldn't surprise us because we know that serving the Lord is always a stretching experience and as we're stretched we're also fulfilled. New church development is not for people whose primary orientation to life and faith is that of the *consumer* looking for programs and experiences to “meet their own needs.” Church planters are *investors*—people whose primary concern is in devoting their lives to serving Christ and the church. They are people willing to endure chaos, inconvenience, and constant change so that the cause of Christ might move forward.

The *Evangelical Covenant Church* desires to be a denomination characterized by an investor mentality. This is why new church development is a major focus in our fellowship. Currently we are starting an average of 20 churches a year, 50% of which are “ethnic” or “urban” congregations. This is about double what it was 10 years ago—the result of a growing desire that every congregation in the Covenant be involved in helping to launch a new church through **parenting** (a church sending out a significant group from their own number to become a new congregation), **partnering** (several Covenant churches working together to form the core for a new church), or **pioneering** (a congregation sending out a church planter to start from scratch).

As you can well imagine, such an undertaking requires a significant commitment on the part of the local churches, regional conferences, and the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism—all working together. The real challenge, though, will be in finding enough people who are willing to leave behind the comfort of an established congregation to pioneer a new mission. It's not that there is a lack of interest; to the contrary, many Christians are intrigued by the idea of church planting. It's just that they aren't sure whether it's a ministry for them and if it is, they don't know how to proceed.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with some information that you will need to discern whether God might be calling you to church planting and then to walk you through some of the basic steps involved in starting a new congregation.

The ball has been lobbed into your end of the court. Are you willing to rally to the challenge of church planting?

## Chapter 2

### **12 Reasons Why New Churches Are a Good Idea**

Not everyone is sold on the idea of church planting. There are some genuine concerns that seem to pop up over and over again as people talk about starting new congregations.

- “We can't even fill the existing churches; why should we start new ones?”
- “Our area is already overchurched.”
- “Starting a new church would cause division in the existing churches.”
- “We're not big enough or strong enough to give up some of our people.”

All of these are legitimate concerns but as you consider the following reasons for starting new churches you'll see that they are without significant basis in fact or can be overcome.

#### **(1) Church planting has a biblical basis**

Jesus was a church planter. At the outset of his public ministry, Jesus began to form a community of disciples that would participate with him in his mission (Mark 1:16-20). The formation of this community became a major focal point of his ministry, for through this community Jesus would carry on his mission of finding and saving the lost (Luke 15; 19:10). In John 20:21 it is to the gathered group of the disciples that Jesus says, *As the Father has sent me, so I send you*. Likewise in Matthew 28:19 the risen Savior commands his followers, *Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...* Note that it is not to the individual disciples that these words are spoken but to the community. Jesus recognized that vital and viable pockets of community were the most effective means to carry out his mission of finding and saving the lost. Consequently when a person is converted to the Lord that person is also converted into the church; he or she becomes a participant in the ministry of Jesus.

Church planting is one of the means through which disciples are gathered into viable Christian communities. In many ways, the new congregation is much more like the initial community of disciples that Jesus gathered than it is like more established churches. This is not to say that established congregations are any less the church; rather that the ministry of the whole church is most clearly evident in the new congregation which has a fresh sense of mission.

Luke makes it clear that after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, one of the qualities that characterized this massive wave of conversion to Jesus was the establishment of fellowship groups. In Acts 2:41-42 he writes, *Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church—about three thousand in all. They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer.* The establishment of such groups—churches—was repeated numerous times throughout Acts and was a major aspect of the apostolic mission. The apostles did not just proclaim the gospel and perform great signs in the name of Christ but they established churches.

## **(2) New congregations are especially effective in reaching lost people**

An inordinate number of people find Christ through the ministry of new churches. Bruce McNicol of Interest Ministries is quoted in the magazine *Christianity Today* as saying that, "Among evangelical churches, those under three years old will win ten people to Christ per year for every hundred church members; those 3 to 15 years old will win five people per year. After age 15, the number drops to three per year."<sup>1</sup>

Other students of church growth concur. Lyle Schaller, in his book *44 Questions for Church Planters*, writes

...new churches are more likely to reach more people and to grow in size than are long-established parishes. Perhaps the simplest explanation of this pattern is that new congregations are organized around evangelism and reaching people not actively involved in the life of any worshiping community. By contrast, powerful internal institutional pressures tend to encourage long-established churches to allocate most of their resources to the care of members. One result is that the vast majority of new congregations in the United States reach their peak in size during the first two or three decades of their existence and then remain on a plateau in size or begin to shrink in numbers.<sup>2</sup>

C. Peter Wagner adds, "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches."<sup>3</sup>

The Barna Research Institute estimates that 59% of the U.S. population is unconverted.<sup>4</sup> In numbers, that is over 162 million people. This is an incredibly large mission field! Gary Walter, Executive Director of the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism for the *Evangelical Covenant Church*, notes that the people of the United States and Canada comprise the largest mission field in the Western Hemisphere. Walter writes

While as a Covenant we actively affirm and engage in other thrusts of evangelism, the efficacy of church planting as an evangelistic strategy compels our commitment to it. As existing congregations continue to hold evangelism as a central value and as new churches are established on the priority of that value, the Covenant will be well positioned to do its part in reaching the very mission field in which we live.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Churches Die with Dignity," *Christianity Today*, January 14, 1991, 69.

<sup>2</sup> Nashville: Abingdon, 1991, 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, Glendale: Regal Books, 1990, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Barna Research Online, "The State of the Church, 2000", March 21, 2000. [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org).

<sup>5</sup> *Next Steps*, a planning document from the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism of the Evangelical Covenant Church, September 1992.

The reasons for the effectiveness of new churches are: the high levels of commitment and expectation in a newer congregation, the greater use of culturally relevant forms of communication and worship, the tendency to emphasize basics such as the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and the motivation created by the knowledge that the congregation will not survive if it is ineffective in reaching people for Christ.

### **(3) New congregations provide a forum for innovation**

All cultures are in a state of continual flux but ours is in an era of accelerated change. Who, 40 years ago, had heard of a microwave oven, CD player, air bag, home computer, digital camera, DOS, MP3, DVD, PDA, or VCR? Who 20 years ago would have predicted the fall of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union? Or the rise of Amazon.com? Who 10 years ago would have thought that VW Beetles would once again be common on American roads? Our world is changing extremely fast at home and abroad and this means changes in social patterns and behavior.

How will the church ever keep up with these changes? Existing congregations will have to adapt their style (but never their message!) if they are going to survive but, as many people have discovered, change does not come very fast in the church. By nature churches are somewhat change-resistant. This is good because it keeps us from getting sucked into every fad that comes along. But the fact is that if we expect to meet the new challenges that our society is throwing at us we need both the stability of existing congregations and the flexibility of new churches.

The new congregation, because it has less of an institutional history and thus less to conserve, naturally presents fewer barriers and limitations for change. This means that it is more likely to respond to cultural shifts. In this way the new congregation provides leadership for the rest of the church.

Examples of changes that have come out of new churches or new church movements are:

- Evangelistic Strategy—The introduction of innovations such as the “seeker-driven” service was the result of a vision at the now famous Willow Creek Community Church of South Barrington, Illinois. Music and drama are carefully crafted to speak to a segment of society which is entertainment oriented. This evangelistic approach, unheard of 40 years ago, has been adapted by numerous congregations around the world.
- Small Groups—Small group ministry is not really new or innovative but is being rediscovered after a long period of neglect and now many churches have some form of small group ministry. The purpose of these groups that regularly meet together varies from evangelism to Bible study to personal support. What they have in common is a recognition that people need to have a regular face-to-face encounter in a small group setting where significant relationships can form. When

existing congregations try to introduce a small group system or structure they find that they are competing with other less-than-essential but more established elements. New congregations, on the other hand, can create small group structures from the outset and thus reinforce the priority of Christian community.

- **Musical Innovations**—The praise songs which were common in the 1980's initially took hold in the newly established Calvary Chapel and Vineyard Christian Fellowship churches of the 1960's and 70's. Many songs, such as "A Mighty Fortress," "How Great Thou Art" or "Children of the Heavenly Father," now considered "traditional" were originally introduced in earlier new church movements. Someday, in the not too distant future, the best of the songs written today will be considered traditional fare and music more in tune with the new generation will be on the cutting edge. Chances are that much of this new music will be introduced to the church in new congregations.

#### **(4) The perceived "competition" of new congregations encourages existing congregations forward toward spiritual vitality**

While competition does not at the outset sound very spiritual it has proven to be an effective motivator for existing congregations as they are compelled to examine themselves in light of the spiritual growth of new congregations in their community. This can lead to a spirit of resentment and bitterness toward the new group and even the Lord (for "blessing them and not us") but it can also be impetus for change and awakening. C. Peter Wagner notes

Some are reluctant to start new churches for fear of harming those churches that are currently located in the target community. They feel that doing so could create undesirable competition between brothers and sisters in Christ. I mention here that in more cases than not, a new church in the community tends to raise the religious interest of the people in general and if handled properly can be a benefit to existing churches. That which blesses the kingdom of God as a whole also blesses the churches that truly are a part of the Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

Wagner cites a study done in the town of Ewa, Hawaii. With the planting of a Southern Baptist church in that small town came a 100% increase in attendance at the Roman Catholic church. The local Congregational church saw attendance rise by 155%.

Lyle Schaller has made a similar observation about the planting of new congregations of the same denomination.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, congregations usually benefit from intra-denominational competition. While it is impossible to isolate one factor as being decisive, the presence of two or more congregations with the same denominational affiliation usually results in a higher level of congregational health and vitality than if one congregation has a denominational monopoly in that

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<sup>6</sup> *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, 20.

community.<sup>7</sup>

As strange as it might sound, one of the best places to start a Covenant church is where one or more already exists. A new Covenant church will raise the visibility of the existing church and will in turn receive the support and encouragement of the established congregation.

If congregational leadership will avoid a negative spirit of competition then the new congregation stimulates the existing congregations not only through the introduction of new ideas and methodologies into the community but also by renewing its sense of mission. An existing congregation which has written its community off as resistant sees the success of the new group and realizes that perhaps the mission field in the area is still “ripe for harvest.” The existing congregation is then forced to ask the hard questions surrounding their own ineffectiveness.

#### **(5) New congregations create new leaders**

Many established congregations unconsciously hinder the development of new leaders. This is unintentional but nevertheless real as potential leaders can be discouraged and held back because of a perceived lack of openness to new blood and new ideas. Furthermore, there are only so many leadership slots in a church and in existing congregations those slots are often filled. And even when there are formal spots open on a council or a committee a person will not necessarily be allowed to exercise leadership from those positions. The simplest definition of leadership is “influence” and long-time members of a church who are no longer serving formally on the church council can exercise informal influence that is greater than the formal influence of a neophyte leader. All of this is a roundabout way of saying that not all gifted leaders are going to be allowed to exercise their gifts in an established congregation.

New churches create openings for more people to develop and utilize leadership gifts. Furthermore, the new congregation often creates leadership opportunities that are not easily found in existing congregations. Leaders in new congregations tend to be more entrepreneurial and pioneering than those in existing congregations and an attempt to exercise that type of gift in an existing setting can lead to conflict and massive turmoil. Thus, a new congregation provides an appropriate setting for these people to use and develop their gifts.

#### **(6) New congregations are hotbeds for spiritual growth**

The process of starting a new church can be a time of great personal and corporate renewal. In my own life I've discovered a new awareness of the mystery and transcendence of the Lord that comes from living “on the edge.” This is consistent with what others are observing. James Persson, former Executive Director of the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism for the *Evangelical Covenant Church*, has stated that

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<sup>7</sup> *44 Questions for Church Planters*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991, 29-30.

“every time we build a church it takes at least two or three miracles to make it happen.”

For example, one person from Good Samaritan Community Covenant Church in Valley Springs, California, noted that there was opposition from area residents when they started the process of constructing a building. In spite of the opposition they received approval and one man who originally protested to the city council now attends the church. That church is now not only praising God for a wonderful building but also for that man.

One woman in Colorado recalls a difficult time in their new church. The founding pastor left and she was sure that everyone else would pull out but instead they pulled together. She writes, “The church was given a rebirth and God certainly is faithful.” That church currently averages over 400 in attendance and is helping to start another new congregation.

Of the 120 laypeople surveyed as I prepared this handbook 116 responded positively to the statement, “I would consider my new church experience to be a spiritual growth experience.” Several people put exclamation marks after their “yes” answer and one woman from Texas wrote in, “Absolutely, yes, yes!”

### **(7) New congregations bring a future focus to the church**

If asked, existing congregations can usually point to some accomplishment or event in their past as a justification for their current existence. While it is healthy to recall what the Lord has done in the past, it is stifling if that past becomes the sole or dominant source of identity for a congregation.

The new congregation, on the other hand, has no past and is thus more inclined to be forward thinking in its approach to ministry. Its self-perception grows out of a futuristic orientation and is shaped by a sense that it, like ancient Israel, is a congregation of aliens headed toward a promised land. Both the existing and new congregation have this sense of journey but the existing group sees itself as struggling to make a life in the promised land whereas the new group sees itself as still outside the promised land. It is not unusual for a new church to think of itself as wandering in the wilderness for the first couple of years—especially if they change meeting locations on a regular basis. This wandering is not seen so much as a negative factor but as an indication that God is doing something new through them. Again, this perspective can be contagious as the existing congregation looks over the shoulder of the younger congregation and sees the plans and vision of the new group.

### **(8) New congregations focus a group of highly committed people on a single task**

Some people have argued that creating new congregations is just a matter of “reshuffling the saints.” Sometimes they are correct but there is also a sense in which reshuffling is not always negative. Card players know that reshuffling the deck can create more powerful hands and change the whole dynamic of the game.

This is essentially what happens when believers move from an existing congregation

into a new one. These people are not just seeking to escape a less-than-fulfilling or negative situation but they are captivated by a vision for ministry. Pollster and church growth strategist George Barna notes

I've also come to believe that it is substantially easier to achieve growth in a church that has been newly planted than in an existing congregation that is beset with hardening of the spiritual arteries. In a new church, the chances of bringing together people of like mind and like mission are much greater. In such churches, attracting people who own the common vision for ministry is much more probable. Indeed, it takes such a oneness of mind and spirit to successfully launch a church in America today.<sup>8</sup>

The new congregation serves as a catalyst of vision. A fact which is occasionally overlooked, though, is that the vision of one congregation will ultimately affect other churches and thus bringing people together around a new vision can have a sweeping impact. The right combination of people in the right setting can open new doors and possibilities for the entire church.

**(9) New congregations can challenge the commitment level of existing congregations, especially in a denominational context where there is a sharing of resources**

Most new congregations planted in the *Evangelical Covenant Church* are a combined effort of the denomination, its regional conferences, and a local congregation. There are some weaknesses in the methodology but there are also some great strengths in that the existing congregations, many of which are too small or frail to launch a new congregation on their own, genuinely participate in the process.

When a new congregation starts it is not uncommon to have a significant number of visitors from other Covenant churches. These people are not just well-wishers but genuine participants in the process coming to see firsthand how God is using some of the resources they have provided. They have been supporting the planting efforts through prayer, finances, by identifying prospects for the church, and even by sharing some of their key leaders and families from their own congregations. Even though these visitors are not a part of the new congregation they have a definite sense of ownership and commitment to it.

In Covenant churches throughout the U.S. and Canada congregations and individuals have been stepping up to bat to fund new churches. Our own congregation, *Cornerstone Covenant Church*, of Turlock, California (established in 1994), has set aside 5% of the income from our capital fund drive to help fund a new church. Nearby Hilmar Covenant Church, getting ready to celebrate 100 years of ministry, is also setting aside 5% of the income from their expansion campaign to help start a new congregation. In all likelihood the two churches will combine their money with that of similar funds in other area churches to soon plant another new

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<sup>8</sup>*User Friendly Churches*, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991, 188.

church.

This kind of sharing happens on many levels in many ways. Another example is the *Frontier Friends Kingdom Builders* fund. Since 1952 this auxiliary organization in the Covenant, consisting of over 6,000 people, has contributed over \$6 million to 350 plus congregations, mostly new. Churches receive an average of \$25,000 each to help with the purchase of land or construction. It is this hands-on participation and extended sense of ownership which allows believers in existing congregations to share in the newness of what God is doing somewhere else and they in return are renewed.

### **(10) New churches are necessary for new cultures**

The *Evangelical Covenant Church* came into existence because there was a desire on the part of Swedish immigrants in Canada and the United States to reach other Swedish immigrants with the gospel. These early Covenanters recognized that English-speaking churches, steeped in traditional American culture, would be ineffective at reaching the new Swedish-Americans. As the church growth movement has observed, people respond best to the gospel among similar people. Persians will hear the gospel better when there is a Persian congregation with which they can identify. Likewise, Laotians will respond to the good news of Christ when it is presented by a Laotian congregation.

Increased mobility throughout the world means that there will be cultural enclaves in new places that need to be reached with the gospel. For example, I live in Turlock, an agriculturally-based community in the great Central Valley of California. As I work in my garden I hear my neighbors speaking Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Punjabi, and Assyrian

While the *Evangelical Covenant Church* as a group has decided to specifically target the African-American, Hispanic, Korean, and Native Alaskan cultures for new church development we are very open to developing work among other groups as well. Currently there are Covenant churches in the U.S. and Canada which reach Laotians, Vietnamese, Assyrians, Haitians, second generation Asians, Mainland Chinese, Sudanese, and Estonians.

Likewise, we need to recognize that even among English-speaking people there are numerous subcultures that will best be penetrated as churches are established by others of similar social position. This is one reason why so many of our established churches are not growing. It's not that they lack commitment, spiritual depth, or even the desire; it's rather that they are of a different cultural make-up than the communities where they exist. For example, churches composed mostly of blue-collar factory workers have a hard time making significant inroads into the ranks of corporate CEOs and vice versa. We may find this fact disconcerting but we need to recognize it as a reality with which we must deal.

The great challenges of the next few decades will center not only around the increasing ethnic diversity in our country (Anglos are a minority in California and will soon be elsewhere in the country) but also in the distinct subcultures that each new

generation seems to be creating. Only about 30% of the new church plants in the Covenant are designed to reach out to suburban Anglos. The rest are reaching into distinct cultural and generational groups. One of the great new waves of church planting is taking place in churches designed to reach Gen-Xers and people of a more Postmodern bent. Soon we will be planting churches that speak to the media savvy Millennium Generation.

The growth of new ethnic groups and lifestyles means that we must develop new congregations to meet the needs of these subcultures.

### **(11) Very few places are “overchurched”**

There is almost always room for one more outpost of the kingdom of God. For a minute ignore the fact that most churches in your area are not doing an effective job at penetrating the community with the gospel and that it is unrealistic to expect that fact to change in a major way. Just ignore that fact for a few minutes as you go through the church listings in the yellow pages. Call them all and ask (or just guess) how many seats they have in their sanctuaries. Then, make the assumption that each of those seats is filled every week and add up the seating capacity for all the churches. How does that number stand in relation to the total population of the community? If you're really optimistic assume that each church could go to double services if they had to. Are there still people who wouldn't fit into all the churches? Virtually without exception the gap between the capacity of the existing churches and the total strength of the population will be significant.

However, the fact is that churches are not really seats anyway. They are dynamic living groups of believers which will reach a relational capacity for growth and then plateau regardless of how many chairs they own. There are people in your community who are not being reached by the existing congregations and the chances are that it will take a fresh approach by someone new to significantly impact the unchurched segment of your city or town.

### **(12) Church planting is essential to advance the collective mission of the *Evangelical Covenant Church***

In the Covenant we don't see the individual congregations existing just for themselves but also for the furthering of the Kingdom of God around the world. We have a “covenant” together to encourage and support the world mission of the church. In order for us to be effective we must plant new churches in the United States and Canada thereby expanding the financial and personnel base of our international ministry. It needs to be noted that newer churches are also some of our most generous congregations. Their enthusiasm for Christ's work at home spills over to bring renewal, creativity, and fresh resources to our ministry abroad.

This need to expand the home ministry base is even more critical as we realize that each year a handful of Covenant congregations cease to meet and are laid to rest. Schaller notes that denominations which intend to remain on a numerical plateau will organize one new congregation a year for each one hundred existing congregations. Denominations which intend to grow will organize “two or three new

churches each year for each one hundred existing congregations.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Summary Thoughts**

Each city, town, region, and situation is different but one thing that most places have in common is a need for new churches. The 12 reasons outlined above should make it clear that church planting is not an option or a luxury for the church but it is an absolutely essential dimension of our mission. There are literally thousands of people who will be touched directly and indirectly by your involvement in establishing a new church.

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<sup>9</sup> “What Is the Future of Your Denomination?” *Parish Paper*, Vol. 22—No. 2: August 1992, 1.

### Chapter 3

## **Leadership**

It is obvious that the *Evangelical Covenant Church* is committed to church planting but the question remains, who is going to lead all of these churches?

### **The Holy Spirit**

One veteran church planter, a layperson, writes, “We don't start churches—God does!” Christ is not only the head of the church but he also sustains and leads it through his Spirit. It's pretty hard to read the book of Acts without recognizing the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit in moving Christ's church forward. Acts 1:8 is the nutshell summary of the entire book. Jesus tells his disciples, the church, *But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

It is the Holy Spirit who leads the church as he speaks through scripture, creates vision in the lives of believers, and opens doors for the gospel. Apart from his direction and blessing the church will not succeed. This doesn't mean that every group which wears the label “church” is operating under the direction of the Holy Spirit. There are some rather large congregations which appear to be successful but from a divine perspective are not really the church at all for they are built on human ambitions and manipulative techniques. They may do miracles and use the name of Jesus but they are not Spirit-led.

Practically speaking, this means that church planters will be making themselves alert to the Holy Spirit by spending time in the scriptures, listening in prayer, and in open discussion with other believers (fellowship) about what the Lord seems to be doing. It means that we needn't be frustrated when everything fails to come together according to our own timetables or in the projected manner. Most of the lay church planters I surveyed reported that in spite of their careful planning and enthusiasm they experienced major surprises in the process of establishing the church—people move away, the neighbors oppose a construction project, a pastor takes a new call, a tornado takes a roof. All of these are factors over which we have no control. The only thing we can realistically do is recognize that God is in charge and that the Holy Spirit is accomplishing his work through us, in his way, at his own pace.

### **The Laity**

Lyle Schaller says that, “From a long-term perspective one of the most significant decisions in planting a new church is the choice of that initial cadre of volunteer leaders.”<sup>10</sup> The assumption behind this handbook is that next to the Holy Spirit laypeople are the primary ministers in the church and in church planting. Yes, pastors have a role. Yes, denominational leaders and experts need to play a part but

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<sup>10</sup> *44 Questions for Church Planters*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991, 128

the front line people in the church are the laity. As a matter of fact the word “laity” actually means “people.” You see, in the Bible the responsibility for ministry doesn't rest with a group of spiritually elite specialists but with the people as a whole—the laity.

In 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10 the apostle describes the entire church as being a “holy” or “royal priesthood.” The entire church, the body of Christ, shares in the ministry of representing Christ to the world. What can be said of the entire church is just as true of the new congregation.

Organizational strategists have long noted that “everything rises and falls on leadership.” This axiom is especially true in the new church—and it applies to lay leaders as well as whatever clergy are involved. We need strong leaders at the outset—leaders that are initiators. Many of our congregations are completely lay-initiated. That is, one or more lay leaders coalesce a group of interested church planters, begin a Bible study, seek direction from the Lord, and begin working with a conference superintendent or director of church planting to form the nucleus for a church. In some situations a layperson with appropriate gifts and calling is appointed to pastor a new congregation and is licensed as a lay minister by the Covenant. The point is that it doesn't necessarily take an expert or a specialist to start the process of planting a church.

Are you a leader? There are four certain qualities which characterize Christian leadership and are particularly applicable to church planting leaders.

### **Purpose**

*Purpose* is the most obvious quality of Christian leadership. To what end is a person influencing another? A person whose leadership is not consistent with God's purposes in the world certainly cannot be deemed a leader in a biblical sense. If an individual is interested in starting a church so he or she can exercise control over other people or so that his or her religious needs will be met in a convenient manner then that person's purpose is not consistent with God's purposes. The Lord is interested in forming churches which can be redemptive communities seeking out the lost (2 Corinthians 5-6), edifying the believer (Colossians 1:28), and joining together in worship (1 Corinthians 14:26).

### **Call**

The second thing that characterizes Christian leadership is *call*. The most moving and striking points in scripture are related to God calling his people to leadership. Abraham was called to leave his homeland and establish a new people. Moses reluctantly acknowledged his call to leadership in Exodus 3 and took Israel out of Egypt. In Acts 9 the apostle Paul was converted and called to leadership at the same time.<sup>11</sup> Even Jesus' ministry began with a heavenly call (Luke 3:21-23).

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<sup>11</sup> See verse 15.

The church itself can be defined in terms of call. After all, the New Testament word which is most often used to describe the church is *ekklesia*, meaning those who were “called out.” The church is by definition “called” to ministry.

Likewise, as noted in the examples above, God calls individuals to specific ministries. The planting of new congregations needs to be seen not only as a part of the general call that Christ gives to his church but also as a specific call to certain individuals. Joseph F. James writes

Church planters are ordinary people with an extraordinary passion for the lost. They are businessmen, schoolteachers, mechanics, retired ministers, mature students, bi-vocational pastors, young seminarians, experienced pastors—anyone called of God for that purpose!<sup>12</sup>

While more will be said about determining call in chapter 4 it needs to be noted here that the people God calls into leadership he also equips and gifts for that ministry.

It is in the context of a discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28 that the apostle Paul reminds his readers that God appoints some to leadership. *Here is a list of some of the members that God has placed in the body of Christ: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers, then those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, those who can help others, those who can get others to work together, those who speak in unknown languages.*

In Romans 12:6-7 he again notes the gifts of leadership, *God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out when you have faith that God is speaking through you. If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching...*

When God calls individuals to a particular ministry he provides the necessary gifts to carry out the assignment. Indeed, the presence of certain gifts can be one factor in hearing God's call. One gift that many church planters have identified as absolutely essential for leaders in the new church is that of faith—the special ability to see what God wants to accomplish and to trust him to do so.

## **Community**

The third factor indicative of leadership ministry is that of Christian community. What is truly ministry will always emerge from the context of Christian community—the church. This means that church planters are not to be “lone rangers” out there doing their own thing to make a church happen. This means that ministers (lay and clergy) must be an active part of the community of Christ and receive in some way the blessing of that community before they venture out to start a new congregation. In the Covenant this means working in harmony with conference superintendents, and if you're going to spin a group off from another church, the council and pastor of that church.

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<sup>12</sup> *On the Front Lines*, Winona Lake, IN: Free Methodist Church of North America, 1987, 11-12.

## Ethics

Covenanters, like all other serious followers of Christ, have historically recognized a distinctive Christian lifestyle or system of ethics. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 the apostle Paul lists several qualities, many of them ethical in nature, that we need to look for in the lives of Christian leaders. Much has been written about these qualities and I would encourage you to take some time to study them.

But when we say that there is a distinctively Christian ethic we are not just talking about a list of qualities. Christian leaders recognize that there is a way of treating people and completing tasks which reflects the mind of Christ—a servant mentality. It is especially crucial that we adopt the servant-leadership style of Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote, *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...* (Philippians 2:6-7b—NIV)

The leaders of new churches, faced with the pressure of limited time and resources, can easily be tempted to adopt a more dictatorial or even manipulative style. But we need to remember Peter's charge to the early church elders.

*...Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example....And all of you, serve each other in humility...(1 Peter 5:2-3, 5a)*

That is, the ministry of leadership is not characterized by the accumulation of power, as demonstrated in much of worldly leadership; rather, Christian leadership is characterized by the giving up of power. Sometimes contemporary research calls this “empowering leadership,” the use of power to build up and equip others in order that they might live up to their potential.

A servant is one who sets aside his or her own self-interests in order to carry out the will of another and Christian leaders set aside their own aspirations so that the church might be empowered for ministry. To say that Christian leadership is characterized by servanthood is not to say that it is spineless or passive in style. The particular manner in which servant leadership is exercised will depend on the gifts, personalities, and contexts of both the leader and the follower. We need to recognize that there is no single style or leadership personality that works in all situations. To the contrary the effective leader adapts his or her style to the situation. Even then no individual possesses all the gifts necessary to function in all leadership situations. That's why effective servant leadership is also shared leadership.

This observation is consistent with the body metaphor that the apostle Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26. He says, *Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part.* (1 Corinthians 12:14). Thus it is not a particular style that makes for effective servant leadership but the ability to work as a team to empower others.

Again, this demonstrates the need for the sharing of leadership in new churches. While

it may be necessary for a leader or small group of leaders to possess considerable decision-making power at the outset, the leader(s) will want to quickly begin the process of transferring power and responsibility to others who have appropriate gifts.

The standards outlined above should reinforce in your mind the fact that we expect a lot out of lay leaders. This is because these leaders will set the tone and the pace for the congregation. Sometimes struggling new churches will press any warm body into a leadership role but such acts of desperation will only serve to stifle the congregation. It is better to start out with limited leadership rather than poor leadership.

## **Pastors**

If the ministry of the church really rests in the hands of the laity, then what role do pastors play? Ephesians 4:11-13 tells us that pastors are important. *He (Christ) is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.*

The role, then, of the pastor and teacher (as well as apostles, prophets, and evangelists) is the equipping of the church to do the work of ministry. Whatever else the clergyperson might be he or she is fundamentally an equipper of the saints.

As you choose an equipper—a pastor with whom to work as you establish a congregation—you need to recognize that new church pastors must have a unique combination of gifts and personality traits. Carl George, who has been studying pastors and churches for years, has identified three working styles among pastors that can predict success in church planting—catalyzers, organizers, and operators. The catalyzer is “an entrepreneurial type who can start a group or project from scratch, attracting people and other resources.” Organizers, on the other hand, prefer to take “an abstract goal or disorganized project and design an orderly organization.” Operators can keep an organization going by “accomplishing the essential routine tasks of the programs.” George contends that those people who function as catalyzers and organizers, or as a combination of the two, will be the most successful pastors in new church development.<sup>13</sup>

This seems especially logical if the congregation is being planted using a strategy that relies heavily on a single leader. But churches committed to shared leadership will not have to rely as heavily on the working style of the pastor or senior pastor. If the church is being planted by a leadership team it seems essential to have a combination of styles that can balance each other. For example, if there is a strong and sensitive lay leader who can perform catalyzing functions then the pastor can apply him- or herself to the organizing tasks.

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<sup>13</sup> From the “How to Plant a Church Seminar,” offered through the Fuller Evangelistic Association.

The facts are, however, that the new church pastor must be flexible, able to live with the chaos of start-up, be warm, outgoing, and willing to work hard. The Department of Church Growth and Evangelism takes potential church planting pastors through an assessment process to determine whether they have the necessary gifts and personality traits to thrive in this type of ministry. These pastors also receive specialized training through that department.

Many of the early Covenant pastors were bi-vocational, that is, they supported themselves and their pastoral ministry through “secular” work such as farming or teaching. We are now more and more open to returning to this model, especially for church planting pastors. Bi-vocational pastors will not be appropriate for all settings but we’re discovering that in many places they are more effective at getting the job done than people who are full-time vocational pastors.

In some settings it may become apparent that God is calling a local layperson, not formally trained, to serve as pastor of the new congregation. We rejoice when God calls such individuals and the Covenant recognizes their call by issuing a lay minister’s license. These ministers have the authority to lead in all pastoral functions including preaching and sacraments. In most states they can perform all the same official functions as an ordained pastor (e.g. weddings). Churches or groups interested in lay licensing need to check with the conference superintendent.<sup>14</sup>

### **“All of the above”**

Who, then, is responsible for providing leadership in the church? The Holy Spirit? The laity? The pastor? The answer is “all of the above.” It is the power and leading of the Holy Spirit that creates the vision and calls those who will serve as his assistants. The laity makes up the front line of the church’s ministry in the world, including that of new church development. Pastors have been called to equip the laity for the work of ministry.

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<sup>14</sup> Go to [www.covchurch.org/cov/home/conferences.html](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/home/conferences.html) for a listing of conference offices.

Chapter 4

The 5 Phase Launch

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Discernment	Coalesce Core Group	Preview	Preparatory Worship	Grand Opening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could take months or even years</li> <li>• “Is this something God is calling me to do?”</li> <li>• “Are there others with a similar sense of call coming together?”</li> </ul> <p><b>Tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do research on your area.</li> <li>• Dream about what kind of church you want to plant.</li> <li>• Find 5 or 6 adults with a similar vision.</li> <li>• Talk to your pastor, church council, and conference officials.</li> <li>• Start setting some money aside to support the plant.</li> <li>• Visit as many new churches as you can – especially those less than a year old.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideally 3-4 months (e.g. June 1- Sept 19)</li> <li>• Bring in a church planting pastor.</li> <li>• Coalesce 20-30 motivated adults—or 30-50 if parented by an existing church.</li> <li>• Network with area Covenant churches.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose a name.</li> <li>• Gather people.</li> <li>• Build a sense of community</li> <li>• Work through and agree on values and cast the vision.</li> <li>• Plan and prepare for preview services.</li> <li>• Spend lots of time networking with potential people.</li> <li>• Follow up leads.</li> <li>• Tell your story to as many people as possible.</li> <li>• Hold open houses.</li> <li>• Be hospitable.</li> <li>• Core group meets together twice a month.</li> <li>• One or two group outreach activities a month.</li> <li>• Official organization assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideally 3-4 months (e.g. Sept 20-Dec 6)</li> <li>• Get everyone focused on gathering.</li> <li>• Focus on finding 50 new people each month to attend a preview service.</li> </ul> <p><b>Monthly Pattern:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Week 1 – Preview Service &amp; visitor follow up</li> <li>• Week 2 – Core activity in addition to “sub-core” meetings (leadership team, working groups)</li> <li>• Week 3 – Assimilation activity (picnic, BBQ, open house, mailing party, etc)</li> <li>• Week 4 – Core activity in addition to “sub-core” meetings (leadership team, working groups)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideally 3-4 months (e.g. Dec 7-Mar 6)</li> <li>• Begin weekly worship but don’t advertise.</li> <li>• Focus on developing the word of mouth invitation flow</li> </ul> <p><b>Tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen and develop these four areas of ministry (in this order of priority)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sunday service</li> <li>2. Children’s ministry</li> <li>3. Small groups</li> <li>4. Visitor follow-up</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideally 3-4 months (e.g. Mar 7-May 31)</li> <li>• Special celebrative events to keep the momentum going – e.g.</li> <li>• Mar 7– Grand Opening</li> <li>• Mar 14 – Fun assimilation event after service</li> <li>• Mar 21 – Bring a Friend Sunday</li> <li>• Mar 28 – Palm Sunday</li> <li>• Apr 4 – Easter</li> <li>• Apr 11– Kid-focused assimilation event</li> </ul>

There is no one right or best way to start a new church. The following steps are intended to serve as a general outline that can be used to start a church which is highly lay-oriented or occasionally without any clergy leadership at the outset. There is room for adaptation. However, before you venture too far from the pattern it is important to realize that this general flow has been developed and refined through the experience of thousands of people—hundreds of successful church starts—and dozens of failures. In other words, if you stray too far you may find that you're having to reinvent the wheel.

### **Phase 1—Discernment—“Is this something to which God is calling me?”**

God doesn't call everyone to be a church planter, although I'm convinced he is calling more people than are responding. If you have even the slightest amount of interest in this ministry you should assume that the Spirit is prompting you to explore in that direction. But don't move too quickly; give some time to asking the Lord to close the door if he has something else in mind for you. The apostle Paul and Timothy found the door closing on them several times (Acts 16:6-8). The closing door didn't seem to be apprehension, financial difficulty, or even an impossible-looking situation. Rather it was the prompting of the Holy Spirit who was about to open another door. Pray, asking the Spirit if there is any reason that you should not move ahead.

Visit as many new churches as possible in order to get a feel for the task. Make sure that some of those churches are a part of the Covenant and focus on getting first to those which are less than one year old.

One of the most important factors to consider is that of cost. You will be expected to give sacrificially of your time, money, and energy. Sometimes the personal return will not be immediately apparent. One veteran church planter, a woman from Houston responded to my survey by writing:

*Know that God is leading your involvement in this or it will be a lonely job. You have to be willing to get your own needs met elsewhere and not from the newly growing congregation. For example, I am a never-married professional. I don't have a lot in common with our target audience nor basically the church as it has developed. But because of my desire to be used of the Lord in this ministry he meets my needs in other ways.*

Consider, too, the advice of mature Christians who not only know you well but who are themselves sympathetic with the ministry of new church development. You might find it helpful to talk with some people who are already involved in church planting.

If you are a leader who has felt the Spirit's compulsion to actually initiate the process of starting a church you need to be in consultation with your pastor, church council (board), or if you're not locally a part of a Covenant church, a conference superintendent.<sup>15</sup>

Do research. Before starting a church somewhere it is important that we understand who lives in the area. There are several sources that you can go to for demographic

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<sup>15</sup>Go to [www.covchurch.org/cov/html/conferences.html](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/html/conferences.html) for a listing of conference offices.

information. Public libraries usually stock U.S. census data which you can study for profiles of states, counties, standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSA), a city or a census tract. Likewise, school boards and other government agencies compile demographic information as do chambers of commerce. I once found a most relevant demographic report in a real estate prospectus for a building we were trying to lease.

If you don't want to spend hours with your nose in books trying to decipher statistical tables one of the smartest things you can do is buy a *Ministry Area Profile* from Percept Group.<sup>16</sup> These reports are relatively inexpensive and tend to focus on useful information. Before contacting them, however, check with the Director of Technical Services in the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism, (773) 784-3000. He has on occasion made special price arrangements with this company.

The Director of Technical Services has a computer program which can generate a less detailed demographic profile. He can also tell you about the areas where the Covenant has already done demographic research. Some of the conference offices have also done preliminary reports on a limited number of locations. If there are other new churches in the community check with the pastors to find out what type of demographic research they have done and if they might be willing to share their information.

One final word about research—learn as much as you can about the community and the people without getting bogged down or depending on the information as the final word regarding whether you should start a church (or even what kind of church you should start). There are lots of places with less-than-ideal demographics which host thriving new churches. And there are a lot more places with “ideal” demographics where new churches have a hard time taking root.

In the Covenant we practice “organic” church planting. This means that while we take crucial issues such as population growth and make-up into account, our primary focus is on people resources. We know that we need to have the right people with the right networks all brought together at the right time by the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

## **Phase 2—Coalesce a Core Group**

If it seems that the light is green, begin looking around for some other people who might share your vision. In the first century it was necessary to coalesce a group of 10 Jewish men (and their families) to start a synagogue. This is a good guideline since ten tithing families can provide the necessary financial support to start a church. On the other hand, Larry Lewis, a Southern Baptist church planter, tells of Ross Hughes, a mission leader in their convention, who often spoke of the “frontier four.” Pastor Hughes believed that the minimum number necessary to form a nucleus of a new congregation was four committed families. These four families, consisting of at least six to eight adults, provide enough of a base to begin meeting together and can even supply the necessary

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<sup>16</sup>Percept Group, (800) 442-6277 or (714) 957-1282, [www.perceptnet.com](http://www.perceptnet.com)

<sup>17</sup>See the article “Organic Church Planting” by David T. Olson located in Appendix A.

workers for a fully graded Sunday School. Obviously a “frontier ten” or even a “frontier fifteen” would be even better.

The goal in this step is to find at least 20-30 motivated individuals. Without this kind of a base it will be very difficult to move on to the next step.

Where do you find this initial core group? Ask! Ask your friends at work, school, in the neighborhood. Sometimes a door-to-door or telephone survey of an area will not only provide you with contacts of people who are interested in starting a church but will also give you tremendous insight into the perceived needs of the people in the community. A survey might consist of about six questions, such as these:

1. Are you active in a nearby church?
2. What do you think is the greatest need in this community?
3. Why do you think that most people don't attend church?
4. If you were looking for a church in this area, what kinds of things would you look for?
5. What advice would you give to us as we look into forming a church around here?
6. Are you interested in receiving more information about this new church?

Sometimes you'll find that an ad or an article in the local newspaper will create interest. This is how the Redwood Covenant Church of Santa Rosa, California started. Others have found that they've actually made some initial contacts through classified ads in newspapers or in the Pennysaver type publications.

My first attempt at forming a core group was as a college student and I enlisted the aid of a conference superintendent who provided me with names of people who subscribed to Covenant publications in my area. You will find the superintendent to be a good resource and source of encouragement. Make sure that you contact him or her early in the process of forming a group. Likewise, you need to maintain contact with your own pastor. While most pastors will be supportive of your mission, you will occasionally find a pastor who is less than thrilled. After all, he or she is going to be losing you and you are a great asset!

The most effective way of planting a Covenant church in most situations is parenting. Parenting is the process of taking a group from one or more established churches to form a new church. This approach requires the enthusiastic leadership of the pastor(s) of the existing church(es). If you think that your existing congregation might be able to parent the new church you need to direct your energy toward fostering that vision with the pastor. If the pastor really catches the vision he or she will help you recruit a core from within the congregation. Sometimes a parenting church will send a staff person to serve as the new pastor.

In a parenting situation it is ideal to have at least 30-50 committed adults by the end of the 3 or 4 months spent at this step. As a general rule of thumb we tell pastors of existing congregations that we don't want them sending more than 10% of the existing church to help start the new work.

## **Network**

Regardless of how you get your initial core group one of the most important things that you do in this phase is networking. We tell mission pastors that they should be spending 50% of their time in the church's first year networking with people. And the same generalization can be made for laypeople.

The temptation might be to let the organizational work necessary for this stage absorb all your energy. Don't. If you pour most of your energy at this point into telling your story and sharing the church's vision with as many people as possible it will pay off in the long run.

Hold open houses where you have refreshments and then give a brief explanation of what you're doing. Cookouts in the park can be very effective at this stage. Challenge people who visit your events to consider whether this might be what God is calling them to do. Ask them if they know of others who might be interested.

Another source for contacts might be neighboring Covenant churches. See if you can get an invitation to tell your story to the church council, outreach commission, and ultimately to the congregation. Neighboring churches will often be enthusiastic supporters providing finances and people. When you move into the preview stage some of the contacts you make at this point will result in child care workers and musicians.

Follow up on all contacts and invite them to your core group meetings. Bless everyone—even those who aren't at this point led to be a part of your new church. Your enthusiasm will be contagious and your influence will extend further than you can imagine.

## **Core Group Meetings**

Generally speaking it is best if the core gets together as a group only twice a month. Our experience has been that groups that meet more often than that at this stage will often become ingrown and not have as much energy for networking with people outside the group.

When the group does get together they will spend some time in prayer and the pastor will generally have a brief word from scripture. He or she will also talk some more about the vision and the launch schedule. Some people will be assigned specific tasks for the next open house or outreach event.

## **Pastor**

Who is going to serve your group as the pastor? Church planting is a fairly unique calling and not all pastors are "wired" for this type of ministry. As mentioned earlier we put all of our potential church planting pastors through an intensive assessment process. We also provide training and coaches for our church planting pastors. This is why all pastoral appointments for new churches have to be approved by the conference superintendent and the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism.

In reality many churches do not enter into the Core Group Coalescing phase until the pastor is on the scene. Since there is a shortage of church planting pastors, sometimes it takes awhile before a call is extended. This means that the process of getting started sometimes has to be extended beyond the 3-4 months. However, you don't want to go beyond this phase before the pastor is in place.

As we plant more and more churches we realize that there are several models for pastoring new churches.

Possibilities:

1. A full-time mission pastor—The appointment of a fully compensated and ordained mission pastor is issued by the conference superintendent and the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism. Generally pastors are funded in the following way—1/3 through the giving of the new congregation (or a sponsoring congregation or congregations), 1/3 through the regional conference, and 1/3 through the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism. This is an expensive way to start a church and finances are limited so in some settings you might have to explore one of the other possibilities.

2. A shared pastor—If your church is coming out of an established church the parent church may be able to provide full funding for the pastor or the pastor may serve part-time on the staff of the parent church and part-time with you during start-up.

3. A self-supporting pastor—There are some pastors who in addition to seminary training have a trade or vocation. They are self-supporting missionaries in the tradition of the apostle Paul who sustained himself as a tentmaker. The superintendent may be able to put you in touch with such an individual and together you would negotiate a minimal compensation package. Often it is assumed that as the church grows the pastor will eventually become fully compensated. There are some bi-vocational pastors, however, who prefer to remain bi-vocational.

In addition to pastors who support themselves through another job there are some who have been able to raise outside support for their missionary activities.

4. Combination—At times a combination of all of the above options is worked out.

5. A lay pastor—A layperson in the congregation who has demonstrated pastoral gifts can be appointed as pastor. This is an underutilized option that works well in some areas. In some settings there will be two or three such individuals who can share the initial pastoral responsibilities. The superintendent will interview potential lay ministers and help them secure the lay minister's license that is issued by the Covenant. They will also receive some specialized training in church planting.

6. A Seminary Student—There are some seminary students who are capable of pastoring a church while they go to school. They receive minimal compensation from the congregation and internship credit from the seminary. They are credentialed with a student minister's license.

## Vision

One of the most important things that happens during the coalescing phase is that of coming to a consensus on vision. Just what kind of church is this going to be?

George Barna has defined vision as “a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.”<sup>18</sup> Put just a bit more simply, vision has to do with what kind of church God is calling you to start in your particular situation.

This is important, as several church planters have reported a “crisis of vision” that occurs somewhere in the second or third year of the new church's existence. About that time some of the hidden expectations of various people in the original core group begin to surface. Pastor Larry Sherman notes

The people were all in agreement that they wanted a “baby” but when the baby becomes 1-3 years old, the parents (the core members) realize that: 1) the baby is more work than they thought, 2) others have different ideas about how to raise the baby, and 3) others have different goals for what the baby should become.

A common vision formulated early in the life of the church will help preclude this crisis. It is essential that the pastor and the key leaders be in agreement.

Formulating and agreeing on a common vision for the church might either come easily or be a real effort. Sometimes the struggle is a result of bringing together people from a lot of different backgrounds or even different Covenant churches. An individual coming from the North Park Covenant Church in Chicago is going to have a completely different set of expectations than the person who has been nurtured in the Hope Center Covenant Church of Pleasant Hill, California. The latter uses a lot of drama, is informal, and “contemporary” in style. North Park, on the other hand, equally vibrant, is more formal and liturgical in style.

## The Covenant

There is a lot of diversity in style throughout regions of the Covenant and even within regions no two Covenant churches are identical. Each church has its own personality and vision. That which is common among all Covenant churches and which you should seek to build into your congregation from the outset is:

- an emphasis on evangelical essentials such as the authority of the Bible and the necessity of new birth in Christ Jesus. These are understood within the context of historical Christianity and the Protestant Reformation in specific.
- an openness to believers of differing theological persuasions within the parameters of evangelical Christianity. We want to be a church where people from Baptist, Lutheran,

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<sup>18</sup>*The Power of Vision*, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997, 28.

Charismatic, Presbyterian, and Methodist backgrounds would all feel comfortable coming together because the focus is on the unity that we have in Christ Jesus. We take seriously the ancient Christian expression, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”

- a strong sense of mission and a willingness to work together with other churches and, in particular, other Covenant churches to advance the cause of Christ through evangelism, social outreach, and benevolent ministries.
- an appreciation of the Covenant ethos. This is probably the most intangible of all our distinctives but it might best be described as a warm spirit that comes from being united in Christ and an appreciation of the fact that God has called us together as a church family.

Sometimes we talk about the Covenant as

- *Missional*—driven by the desire to reach people with the good news.
- *Devotional*—driven by the desire to grow in our relationship with Christ.
- *Connectional*—driven by the desire to do all of this together as cooperating churches.

## **Models**

Over the past 25 or 30 years in the U.S. and Canada there has been a growing trend toward categorizing churches according to model. There are some negatives to this trend but as you decide what kind of church you want to be you might find it helpful to at least discuss some of the more common models. This will help surface some of the hidden expectations in your core group.

The Classroom Church—These are congregations formed around the premise that believers gather for edification and scatter for ministry. The primary focus for the church is then to educate and mature believers, equipping them to walk out the doors on Sunday morning and out into the world where they are the ministers. It's called a classroom church because it tends to be very didactic in approach with most of the morning service focused on the teaching segment. These churches reflect the influence of the Bible Church movement.

The Mission-Driven Church—These are congregations which find their impetus in their collective mission, such as the feeding of the poor or the resettlement of refugees from another country. Their mission can be evangelistic, running a radio or TV station. New people are welcomed and assimilated as they participate in the common mission.

The Issue-Driven Church—These churches are set-up around one or two crucial issues such as advancing family values or opposing abortion. Everyone in the church is expected to hold an extremely strong view on the designated issue and the common view is reinforced in every possible setting. The designated issue can be theological such as gathering all who believe in a particular understanding of predestination.

The Community-at-Worship Church—This type of church concentrates on gathering the community of believers for the purpose of worship. It doesn't matter whether the worship is liturgical, charismatic, or southern gospel the focus is on experiencing the presence of God together. These churches are set up to welcome Christians with open arms.

The Seeker-Sensitive Church—This category is similar to the “community-at-worship” category with the exception that it is more sensitive to the needs of “seekers” (people who are seeking to find out about Christianity). Many of the religious terms are translated into language that non-Christians can understand. While the “community-at-worship” church is more concerned about involving the church community in the act of worship the “seeker-sensitive” church additionally believes that seekers can be converted through worship. These churches are most effective in metropolitan areas with high mobility.

The Seeker-Driven Church—This is the model developed by Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Community Church of South Barrington, Illinois. These churches are driven by the needs of seekers. Willow Creek targets affluent baby-boomer seekers so it focuses on letting people retain their anonymity when they come to check out the contemporary presentations of the Christian message. There is little emphasis on participation but lots of emphasis on performance. Starting a “seeker-driven” church requires calling an extremely gifted communicator as pastor-evangelist. The cost is great and the demands on the nucleus group of Christians is extreme.

The Program Church—People find their way into the congregation through participation in programs such as those designed for youth, children, senior adults, recovering alcoholics, parents with troubled teens, or divorce recovery. To start such a church requires the immediate implementation of one or two quality programs that will be added to as quickly as possible.

Cell Church—The cell church operates on two levels. The basic level is the lay-led cell-group which is often the primary point of contact. Cell groups can be focused around a particular issue, mission, or Bible study but it is always the primary form of pastoral care in the church. The second level is the celebration of worship where believers from all the cell groups come together to worship. There are many variations on the model and cell churches can be either large or small.<sup>19</sup>

Generational Church—This is a church designed to reach a specific age group—such as Gen-Xers or Millennials. These churches will implement a strategy that focuses on elements of the generational sub-culture—e.g. certain types of music, art, or media.

Obviously, most churches are not pure examples of any one model. Nor should they be! As you decide what kind of church the Lord is calling you to start, you need to look

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<sup>19</sup> Cell churches don't require the same level of programming as other church models but up to this point cell churches have had a hard time rooting in North America. There are some notable exceptions. Planting a cell church would require significant deviation from the model presented in this handbook. To learn more about cell churches you can visit the following—[www.touchusa.org](http://www.touchusa.org) or [www.cellgroup.com](http://www.cellgroup.com) or [www.cell-church.org](http://www.cell-church.org).

for the balance that is appropriate in your particular situation. Who knows? Maybe the Lord is calling you to start a church that will be the prototype for a whole new model. What is important is that you have a clear vision of the type you plan to plant.

## DNA

Your pastor will help you work through vision formation and consensus. In a nutshell you'll be working together to come up with the church's DNA.

**D** stands for **definition**. For what purpose do we exist? For example: *The purpose of New Harvest Covenant Church is to reach out to people in the north county area with the good news of new life in Christ. We desire to be a harvesting church where people meet the Savior, grow in their faith, and attract others toward new life in Christ.*

**N** stands for **non-negotiables**. What is going to be absolutely essential in this church? An Evangelistic edge? A passion for worship? Preaching from the Bible? These are the values. For example, at Cornerstone Covenant Church in Turlock, California where I am currently a pastor, one of our values is that, "We want to be transgenerational and transcultural in as many ways as possible."

**A** stands for **actions**. This answers the question, how are we going to accomplish our mission? Are we going to build on cell groups? Will we start out with a top notch children's ministry?

This is what a DNA statement looks like:<sup>20</sup>

### Definition:

Anywhere Covenant Church exists:

- to share the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed with the thousands of residents in Anywhere, Somewhere, Everywhere, and the surrounding areas, and
- to meet the needs of Christians by providing a place for growth, fellowship, and service.

### Non-Negotiables:

1. **Outreach.** We warmly welcome all with the hope that all will welcome Christ into their lives.
2. **Spiritual Growth.** We believe that Christ's followers should manifest authenticity and desire for continuous growth.
3. **Multigenerational.** We believe we are a church for children and youth... who just happen to bring along their parents.
4. **Caring community.** We believe loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life and that life-change often happens best in small groups.

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<sup>20</sup> Church planting clergy in the Covenant go through a training weekend and this particular DNA statement is from the binder provided for these pastors, *Servant Leadership in Church Planting* (Evangelical Covenant Church, Department of Church Growth and Evangelism). No date or page numbers.

5. **Reverent and relevant worship.** We believe that the worship of a limitless God should not be limited to categories. Rather, to express the immensity of God, a diversity of elements and styles seamlessly woven together is necessary.
6. **Team spirit.** We believe our greatest impact can be made by teaming together with other Covenant churches, community churches, and ministry organizations to meet the spiritual and physical needs around the corner and around the world.

**Actions:**

To accomplish our purposes and to live out our values, Anywhere Covenant will give priority to:

- vibrant worship services with biblically rooted messages.
- home Bible study groups and spiritual development seminars.
- strong children and youth ministries.
- practical service and mission opportunities within the community and beyond.

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If you are having trouble articulating your vision, or as a core group coming to a consensus about that vision, it would be beneficial to bring in someone from outside the group who can work through the issues with you. Your conference superintendent would be glad to suggest a competent individual.<sup>21</sup>

**Choose a Name**

One of the most difficult tasks for new churches is choosing the name by which they will identify themselves. I say difficult because lots of people seem to have strong opinions on the matter. There was a time 50 years ago when naming a church was easy. If it was the first Covenant church in the area it was called First Covenant Church. The second Covenant church was only slightly more troublesome. Often a second church was named to reflect a city (Mercer Island Covenant Church), district (Urban Heights Covenant Church), or biblical concept (Trinity, Immanuel, etc.). In the 1970's and 80's it became popular to include "community" in the name to convey a sense of openness to all people in the community. But this trend has waned significantly as more and more groups of questionable orthodoxy followed the trend.

Here at the turn of the century we're finding that Covenant churches are naming themselves for a geographical area where they serve ("Sawmill Covenant Church", "Northpoint Covenant Church") or are trying to combine geography with a biblical concept ("Crossroads Covenant Church", "River Life Covenant Church", "Spring Valley Covenant Church"). A few churches are naming themselves after a biblical location ("Solomon's Porch Covenant Church").

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<sup>21</sup>Also, consider reading George Barna's book, *The Power of Vision*, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997 or Aubrey Malphurs' *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

Normally we require that the word “Covenant” appear somewhere in the name. We do this because we believe that it creates cohesion throughout the movement and because as we grow we know that “Covenant” will become synonymous with quality. As your church develops into a quality congregation your reputation will enhance that of other Covenant churches and will even make it easier to plant more Covenant churches in the future.

We recognize that there are some communities where the name “Covenant” might lead to confusion. There are some independent churches—especially charismatic churches in the Southern U.S.—who have chosen to call themselves “Covenant”. One solution might be to include the word *Evangelical* before *Covenant*. The phrase *Evangelical Covenant* is a registered trademark. Unfortunately the word evangelical has different connotations in different parts of the country and it's a mouthful in an age when churches are going for shorter and more succinct names. Work with the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism, as well as the director of church planting from your conference, to come up with a creative solution.

Do choose a name that reflects your vision for ministry. If you are a seeker-driven church you probably won't want to name yourselves First Evangelical Covenant Church. You'll want to be a little more generic. If you plan to be informal in liturgical style you'll not likely call yourselves St. Matthew the Apostle Covenant Church. Again, the superintendent or new church director for your conference can give you invaluable assistance in choosing a name.

### **Become Official**

There are some other organizational tasks that will need to be dealt with during this phase. Your pastor will be the point person to make sure that they get done but it is helpful if everyone knows what needs to be happening.

At one of the early core group meetings you'll want to have a business meeting during which you take a majority vote to declare yourself a church. A motion to organize might look like this:

*Whereas*, We have sought the Lord's direction through prayer and consultation, and *Whereas*, We believe that God has called us to organize a new Evangelical Covenant Church in (name of community), and *Whereas*, We are committed to this ministry, *Resolved*, That we constitute a new Evangelical Covenant Church, to be named \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant Church.

At the organizational meeting you will also need to elect a temporary chairperson, a treasurer, and a secretary. The secretary should immediately begin to keep minutes for the fledgling church. These people, and perhaps one or two others that the group appoints, will be the temporary church council and should be charged with the responsibility of organizing the congregation as outlined below. You will also want to appoint a historian who will be responsible for starting the church archives—arranging for photographs and copies of important documents. Spend some time in prayer affirming and thanking God for your calling.

### **Fellowship Group Status**

As your group coalesces you will want to apply for “fellowship group” status with the Covenant. This will give you official standing with the denomination and the denominational computer which will make sure that you're put on all the appropriate mailing lists. Contact the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism.<sup>22</sup>

### **Incorporation**

You will want to incorporate as a non-profit religious organization in your state. Each state differs slightly in how to do this so you'll need to check with the superintendent or the Director of Technical Services for the Covenant who have model copies of articles of incorporation for your state on file. Note that this is different from adopting a constitution or bylaws for the church, which comes later.

### **Federal Tax-Exempt Status**

Your affiliation with the *Evangelical Covenant Church* means that you will be included in the denomination's group exemption from Federal Income Tax. Send a letter to the Office of the Secretary of the Covenant requesting to be included in the Covenant's group exemption.<sup>23</sup> Once you have this exemption any contributions made to the Lord's work through your church are exempt from federal taxes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

### **State Tax-Exempt Status**

Some states exempt churches from paying sales and franchise taxes. You will need to check with the superintendent, the Director of Technical Services in the Covenant's Department of Church Growth and Evangelism, or the comptroller's office in your state.

### **Taxpayer ID Number**

Even though your church won't be paying federal taxes you will still need to have a taxpayer ID number—also called “Employer's Identification Number” or EIN. This is the corporation's equivalent of a social security number and it is issued by the Internal Revenue Service. Download form SS-4, “Application for Employer Identification Number”, from the IRS website.<sup>24</sup>

### **Mailing Address**

Set up a mailing address so the church can receive mail. If you are not going to have a permanent office in the immediate future the best option is a post office box. Shy away

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<sup>22</sup>(773) 784-3000

<sup>23</sup>See Appendix E for a sample letter.

<sup>24</sup>[www.irs.gov/forms\\_pubs/forms.html](http://www.irs.gov/forms_pubs/forms.html)

from the private companies which rent boxes because they often have a street name attached to them. It is inevitable that sometime in the future someone will show up at that address looking for your worship service.

### **Phone Number**

You may not see the immediate need for it but you will want to get a phone number as soon as possible. You can probably have it installed directly into someone's home. However, you'll want to pay the extra amount to have the phone set up as a business line so you can be listed in the Yellow Pages. Make sure that your church is listed in the yellow pages under at least two categories— "Evangelical Covenant" and "Covenant." Until you have a permanent church structure do not list an address with the number or you will have visitors showing up at that address on Sunday mornings.

Do attach an answering machine to the line so that you can receive calls and give a brief message about the church when no one is around to answer the phone. Most phone companies will allow you to ask for a particular number and if it is available will give it to you. Choose a number which is easy to remember or can be turned into letters. For instance, Faith Community (Evangelical Covenant Church) of Houston has the number 859-LOVE. One way to find out if a number is available in your area is to simply dial it. If it is not in service (that is, it is available) a recording will tell you so.

### **Financial Procedure**

It is important that you begin to receive regular offerings during your core group meetings—even during the coalescing stage.

Set up a checking account in the church's name so that you carefully control the income and expenditures of the church. Along with the account you will want to set up a simple in-house accounting procedure that includes keeping a record of contributions to the church so you can issue statements at the end of the year to contributors. As soon as you have a compensated pastor or other employees you need to secure the services of a C.P.A. who is familiar with church finances.

Even before you bring a pastor on board consider subscribing to *Church Treasurer Alert!*, a monthly review of accounting, financial, and tax developments affecting churches and clergy. This newsletter is important because the rules in church finance change quickly. They will also walk you through special church related financial requirements on a monthly basis. In other words, they will simplify your life considerably.<sup>25</sup>

At some point early on you will also need to establish a budget. If you are receiving financial assistance from the denomination this will have to be done in consultation with

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<sup>25</sup>*Church Treasurer Alert* is published by Christian Ministry Resources, P.O. Box 2301, Matthews, N.C. 28106, (800)222-1840. [www.iclonline.com](http://www.iclonline.com)

the superintendent or conference director of new church development.<sup>26</sup> From the outset it is important that you build mission giving into the budget. If you don't start contributing to the common mission of the denomination and the conference from the beginning it will be even harder to include later.<sup>27</sup>

### **Mailing Permit**

If you plan to use mass mailings apply for a non-profit bulk mailing permit with the postmaster of your local post office. This will give you reduced rates on mailings of 200 pieces or more. Sometimes it takes several months for this application to be processed so plan accordingly. There are three fees involved in bulk-mailing permits. The first fee is a one-time application fee, the second is a one-time imprint fee, and the third is the annual maintenance fee. Of course, you also pay for each piece you mail but at a greatly reduced rate.

### **Prayer Partners**

You will want to appoint someone in your group as a prayer partner coordinator. He or she will ask the members of the group to contact family and friends outside the core group for the purpose of recruiting prayer partners. These will be people responsible for praying you through the start-up phase of your congregation. The coordinator should send out a regular prayer letter to these partners.

### **Logo & Stationery Design**

A well-designed logo will communicate much about your new church. It may cost you but go for quality in both logo and stationery. If you don't have a local graphic artist you might find the services of companies such as Outreach Marketing to be extremely valuable.<sup>28</sup>

### **Internet Exposure**

This would be a good time to have someone put together a simple webpage that would represent your vision to the growing cyberworld. You should consider registering your own .org domain name so that it is included on early publicity. This will also give you a set of permanent email addresses.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>See appendix B for a church budget worksheet.

<sup>27</sup>If you are receiving denominational funds it will be required that you budget a percentage of your giving for the common Covenant mission.

<sup>28</sup>[www.outreachmarketing.com](http://www.outreachmarketing.com) or 800-991-6011

<sup>29</sup>There is information on the Covenant website about setting up your own webpage, [www.covchurch.org/cov/html/create\\_page.html](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/html/create_page.html). A fairly easy start, if you have no one with technical expertise, would be to set-up a free website at [www.forministry.com](http://www.forministry.com). You could then have your domain name directed there. If you are willing to spend a little money for a really cool website you can have a company such as [outreachmarketing.com](http://outreachmarketing.com) do the work for you.

### **Phase 3—Core Group Gathering & Preview**

This next phase, which generally lasts 3-4 months, involves three main tasks—holding monthly preview services, visitor follow-up/assimilation, and core group development. There is a monthly rhythm.

#### **Week 1—Preview Service**

The sneak preview service is something we learned from the movie industry. We want people to get a feel for the type of church that we are planning to launch. We do this by providing a prototype Sunday morning worship service with the goal of 50 new people in attendance each month.

Since you will want to build in numbers each month start out focusing on word of mouth networking and invitations. Then you might want to do a community mailing for your third and fourth preview services.<sup>30</sup>

Because the service is a “preview” it needs to look a lot like the type of service you intend to provide once you launch. So you will need to use the type of music and the style of preaching that will characterize your church. You will also want to be meeting in the location where you expect to meet.<sup>31</sup>

Inasmuch as you’re probably only 30 or 50 adults at this point you may need to have assistance from neighboring churches. Ask around to find out if they can help you by providing temporary musicians, child care workers, and ushers!

At the end of each preview service you will want to ask everyone to fill out a participation survey which will help with follow-up.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Week 2—Core Group Gathering, Follow-up, & Networking**

There are three big assignments during the week following the preview service.

The most immediate concern is to follow-up and make contact with all of the visitors. Make a phone call to everyone who gives you their phone number—just to thank them for being there and tell them that their very presence was a great encouragement. If they have indicated a willingness to help with a task or want to be included in the core group make sure that they get an appropriately warm welcome and/or directions for their task. You will also want to send them an invitation to the “assimilation event” which is held in week 3.

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<sup>30</sup>The Department of Church Growth and Evangelism can supply you with samples of mailings.

<sup>31</sup>See page 62 for a discussion on meeting places for new churches.

<sup>32</sup>See Appendix D for a sample Participation Survey.

The second assignment during the second week of the cycle is to have a core group meeting. This will be a lot like the meetings held in phase 2 although you may find that you're spending a little more time in planning. At this point you are actually planning two things—an assimilation event for week 3 as well as the next preview service.

The third assignment during this week is to continue networking—going out to the highways and byways to tell the story of your new church—meeting as many new people as possible. The goal is to have 50 new people at the next preview service (only 2 weeks away!) who have been to neither a core group meeting nor an earlier preview service. This requires a lot of hustle on the part of the group members and the pastor.

### **Week 3—Assimilation Event & Networking**

The assimilation event could be another open house, a barbeque, a pizza party, or a mailing party. A mailing party is a gathering of people to peel and stick labels on the mailers that will go out to announce the next preview service. (Of course, you'll want to have a few pizzas as well!) The point is to give some of the new people the opportunity to “bond” with the established core. The new people need to begin to *feel* comfortable with the existing core people in the fledgling church. And the core people need to begin to *feel* comfortable with new people entering the core. Think of the core group as the cement foundation of the new congregation—but you never want to let that concrete set in the first year. You want to keep stirring the mix by adding new people to the group. Concrete that sets too quickly will crack prematurely.

### **Week 4—Core Group Gathering & More Networking**

By now the pattern should be evident. Every other week is a gathering of the core to pray, to hear God's word, and to plan the next event or service. You might find that there will be a need for some additional working groups to meet apart from the core to handle some of the work load. Do include some of the new people on these task forces. Starting a new church is very labor-intensive and time-consuming. Take heart in the fact that it won't always be quite so intensive and that Christ's “gracious favor is all you need” to make it through (2 Corinthians 12:9).

### **Phase 4—Preparatory Worship**

A Target store recently opened in our town. They had a big banner across the building—“Grand Opening October 8<sup>th</sup>—See You there!” However, when I was driving by the new store on October 5<sup>th</sup> I noticed what appeared to be customers pushing shopping carts out the front door. I stopped, went to the door and found that indeed the store was open. And not only was it open but there were quite a few customers inside. So I went in and found a few items I was needing. When it came time to check out, the cashier was having trouble scanning the box of fertilizer I was buying. She had to call a supervisor. But I didn't mind because I knew that the store was new, the cashier was just figuring out the system, and there weren't a million people behind me in line.

This is called a “soft opening”. The point of this kind of low key beginning is to get all the kinks out before the store is swamped by a large number of customers. They know that if they make a big deal out of their opening on Day One that the customers might have a negative experience (and never return!) because the employees are still getting used to the store.

Church planters have learned from the experience of these retailers. There is real value in a soft launch. It allows a new church the opportunity to get the kinks out and to improve the quality of worship without the pressure of having to “perform”. This is one of the goals of the preparatory worship stage that usually last for 3-4 months. During this phase you begin weekly worship but you don’t advertise—at least not at the beginning.

There are some other advantages to the soft launch. Since there is no advertising it “forces” people to focus on extending personal invitations to their friends and acquaintances. If this pattern can be developed early on it will carry over once the church has “gone public”. And we know that churches that rely on word of mouth invitations as their primary means of evangelism will generally develop into stronger and healthier congregations. So try to save the advertising until the grand opening phase.

Furthermore, a soft launch gives you time to develop three or four of the supporting ministries that will help you assimilate new people during the first year. The temptation might be to launch out and start as many ministries as people think they can support. But starting a church is energy intensive and it is imperative that you focus your energy on doing three or four things well rather than spreading yourselves out too thin—especially at this point.

So you will have to decide which three or four things will produce the most fruit at this early stage. For most new churches, according to Dave Olson, director of new church development for the Covenant, the key four ministries to develop in the first year are, in order of priority, 1) the Sunday worship service, 2) a children’s ministry, 3) small groups of some sort, and 4) a system of visitor follow-up.

## **Worship Service**

What should your worship service look like? There is no set answer that applies to all new congregations. If you spent time developing your DNA (see p. 29) you should have the guiding principles for developing your own style.

At the very least, though, your worship should have a level of contagious energy, should be cohesive, and focused on hearing God’s word. Whether you do all of this using a traditional, contemporary, or a blend of these elements will depend on your local context and the church’s vision for ministry.

Make every effort to start worship at the time and in the place where you expect to be for the next year.<sup>33</sup> But if you have to make changes this is the time to do it. Relax and enjoy the start-up. Laugh at your mistakes and ramp things up so that you each week is

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<sup>33</sup>See page 40 for a brief discussion on choosing a place to worship.

an improvement over the previous week.

### **Children's Ministry**

A children's ministry during your first months as a church can be as simple as a special program for the kids who leave the worship service during the pastor's message. Children will often be escorted into another room where they might be involved at two or three learning centers, then hear a Bible story, participate in a craft or drama, and have a snack. It can be that simple.<sup>34</sup>

As the group grows in size you can divide into smaller groups. But to begin with you'll probably want to have a single group which includes all elementary age children or perhaps children through fourth grade.

A full blown graded Sunday school program is probably beyond what you want to do at this stage. You might even find that you'll want to add a mid-week children's program of some sort before you launch into a Sunday school.

Again, there will be some variety in how churches approach children's ministry. This may be an area where your church's coach<sup>35</sup> can give some guidance.

Child care is an important issue related to children's ministry. Your ability to attract and retain young parents will be directly tied to the perceived quality of child care. Child care needs to be in a safe, secure, and clean area not too far from where you worship but out of earshot so that children are not heard when they cry. Hiring reliable child care workers early on may be one of your best investments. Many new churches have found great child care workers through the local Seventh Day Adventist church. In our congregation the best child care workers we ever had were a couple of young Catholic women who attended mass on Saturday night so they could help us on Sunday morning.

### **Small Groups**

There are lots of ways to do small groups. Some are Bible studies. Some are more prayer or evangelistically focused. Sometimes a small group will be task oriented. Your pastor will help you figure out the best pattern for your situation.

It is important that these groups become a priority because new people will find that they can bond—emotionally connect—with the church more rapidly on a small group level. And because small groups tend to be more personal, people find that their needs are better met on this level. A tremendous amount of care and growth takes place at the small group level. So much so that I know from personal experience it is a whole lot easier to pastor a church with small groups than without.

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<sup>34</sup>See page 43 for a brief discussion on curriculum.

<sup>35</sup>A coach is a veteran church planter who is assigned to assist the pastor and new church during the early stages of development. Often these coaches work for the conference as the director of new church development. Some coaches are pastors of other congregations who have agreed to serve as advisors.

There is another important issue, too. Generally speaking people so crave the small group experience that if it is not in some way provided for them they will either start groups themselves or they will subconsciously work to keep the worship service small and intimate. In other words, they will do things that encourage a small group feel for worship service. And if the leadership attempts to move the group forward they will resist. “We can’t expand to two services, I won’t get to see everyone.” A church without small groups tends to become an ingrown oversized small group. And visitors will often feel that even though the people are friendly and the experience is quality that they are walking into someone else’s family reunion.

Because there tends to be so much chaos and so many new people coming and going new churches often find that groups with an intentionally short life span of 4 to 8 weeks are especially effective.

Some churches are launching their small groups as a follow up to an Alpha program. Alpha is a 10 week, one time a week, introduction to Christianity. Many people are meeting Christ through these groups and because they have a small group component they are a natural lead-in to developing small groups as a follow-up.<sup>36</sup>

### **Visitor Follow-Up**

It is crucial that your church develop a follow up strategy to attend to people who visit your church. Many congregations use a pattern such as this:

1. Follow-up the visit with a phone call from a layperson and a personal handwritten note from the pastor.
2. On a midweek evening after the initial visit someone from the church drops a church mug filled with chocolates<sup>37</sup> off at the visitor’s house. It’s a quick visit where the courier will usually decline any offers to enter the house. “I just wanted to drop this off to let you know how much we appreciated your visit last Sunday. Have a good evening. God bless you.” The point is to help the visitor feel noticed without putting him or her on the spot to entertain the delivery person. We don’t want people to feel pressured but genuinely appreciated.
3. A second visitor letter with a brochure follows a second visit to the church.
4. A phone call or visit from the pastor follows a third visit to the church. This includes a personal invitation to the pastor’s open house, a social event, or a small group—or some other type of “sticking point.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>For more information on Alpha go to the Covenant’s Alpha site, [www.covchurch.org/cov/cge/alphawelcome.html](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/cge/alphawelcome.html), or visit the Alpha North America site [www.alphana.org](http://www.alphana.org), or internationally, [www.alpha.org.uk/](http://www.alpha.org.uk/).

<sup>37</sup>or a loaf of fresh baked bread or a pie or cookies or... Be imaginative!

<sup>38</sup>Sometimes a sticking point will be task oriented—asking people to join a labeling party, to bring cookies for post-worship treats, to assist in set-up or take-down.

## Phase 5—Grand Opening

You've practiced the music, met hundreds of new people, defined the vision, and have even filled out all the right paperwork to keep the IRS happy. Now you're ready for the Grand Opening. Notice I didn't say Grand Opening Sunday. It's that and more. Ideally you'll be able to sustain this phase for 3 or 4 months festooning together a series of connected events.

The first Sunday is when you pull out all the stops—sending a community mailing, advertising in the newspaper, and extending personal invitations. One of the best times to begin grand opening is a month prior to Easter. This will build momentum toward Easter Sunday, which is traditionally a high attendance Sunday.

The second Sunday might include an assimilation event—for example a catered lunch or barbeque that also follows the service.

The third Sunday of grand opening might be a “Bring a Friend Sunday.” We do this every few months in our congregation. This is a Sunday where we include a little added incentive to make it easier for people to invite their friends. For example, we've given away easy-to-read Bibles, books, poinsettias during December, and slices of apple pie for after service refreshments. The point is to have something so that your people can say to their friends, “This would be a good Sunday to visit because we're giving away \_\_\_\_\_.” We try to keep the service itself as normal as possible because we want people to get a real feel for the kind of church we are, but we add a small incentive to visit on that Sunday.

If you're following the Easter pattern suggested in the chart on page 20, the fourth Sunday would be Palm Sunday, which is naturally festive, and at the same time an opportunity to start to draw people toward the cross. The fifth Sunday would be Easter—the most festive Sunday in the church year. Perhaps on that Sunday you'll do something like hand out “tickets” to all the children inviting them to return the following week because there is going to be an inflated jumping castle set-up after the service. The sixth Sunday in the grand opening phase would feature the jumping castle after the service.

The point of all this is not to create a lot of hype but to build a lot of bridges. You want to help people to get to know your new church at a deeper level. Your regular attenders may need to be prompted to reach out to strangers at the catered meal or to parents standing with their children in line for the jumping castle. If there are not genuine relationships behind all of this activity the whole thing is really just a bunch of gimmickry which people will quickly see through.

A benefit of this approach is that it communicates to people that your new church is committed to having fun together. Any group that expects to be viable for the long term needs to develop a fun side. This is a part of genuine community and a pattern of fun will ease the tension when the inevitable church conflict surfaces.

## Chapter 5

### **Special Issues**

There are some issues that will surface again and again as you strategize and develop ministries. This chapter is a brief collection of insights about special issues you'll face during your first few years.

#### **Strategic Plan**

One of the most important things you'll need to do is to put together a comprehensive strategy or plan for start-up. The plan needs to answer the basic questions of who, what, when, where, and how. (You've perhaps addressed some of this as you've outlined your DNA—but it's good to ask these questions again). Who is going to come to the church and how are they going to find out about it? How will you assimilate the new people who will be attracted? Where will you meet? When will you meet? What type of a service are you going to have? What type of programs will you offer from the beginning? Who is going to be in charge of what?

The answer to these questions will be different for each congregation. While it is impossible to cover everything in detail, here are some of the basic areas that need to be addressed in the strategic plan.

#### **Size**

Your projected size will dictate how you want to start the church and the type of pastor you choose. It takes a completely different set of skills and gifts to pastor a congregation of 75 than it does to pastor one of 750. If you expect to be a church of 750 choose a pastor who will be capable of leading you to that level.

You also need to answer the projected size question because the size of the core group at the time of going public has an effect on how fast you'll grow. This is especially true in metropolitan areas and even more so in metropolitan areas with a high degree of transience.

A related factor is the problem of critical mass. If you start too small you will have a hard time attracting more people. The reasons for this are:

- the types of programs you offer will be too limited
- new people tend to feel overly conspicuous in smaller groups and fail to return
- people suspect that there is something wrong with a group that is so small
- larger numbers of people generate an excitement that attracts more people
- visitors fail to return because they think that they'll be prematurely pressed into a service commitment in the church

The positive reasons to start small are:

- smaller churches require less planning and organizational structure
- smaller churches are generally more effective evangelistically than larger

churches<sup>39</sup>

- it is easier to find a pastor capable of leading a small church
- research shows that small churches generally exhibit greater health than larger churches—with more people utilizing their spiritual gifts and actively involved in ministry<sup>40</sup>
- the “performance” standards in a small group are lower than in a larger church
- the per capita cost of small church ministry is significantly less than that of a larger church<sup>41</sup>
- small churches can be extremely warm and friendly
- the general commitment level in a smaller church is higher than that in larger churches
- many communities are actively resisting the presence of large churches because of their perceived impact on city services and the environment
- the risk is smaller

Some of you will plant churches that will intentionally remain small—parenting more small churches each time they reach an average worship attendance of 100, 150, or 200.

We are assuming, however, that most churches want to grow to a size of some significance. This is especially true if they are taking seriously the biblical mandate to make disciples. There are lots of people out there who are not following the Lord and you want to hook as many of them as you possibly can. This is why you'll want to start out as large as possible. Floyd Tidsworth, Jr., a Baptist church planter writes, “A small beginning seems to attract people who like small churches. When these people become members of a congregation, they hinder numerical growth.”<sup>42</sup>

### **Location and Facilities**

Retailers say that the three most important factors in establishing a successful store are “location, location, and location.” Churches have to recognize that there is a certain amount of this truth that applies to them. Where you meet will have an effect on how you are perceived by “church shoppers” and other seekers.

However, finding a place to meet—let alone “the right” place—is not always easy. Of lay leaders surveyed for this handbook, the difficulty in finding a place to meet was one of the “surprises” most often mentioned. And if the surveys are an accurate reflection of what is happening around the country you should at some point in your history expect to

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<sup>39</sup>Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Church Smart Resources, Carol Stream, IL 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1998) 46-47.

<sup>40</sup>Schwarz, 46-47.

<sup>41</sup>See for example Lyle Schaller, *Reflections of a Contrarian* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1989) 150-160.

<sup>42</sup> *Life Cycle of a New Congregation*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992, 22.

face government and community barriers. In many communities the amount of government regulation is incredible. If you are going to lease a semi-permanent meeting site in a shopping center or a free-standing building you may have to go through the process of getting a zoning variance. You'll have to meet fire and safety codes and you'll have to deal with merchants and neighbors who might not want a church in their backyard. All of this is extremely time consuming.

I say all of this so as to encourage you to look for a simple place to start. Most Covenant churches start out in schools. In 1993 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school districts must provide equal access to religious organizations. That is, if they rent out their facilities to any other organization on a Sunday they have to give churches the same consideration.

Malls often have community rooms and sometimes large banks will let you use their lobby. The Good Samaritan Community Covenant Church of Valley Springs, California had their beginning in a real estate office. One church I started met in homes, then a bowling alley, then a Holiday Inn, then a movie theater, and finally a converted office building. Harbor Covenant Church, of Gig Harbor, Washington met in a funeral home chapel. Many churches have leased space from Seventh Day Adventist congregations. Be creative in finding a first spot and try to minimize moves as much as possible. Several pastors have told me that they've lost 10% of their new congregation with each change of location.

If you have a choice, choose a place that is easy to find, well lit, and is positively viewed by the people you are trying to reach. Many of the people you want to reach may have a hard time going into a funeral home or a lodge building. Movie theaters have built-in seating but can be so dark that they create a passive and subdued atmosphere.

Other considerations include cost (new churches spend an average of \$250 per week on worship space), storage availability, accessibility, lighting, temperature control, and proximity to the core group and their network of relationships.

### **Equipment & Furnishings**

Another concern related to facilities is that of furnishings and equipment. You can buy chairs through a number of local or national suppliers.<sup>43</sup> A very basic lightweight portable sound system with built-in speakers will be appropriate for some churches. They can be purchased for about \$1,200. However, most new churches are spending about \$5,000 for a quality sound system. Many are also spending another \$4,000 for video projection equipment. Will you be buying an electronic keyboard (\$2,000) or drums (\$1,000)?<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Several of our churches have been extremely pleased with chairs purchased from Church Chairs Industries in Rome, Georgia (800)331-5411, as well as Fellowship Seating in Woodstock, GA (800) 253-0248. Check with the local fire marshal's office before purchasing chairs since some cities require that chairs be semi-permanently ganged together into rows.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix G for an equipment needs checklist.

If you're going to transport all of this equipment around you should expect to spend about \$2,000 for a used enclosed trailer. If parked in a visible place at your meeting location signage on the side of the trailer may be of some real benefit. If you don't put any customized artwork on the side of the trailer you may spend about \$300 less.

## Signage

Signage is important for the new church at all stages. You'll need signs identifying the church as well as directional signs inside the building. Fortunately, new technology is making portable nylon and plastic signage relatively inexpensive and in major markets there are numerous corner sign stores that will be competing for your business. Once you choose a company have them scan your church logo into their computer so they can reproduce it on a banner, sandwich board, or temporary "real estate" sign. If you're going to hang a banner on your building for more than a couple of hours a week you'll need to check with your city offices to see if they require a sign permit.

## Music

Music is an extremely important component in the life of any church. You'll want to aim for excellence in this area at a very early stage. Look again at your DNA and decide how music will fit into your mission and strategy. Decide right from the start what type of music you're planning to use and work on developing that style or mix because the type of music you choose will have a significant effect on what type of church you will become.

You'll also find that everyone who walks through your doors seems to have an opinion about what kind of music you should be using so you'll have to know why you're doing what you're doing or you'll go crazy trying to please everyone.

Most churches will need some kind of keyboard, whether it be a conventional piano or an electronic synthesizer. If you need to be portable get a quality electronic keyboard. There are several brands retailing for under \$2,000 that could get you started. Musicians often prefer weighted keys so choose this option if you can afford it.

If you're going to use hymnals consider using *The Covenant Hymnal: A Worship Book*. In some conferences Covenant Women will give 25-50 copies to every new church. Check with your conference director of church planting to find out if this is applicable to you.<sup>45</sup> Many churches these days are not using a hymnal at all and prefer to use words projected on a screen. Some churches still use overhead projectors but numerous congregations are now abandoning them for the more pleasing image from a video projector.

Some churches simply reproduce the words to the songs in the weekly bulletin. There are lots of advantages to this approach but in order to reproduce the words for the songs, whether it be on a screen or in the bulletin, you'll need to secure a copyright

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<sup>45</sup> Additional copies are available from Covenant Publications (800) 621-1290.  
www.covenantbookstore.com

license. This is relatively inexpensive and will allow you to make unlimited copies of the words to songs.<sup>46</sup>

Sometimes a church will not be able to find a music leader or pianist right off. If that's the case limit the number of songs or hymns you sing until you can bring people with musical gifts on board. Several companies now offer digital hymn players. About the size of a large family Bible, the hymn player is programmed with several thousand hymns and songs for worship. They cost around \$500 and can be purchased through Christian bookstores. Consider, also, the possibility of rotating musicians and special music in from other churches until you can secure the strong music leadership you need.

### **Christian Education**

While Christian education in a newly planted congregation is not nearly as complicated as that in an established church it is just as vital and can be a whole lot more fun! But you'll have to be creative—perhaps making classrooms out of nooks in a movie theater and desks out of clip boards. If you intend to serve young couples make sure that you have a clean and secure nursery area, preferably with a permanent attendant. Because you're trying to stretch every dollar you'll be tempted to dispense with established curriculums. Unless you have some very creative and energetic teachers, don't. It's not worth the time and energy to write your own curriculum when you're trying to get a new church up and running. You might be able to adapt some Vacation Bible School curriculums for use in children's ministries.

### **Congregational Care**

Sunday school and educational programs have traditionally been the cutting edge of growing Covenant churches and will in all likelihood remain extremely important; however, many churches are now being developed on a model that utilizes cell groups as the primary means of fellowship, nurture, care, and evangelism. While many churches have small group ministries, only a few Covenant churches, mostly urban or ethnic congregations, are built exclusively on the cell model. The advantages of the approach are that it places less emphasis on physical plants, more emphasis on hands-on lay ministry, and is flexible enough to respond to changing needs in the community.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>To obtain licensing information call Christian Copyright Licensing, Inc. (CCLI), (800) 234-2446. [www.ccli.com](http://www.ccli.com)

<sup>47</sup> If you're interested in learning more about a small group approach to building a church you'll want to consider: *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, by Carl F. George, Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1991. Lyman Coleman's Small Group Leadership Training is presented in about 80 different communities each year. Call Serendipity (800) 525-9563 or visit their website, [www.serendipityhouse.com](http://www.serendipityhouse.com), for more information on these one-day seminars which will help you analyze and develop a small group approach that is appropriate to your vision. The American guru on cell churches is Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr. Go to [www.touchusa.org](http://www.touchusa.org) or call (800) 735-5865.

## Evangelism

Evangelism is the process whereby the good news of Jesus Christ is presented so that people will be converted to him and assimilated into his church. It is presupposed that evangelism is a major reason behind your decision to start a new congregation but how you go about carrying out that mission will depend on the vision you formulated earlier.

Whatever your strategy for evangelism, it needs to be understood that people meet Christ and are incorporated into his church through a process called “networking.” Pastor Tom Collins writes, “The church grows through networks of people in two ways: (1) reaching the networks of the people already in the church, and (2) establishing new networks of people.”<sup>48</sup> The latter will be especially important for you because the number of people already in the church will be somewhat limited at the outset. With each new person added to your congregation, though, you will be adding another link into the networking system. This is because that new person has a number of relatives and friends in the neighborhood, at work, in athletic associations, etc. All of these people are more likely to hear the gospel through your church because of his or her invitations.

Your new church needs to provide opportunities for the people in your congregation to invite people in their network into the church's sphere of influence. This could happen through athletic teams, socials, ministry projects, community Bible studies, worship services, craft fairs, etc.

As you begin to utilize networks you'll probably notice the phenomenon that Pastor Collins has identified: two types of people in your church—“Type A workers” and “Type B workers.” Type A workers are “affirmers.” They find their “greatest joy from serving in the confines of the existing church family, i.e. teaching, helping, administrating.” Type B workers, on the other hand, are “bringers.” They are gifted by the Lord in such a way that their greatest joy comes in bringing others into the church. This doesn't mean that Type B people never teach Sunday school or that Type A people never bring anyone—rather that they are naturally (or better put “supernaturally”) inclined in one way or the other. We need both types of people in the church but your evangelistic success will hinge upon the number and effectiveness of the Type B people in the congregation. Pray that the Lord would bring you lots of “bringers.”

Let me add a few more insights that might help as you formulate your evangelistic strategy. First of all, keep evangelism on the front burner. It's easy to lose sight of the original vision as you're busy trying to juggle all the details involved in organizing a new congregation.

Secondly, don't be afraid to try new methods of expanding your network and presenting the gospel. You're in a good position to experiment. Thirdly, don't be afraid to try old methods, either. Listen to the advice of others as they tell you what hasn't worked for them but consider that it might still work in your situation. I've heard countless people list all the reasons that door-to-door evangelism doesn't work in this day and age. Yet, at

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<sup>48</sup>“Church Parenting in the Evangelical Covenant Church and a Plan for More,” an unpublished Doctor of Ministry dissertation at Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990, 97-98.

the same time, I see that in some communities Baptists are quite successful in starting churches almost exclusively through door-to-door witnessing. Likewise, some experts are telling us that crusade evangelism is no longer effective while evangelists such as Luis Palau continue to draw a record number of people who are making commitments to Christ.

You've simply got to decide what the Holy Spirit is calling you to do. If you have people who are gifted in confrontational evangelism go ahead and try an outdoor preaching mission in the park. If your congregation has a number of people who have gifts in encouragement set them up to lead support groups. If there are people with gifts of compassion develop an evangelistic strategy built on their gifts of reaching out to the homeless. There is no right way of carrying out the evangelistic mandate. It is simply imperative that we do so and that we do so from the very beginning. If you wait until you're bigger, stronger, or more stable to emphasize evangelism you'll never be bigger, stronger, or more stable.

### **Church Council**

Since there are a lot of decisions to be made you'll need to have a temporary church council to help facilitate the start-up process. Technically, since you are not yet chartered as a congregation you have no actual membership and will be making these appointments on an informal basis. Work with the pastor to formulate a team of four or five people to serve as council members, have the pastor call a congregational meeting, and appoint these people to serve. The pastor serves as chairperson of the church until it is chartered and on occasion may continue to serve as such for a year or so afterward.

### **Historical Records**

Arrange for video and/or audio recording of your historical occasions—organizational meetings, first worship services, etc. Save copies of the bulletin and take a congregational photo. The Covenant Archives maintains a file for each church in the denomination. They would appreciate receiving copies of photos, bulletins, and other historical documents.<sup>49</sup>

### **Portability—The Church on the Move**

If you are using temporary space for your Sunday morning meetings you'll quickly learn the value of portability. Appoint someone to coordinate any set-up and clean-up you might have. If possible secure storage space at the worship site. If not, consider buying an enclosed trailer that can be towed to the site on Sunday mornings and which can also double as an attractive billboard. Many churches have found stacking plastic totes to be invaluable for storage.

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<sup>49</sup> Their address is: Covenant Archives, c/o North Park University, 3225 W. Foster Ave., Chicago, IL 60625. Include a letter explaining that you are a new congregation. Their website is [www.campus.northpark.edu/library/archives/](http://www.campus.northpark.edu/library/archives/).

## **An Event Strategy**

If you have a large budget you can plan some high-profile events during your first year after grand opening. This would generally mean bringing in a well-known musician or speaker and then advertising heavily by direct mail, radio, or newspapers. Unfortunately, the percentage of people who return after such a start is pretty low unless you're able to maintain the same level of "hype" over a long period of time. You must also ask whether the people who come to a church because of high-profile special events are really going to provide a solid foundation on which you can build. These people will be consumer-oriented and it will take a good amount of time before you can build an investment orientation into their lives. The chances are that before you can complete the process someone else down the street will have an even higher profile event and these people will drift that direction.

## **Using the Mail**

A lot of churches are using a series of blanket mailings to invite the community to their grand openings. According to Church Growth Development International you can expect a well designed mailing to bring anywhere from a 0.25 to 0.5% response. A good response (0.5%) would require you to mail your brochure or postcard to 40,000 homes in your area to have 200 people respond with a visit to your church. Multiple mailings increase effectiveness. Design is especially important so you'll need to establish a relationship with a graphic artist and have him or her help you put the mailing together. The Department of Church Growth and Evangelism has templates of mailings that have been effective.

## **Get Real**

From a strategist's point of view having a lot of people visit during the grand opening phase is ideal. But the fact is that many churches will have "less than ideal" beginnings (at least from our human perspective). You may be in a small town and not have 30 people but that does not make you any less a church. You just have to realize that it may be slow going for a while but if you're willing to take the slow but steady approach then move forward in faith. Don't focus on what you *can't* do but on what you *can* do.

## **Chartering**

The chartering stage is the process through which you adopt a constitution and bylaws and then become a full member of the Evangelical Covenant Church and your regional conference.

## **Application and Charter Documents**

The first thing you need to do is decide when you want to charter. Do you want to reach a certain size before you formally join the Covenant? Or do you want to base your decision on a timeline? Discuss the timing with your conference superintendent who is also the person you will notify of your decision. He or she will provide you with the formal application.

As you fill out the application you will also need to formulate a constitution and bylaws for your congregation. The superintendent will provide you with two acceptable models—a board form and a council form. Most churches are choosing the less cumbersome council form but you need to consider the board form, too. The basic difference between the two forms is that of size. The council consists of at least five members who are elected by the congregation. Included on the council are the chair, vice-chair, treasurer, secretary, and members-at-large. The pastor is an ex-officio member. Technically the council members function as both the deacons and the trustees of the church. They, then, appoint people to serve on commissions such as Christian education, worship, facilities, and congregational care.

The board form of government consists of four boards—the trustees, the deacons, the board of Christian education and discipleship, and the executive board. The executive board consists of the pastor, the chair, the vice-chair, the vice secretary, the financial secretary, the treasurer, the chairs of the four boards, and the chair of Covenant Women Ministries. All board members are elected by the congregation.

The temporary church council should work as a team to develop the constitution and bylaws. If you ask, the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism will supply you with a computer file version of the documents which will save you hours of typing. Make whatever small changes are necessary and send a copy to your superintendent for preliminary approval. The superintendent will pass a copy of it on to be evaluated by the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism, the Secretary of the Covenant, and the President of the Covenant. The closer your constitution and bylaws are to the model forms the smoother will be the process of approval.

Once you get approval from the superintendent you can call a congregational meeting to adopt the documents as well as to complete the application for membership in the Covenant. This application must be completed at least 60 days prior to the June annual meeting of the denomination for the year in which your church will join the Covenant. You need to check with your superintendent about regional deadlines which may be earlier than the denominational deadline.

Assuming that the documents are accepted by the executive committee of your conference and the denomination, your application will be acted on at the annual meeting of the regional conference. (Technically you have to be received by the Annual Meeting of the Covenant before your membership in the conference becomes effective). This meeting takes place in the spring. Have as many people as you can at that meeting because the conference will take great joy in welcoming you into the family.

After you have been received at the conference level your application will be presented for action at the annual meeting of the denomination in June. They too, will want to welcome you as full members so again have as many representatives from the congregation present as possible. Once your church is received it will be allowed to seat delegates at the meeting. Churches with up to 99 members can have two delegates while churches with 100 to 224 members are allowed three delegates.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>See article VII, section 7.4 for information regarding larger churches and delegates.

## **Membership**

Once your constitution and bylaws have been approved for application by the superintendent you can open the charter for membership. The pastor and temporary council will want to prepare potential members through an inquirer's class. This class will give you another chance to reiterate the vision and answer questions about the gospel, your congregation, and the Covenant. Draw up an application form<sup>51</sup> and go through the process of receiving members as outlined in the bylaws.

Covenant churches like to make a “big deal” in the Sunday service out of receiving new members and the commitment that membership represents. This is especially true when we have a chartering Sunday and receive the first members. Some churches bring in special music and speakers, and of course, the conference superintendent will want to be present for the ceremonies.

You'll want to have a public signing of the charter document. The charter document should be impressive in size and suitable for framing. There is no set wording that needs to go on the document but it should say something to the effect that these people are binding themselves together as the charter members of your church to carry out the work of Christ. Ask or hire a calligrapher to design the document. Be liberal in the use of color for you'll probably want to frame and hang your charter document once the charter closes. Consider including a significant portion of scripture on the document.

Usually the charter for a new church is open for one year. This means that everyone who becomes a member of the church during the first year after the charter is opened will be considered charter members and will sign the document as they are received into membership.

Many churches also develop a children's charter document. There is nothing official about signing this document but it affirms the children who are a part of the church and allows them to share in the excitement of starting the church.

## **Elections**

Soon after you have an official membership you will need to appoint a nominating committee according to the rules set out in the bylaws and elect an official church council. The terms for the initial council members should be adjusted so that they do not all expire at once.

## **A Time of Growth**

In many ways chartering a congregation is a climax of an era. God has drawn people together and given them a vision for ministry. Celebrate what he has done but at the same time guard against the propensity to relax and let things slide for awhile. This should be a time to rally the troops for the mission that is ahead.

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<sup>51</sup>See appendix C for a sample.

## Chapter 6

### **Special Concerns**

When a group of people begins to dream of forming a new congregation they rarely take into account the many challenges that have to be overcome. You may not have to deal with all of the obstacles listed below, but the input from veteran church planters around the country suggests that you'll probably have to deal with some of them. Note that many of the issues are interrelated.

#### **Discouragement**

If your congregation does not grow as quickly as projected, you lose some key leaders, you have trouble with your meeting location, or if it gets hung up with a financial problem, your group, as they grieve the loss of the original dream, can become discouraged.

Discouragement will also set in if you begin to compare yourself to other new churches. Sometimes God blesses a congregation with instant and spectacular growth. This, however, is not the norm and if you begin to think of it as such you'll quickly become disheartened. Recognize that every setting and mix of people is unique; focus on celebrating what God is doing.

#### **Burnout**

Burnout is the mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion that can occur when we are absorbed in an intense period of work. It is the responsibility of the pastor and church council to balance the needs of the church with the needs of individuals. We need to make sure that everyone is allowed to say "no" to a responsibility without feeling guilty and we need to give people a chance to rest so they can enjoy the fruit of their labor.

Burnout is less likely to occur when people are doing the things for which they are gifted. If you're operating within the realm of your giftedness you'll find that your batteries are being charged rather than drained. One of the great safeguards against burnout is teaching people to recognize the way that they've been gifted by the Lord and by encouraging them to develop those gifts and areas of ministry—even if it means letting go of something *we'd* rather have them do.

#### **Rejection**

You need to realize from the outset that you cannot please all of the people all of the time nor will you be attractive to everyone who visits your congregation. Considering the emotional investment you've put into making your new church the best it can possibly be, I know that this is hard to believe. Rejection, both real and perceived, is a fact of life in any congregation but it is felt all the more intensely in a new church.

Rejection is especially devastating when someone who has been a part of the core group becomes unhappy and leaves. Many of the people surveyed for this project expressed surprise over the petty things that caused people to pack up and move on.

Sometimes it is a choice of a building site or a small change in the schedule. Usually the most obvious concern of the disgruntled church member is really just the “straw that broke the camel's back.” There are underlying problems, many of which have nothing to do with you, that cause people to leave.

One problem is that new churches tend to attract some people who have a certain need to exercise control. Perhaps what made them unhappy in previous churches was being unsuccessful at exercising the leadership they thought they should have. A new church with little existing leadership can be quite attractive to such people. But when it becomes apparent that they'll be unable to exercise veto power and that they can't sway the congregation in every decision, even in the new church, they'll look for some excuse to leave and will move on. Whether they sneak out the back or slam the front door you'll still experience the pain of rejection. Avoid wallowing in the pain and making accusations. Rather follow the advice of Jesus who told his disciples to accept rejection by shaking the dust from their feet and moving on (Matthew 10:14). However, do all that you can to leave the door open for future contact with these people.

### **Disasters**

New churches are not exempt from the hardships that come from living in a fallen world. Fire, theft, and other natural disasters can take a toll and you need to have adequate insurance coverage and loss prevention policies from the beginning. But the fact is that while you can minimize risk you will not be able to eliminate it.

Churches will often rally in times of disaster. This is not always the case—especially if you are a seeker-driven church with lots of uncommitted people. Faith Community Church of Houston found this to be the case when a tornado took the roof off their building. Their attendance dropped drastically and it took them a year to recover. But they did recover. Don't dwell on the misfortunes of the past but press forward with what you have.

### **Critical Mass**

As discussed above critical mass is one of the greatest hurdles for any new church. Again, critical mass is the size that you have to be so that visitors don't feel uncomfortable because they've walked into a small group. The simplest solution to the problem of critical mass is to start with a sizeable core group provided by a larger parent church. If you don't have the luxury of such a birth you'll find that getting up to speed may take considerable time.

The key will be to take appropriate action at each stage in which the congregation finds itself. Church growth experts talk about these stages in terms of barriers. Congregations tend to hit a barrier somewhere around 60-100 in worship attendance. They can break past that barrier by stretching themselves to add new groups, classes, ministries, and/or forms of outreach. Churches seem to hit a second barrier somewhere between 175 and 225. This “200 barrier” is usually crossed by rethinking the previous strategies for outreach. The group dynamics have changed and the church has to adjust to a new way of relating to each other and carrying out ministry. A good resource to remember once you reach this plateau is Bill Sullivan's book, *Ten Steps to Breaking the*

*200 Barrier.*<sup>52</sup>

## **Finances**

Expect to encounter financial hurdles. All congregations struggle with finances—that is, if they're exercising faith in their approach to ministry they'll always be stretching themselves beyond their current resources. The solution is to:

A. Be realistic in your financial planning. In an idealistic state of mind we will overestimate finances and can easily over-commit ourselves to more staff and building than we can realistically afford. Avoid the “edifice complex” or “Field of Dreams” syndrome—the notion that “if we build it they will come.” Buildings by themselves will not draw people into the congregation.

B. Get solid advice before making any major financial commitments. Congregations on denominational appropriations are required to get conference approval for their budgets and before making any major decision.<sup>53</sup> Other churches would be wise to seek the counsel of the superintendent, even though such is not “required.”

C. Use financial needs to rally the troops to action. The Holy Spirit will often use a financial crisis to call believers to reconsider how they are managing their personal assets.

## **Government**

In spite of what you might think the constitution says about the separation of the church and the state, you'll find that various government agencies will want to regulate more than you feel comfortable with. There are times when their concerns are justified—such as in the case of public safety. You'll discover, however, that getting zoning permits and passing building inspections can be very political processes. Try to anticipate government hang-ups at all levels and choose which hills you want to fight on. If you spend all of your time and energy fighting for your rights, Satan will have succeeded in diverting you from your mission. Stay calm, avoid making accusations, and media splashes. Employ a competent Christian attorney to keep matters rolling if you get hung up too long at one point.

## **Adequate Space**

As mentioned above finding adequate space (or any space at all!) can be trying. The Department of Church Growth and Evangelism and some of the conferences have staff people who will help you evaluate your space needs and local options.

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<sup>52</sup> Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988.

<sup>53</sup> In most conferences new churches are allowed to carry no more than \$3,000 debt without special approval. Check with your conference before acquiring installment debt.

## Spiritual Battlefields

The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 6:12 *For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.*

This verse should remind us that the obstacles we face are fundamentally spiritual in nature and need to be dealt with in the spiritual as well as physical realm.

In preparation for writing this manual I asked lay church planters to pass along any advice they might have for others contemplating involvement in new church development. Their overwhelming response is summed up in the words of one woman from Washington state—*Pray, pray, pray...*

You may not enter into the church planting endeavor as an expert in prayer and you're not required to be such, but you'll find yourself growing by leaps and bounds as you encounter each new obstacle. There are many times when you'll have exhausted every single alternative you have and you'll be left with nothing but the option to pray some more.

There have been times when I've prayed that the Lord would remove the barriers we've come up against only to find that he doesn't see fit to do so at the present time. In those cases I find in prayer the strength to deal with and survive the overwhelming circumstances until the Lord chooses to break the log-jam free.

Here are some words of encouragement for your prayer ministry.

- Recruit prayer partners from both inside and outside the congregation. Look for people who are gifted prayer warriors and seek a prayer commitment from them.
- Pray corporately. Private prayer is important but our real strength comes when we pray together. Have regular prayer meetings and make times of prayer an important component of church council meetings.
- Recruit other congregations to pray for you. In the Covenant we encourage established churches to adopt new congregations and to even designate some of their mission support in the name of that new congregation. Sometimes it is helpful if you personally contact congregations that you'd like to see "adopt" you. Even if they don't make a financial commitment they can make a prayer commitment. Keep them informed of your needs and hold them to their commitment to pray for you.
- Pray that Satan and his forces would be rendered powerless. The potential for growth in God's kingdom through a new church is tremendous so don't be surprised when you come under attack. You can expect the adversary to strike when and where he feels the most threatened. This is why new churches seem to be lightning rods for satanic activity.

If prayer is half the solution to dealing with obstacles the other half is sheer persistence.

- *...We proudly tell God's other churches about your endurance and faithfulness in all the persecutions and hardships you are suffering.* 2  
Thessalonians 1:4
- *...Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish.* Hebrews 12:1-2

This list of scripture encouraging us to be persistent in our walk and ministry with the Lord could go on and on. The reason that persistence is mentioned so often is that we are by nature prone to give up and take the path of least resistance when we come up against obstacles. As a church planter there will be times when you'll want to give up and find a ministry which has less stress and more affirmation. But through the power and energy of the Holy Spirit you can and you must continue on.

At some point we all doubt our ability to follow through with such an overwhelming task as planting a church. We question whether God has really called us to the ministry and whether all the answered prayer of the past actually happened. What we're really questioning is whether God could use someone as inept and feeble as ourselves in such an overwhelming situation. I like the answer provided by C.H. Spurgeon, the great English preacher who was himself prone to bouts of depression, "By perseverance the snail reached the ark."

You may not get there as fast as you'd like. You may not be moving as quickly as everyone else. But if you'll hang in there you will get to where God wants you to be. You see, God doesn't define success in terms of speed or size but in terms of faithfulness to him through the process. The process of trusting him for the next step is the end in itself.

A final word on perseverance: you were never intended to make a go of it on your own. I have five friends who are or have been church planters that I call when I feel weary and just checking in with them gives me the lift I need to press on. You, too, need to find some others who are familiar with church planting and then seek their advice and encouragement. Your pastor can probably supply you with the names of other lay leaders around the country who are planting churches. Maintain email contact or talk with them on the phone.

### **How to Get Along With a Pioneering Pastor**

The students of church growth are quick to point out that church planting pastors are often a breed of their own. That is, starting a new congregation from scratch tends to appeal to pastors who enjoy the adventure of risk-taking, have a high tolerance for chaos, are extremely task oriented, optimistic, enthusiastic, and care little about the approval of others. It's this last quality that can make these people, who are called

“entrepreneurs” in the business world, hard to work with at times. Many mission pastors are tempered by other character traits and gifts but the very thing that helps them succeed—their pioneering drive—can also create tension.

How do you, the lay leader in a new church, deal with such a personality? First of all, it is imperative that you have an agreement on vision for the church before you form a partnership. After you do form a pastoral/lay-leadership team commit yourselves to focusing on the vision and mission rather than on the personalities involved. A leadership team can include a lot of diversity in style and temperament if it shares a common vision. As long as you share the same vision and mission stand behind the pastor and make your position known.

Secondly, even if at times the pastor seems to take him- or herself too seriously, it's not necessary that you take yourself in the same light. Make an effort to find things to laugh about and work on building a relationship apart from the task at hand. Some of us pastors are so task-oriented that we never get around to enjoying people and sometimes we're so driven by the future that we have a hard time relaxing in the present. You can help bring that balance into our lives.

Thirdly, even if you can't agree with everything the pastor does, go out of your way to affirm those you can agree with. The positive tenor will go a long way in easing tensions.

Finally, be frank without being personal. That is, discuss ideas openly without criticizing the source of the ideas. Entrepreneurs often have more ideas than they can implement and while they may enjoy floating them for reactions they don't expect all or even most of their ideas to be implemented. Openly discuss the pros and cons of any and every idea—no matter how far-fetched it seems.

### **How to Get Along Without a Pioneering Pastor**

It is possible to organize a church prior to calling a pastor. It can be a lot less expensive and it allows some laypeople to exercise gifts they might not develop otherwise. But the fact is that from a biblical perspective the church is not to function apart from pastoral leadership. *He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.* (Ephesians 4:11).

A team without a coach never plays well since somebody has to be responsible and in charge. This isn't to say that the pastor makes all the decisions and does all the ministry. To the contrary the pastor, as equipper, creates a climate where other people are equipped and freed to utilize their own gifts. The point is that it is not wise to go for long without a pastor. In most situations it's best to have a pastor firmly in place before making the transition into the preview phase.

Lyle Schaller points out that one of the scenarios that has led to “a disproportionately large number of disasters” is that of the

layperson who enlists a small cadre of people committed to starting a new church, gathers them for several months of Bible study, acquires a site and/or a temporary meeting place, and *subsequently* secures a minister to become the

pastor of what may have evolved into a small and often exclusionary lay-led fellowship. That small number of highly visible success stories that have emerged from this initiating point have obscured the far larger number of disasters.<sup>54</sup>

This is not to say that every pastor has to be a seminary-trained doctor of theology. It does mean that someone has to take on the responsibility of being pastor. That person can be an informally educated layperson called by the congregation and recognized by the Covenant, but it needs to be clear to all that that person is the pastor.

### **Making the Denomination an Asset**

In much of the U.S. it is becoming increasingly popular for churches to describe themselves as non-denominational. In doing so they are affirming the principle of independence that is so much a part of the American psyche. But we make no apologies when we tell people that we're a part of an exciting denominational family. Nor do we just accept our fellowship as historical accident. We believe that the Holy Spirit has drawn the Covenant together and called us to a collective ministry.

Yet we understand the frustration that many feel with mainline denominations who have left their biblical roots and have become structural dinosaurs. However, we still believe that *interdependence* is more biblical than *independence* when it comes to the church. And there are positive signs that many churches are now recognizing this biblical emphasis. Many of the independent congregations being planted today will eventually seek affiliation in smaller evangelical denominations (for example, the Evangelical Covenant Church, the Evangelical Free Church, the Christian and Missionary Alliance). Some are banding together to create new denominational structures (or denomination-like structures) of their own (for example, Vineyards, Calvary Chapels, and the Willow Creek Association). Most healthy churches of the future will be linked together in some type of network where there is accountability and a broader sense of what it means to be the church.

How do we go about presenting our denominational identity in a positive light? First of all, explain that we are not what people traditionally think of when they hear the word "denomination." Many people think of a denomination as a structure which functions to control the local congregation while collecting "taxes" to fund a hierarchy that is out of touch with the gospel and the church. We are, however, a family of churches that have voluntarily formed a covenant to work together. The denomination doesn't control the local congregation but serves it. Secondly, point out the importance of accountability. In this age of church scandals it is even more important to know that there is a structure through which we hold each other accountable. Thirdly, point out that the Lord calls for and honors the type of commitment entailed in belonging to an extended family of churches. Finally, don't apologize for who you are and the family to which the Lord has called you.

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<sup>54</sup> 44 *Questions for Church Planters*, 171.

## Goal Setting in the New Church

Everyone and every church has goals of some sort. “We want to fill our sanctuary” is a goal; perhaps not stated in the best form but nevertheless a goal. Goals are simply statements of what you want to accomplish, how you plan to accomplish it, and how you'll know that it is accomplished. Given this framework the above goal might better be stated, “It is our intention to use a newspaper advertising campaign in conjunction with a series of special speakers to fill our sanctuary to 80% capacity on at least three Sundays this spring.”

Goal setting is the next step in the planning process after formulating your DNA and should be subservient to that vision.<sup>55</sup> It forces us to think clearly about what we're planning to accomplish and is thus a necessary assignment for the new church. If your congregation receives any type of appropriation from the denomination you will have to go through a simple goal-setting process on an annual basis in order to fill out the application form.

Much has been written about goal setting and it is beyond the scope of this handbook to walk you through the process. There are, however, volunteer consultants for each conference who would gladly lead your congregation or council through a goal-setting exercise. The consultant will not tell you what your goals should be but will help you put form to the vision that the Lord has given to you. Contact your superintendent for information.

## The Urban Church

The urban setting provides a particular challenge for church planters. But the potential for impacting the cities is so great that certainly the Lord will be leading some of you to establish central city churches. Many, if not most, of these churches will be ethnic congregations. Currently about 25% of all new Covenant churches are reaching into groups of ethnic minorities. Many of them are urban in character.

We will need to develop unique approaches for reaching each of these segments of the population. Particularly fruitful amongst some urban and ethnic congregations has been the cell church strategy mentioned earlier.<sup>26</sup>

Some existing Anglo churches in the cities will undoubtedly adopt a strategy that centers around developing multiple congregations in a single church. For example, the First Mission Covenant Church of Fresno, California has an affiliated Laotian congregation and the West Hills Covenant Church of Portland, Oregon helped start the Vietnamese Evangelical Covenant Church. The Iglesia Hispaña del Pacto Evangelico of Bellevue, Washington shares facilities with the Highland Covenant Church.

The most important factor for Anglo churches launching into ethnic ministries is to

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<sup>55</sup>See page 29 for a discussion on DNA.

<sup>26</sup> pages 28-29.

have both lay and pastoral leadership with cross-cultural gifts. Leaders must be people who will not only enjoy cross-cultural experiences but who are sensitive to cross-cultural needs and aggressive in pursuing such opportunities.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Town and Country Church**

Charles Brock has stated, “A place where three hundred people are without any kind of church or chapel may be a prospective place for a new church.”<sup>28</sup> We need to keep in mind this insight as we consider church planting in more rural areas. The Covenant has traditionally had a strong rural presence and has numerous town and country churches with extremely vital ministries. It seems that now might be the ideal time to begin building on this strength and to encourage these churches to take a strong leadership role in the establishment of new congregations. The ministry potential in rural areas—especially the “60 mile cities” (the vibrant communities that are emerging every 60 miles or so along the Interstates) is tremendous. There are thousands of rural regions with no strong evangelical presence. And while the population is not growing as rapidly as in the cities neither is it as transient. Consider, too, that the land and overhead costs in the country are lower, name recognition is easier to establish than in urban and suburban areas, and that rural people tend to respond well to the Covenant’s down-to-earth style. We may soon find a real cutting edge for the Covenant through the planting of town and country churches. This insight is being reinforced as we see vital small town congregations emerging in places such as Valley Springs, California, and Hutchinson, Minnesota.

One of the aforementioned congregations started with a bi-vocational pastor, although Good Samaritan Community Covenant Church in Valley Springs now has a full-time pastor. The real strength, however, of these churches is the strong commitment and “can do” mentality that characterizes laypeople in many of the rural areas. Rural people are used to building something out of nothing. Many have cleared their own land and built their own businesses from scratch. I suspect that some of our very best lay church planters will emerge out of and/or minister in rural settings.

### **The Suburban Church**

Most Covenant churches in the 1990’s were suburban in nature and most Covenanters are middle-class Anglos at this point in history. And while we do not want to neglect other groups and ministries our existing make-up suggests that many of our new churches will be in suburban areas.

Even the suburbs, though, are changing. No longer do people commute from the

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<sup>27</sup> Important resources for people intending to start urban churches include: *Missions Have Come to America* by Jerry L. Appleby, Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1986. *Church Planting at the End of the Twentieth Century* by Charles L. Chaney, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1982. *Church Planting in the African American Context* by Hozell C. Francis, Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Publishing, 1999.

<sup>28</sup> *The Principles and Practice of Indigenous Church Planting*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981, 67.

suburbs to the central city. Instead the commute is from suburb to suburb, or as they are coming to be called, “edge cities.” Edge cities are suburban areas that have high density office space and light industry. This affects us in at least a couple of ways. First, people are trying to live closer to the places that they work and are thus more attached to the community in which they reside. (Community is defined more in terms of school district than city limits in some rapidly growing suburban areas). This means that they will become less tolerant of the long commute and will undoubtedly seek out churches closer to home as well. Secondly, the commercial and retail space in the suburbs will provide some great start-up locations for new churches.

Another shift in the suburbs is the proliferation of problems that have in the past been associated with only the inner cities. New churches will have opportunities to break onto the scene as they address with spiritual answers the suburbanite concerns about drugs, gangs, and crime. We will continue to thrive in the suburban setting if we realize that we have to start churches which take into account the new suburbia.

### **A Home of Our Own**

You may find it necessary to move from the school or hotel where you meet during the initial stages of the start-up into semi-permanent or intermediate space. This is space you intend to occupy on only a temporary basis until you decide to buy land and build an actual church structure. This is becoming more and more common as the price of construction increases; higher costs also mean that the time in temporary facilities is longer and longer. And the longer and longer you remain without a “home” the less viable you are viewed by some communities. People are suspicious of a church that is after three or four years still without a place of their own. Of course, this is a generalization and in some places, particularly on the west coast, churches which intentionally avoid owning a building or put it off as long as possible may have a special appeal.

If you are going to have a building finished out for you, keep the ceilings as high as possible (14 feet is ideal for a 2,000 sq. ft. worship area). This keeps the room from feeling claustrophobic. Also make sure that you understand about “triple-net”—the insurance and upkeep costs in the contract. In some parts of the country real estate agents quote square foot prices by the month and in other parts by the year. Make sure you and the agent are talking about the same thing. Also, before you begin any serious looking check with the city or county planning office to find out what requirements you'll have to meet to obtain an occupancy permit.

You'll quite possibly run into problems with the local government as you attempt to occupy temporary space. Leasing space in strip malls is popular but many cities do all they can (officially or unofficially) to discourage churches from moving into retail space because it affects their tax base. Be persistent in your dealing with regulators and you'll eventually get through the process. The Director of Technical Services in the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism can help you with strategies for dealing with government and will also help you review leases. A few of the conferences have rules limiting aided churches under certain sizes from acquiring real estate so check with your conference office before acquiring a building or entering into a lease.

In some parts of the country it might be beneficial to actually buy instead of lease or rent. Several churches have taken advantage of down cycles in the real estate market to purchase and remodel office buildings. The Evangelical Free Church of Durango, Colorado bought an unused public elementary school while the Faith Community (Evangelical Covenant Church) of Houston purchased facilities from a small private school. Deerbrook Community Covenant Church in the Houston suburb of Humble purchased and remodeled a free-standing carpet store. The Evangelical Free Church of Arlington, Texas purchased a whole strip mall for \$60,000 from the Resolution Trust Corporation. The Mat-Su Covenant Church of Wasilla, Alaska, north of Anchorage, bought and remodeled a truck wash. Some churches have purchased houses but we're finding that to be less of a viable option, not only because of zoning problems, but also because unaccompanied visitors are reluctant to venture into a church that looks like a house.

One of the advantages of buying over leasing is the possibility of receiving *Frontier Friends Kingdom Builders* grants. These are grants of \$20,000-\$25,000 utilizing donations from Covenanters around the country, available to new churches to help them purchase their facilities

To complicate matters, churches which are working on temporary space are often simultaneously negotiating for a permanent location. While you may feel the pressure to move ahead with a permanent facility, don't buy too soon. Many new churches buy land or buildings before they can afford the quality location and the size that they will need to reach their community in the future. Don't accept from anyone, without your conference office's advice, a gift of real estate with the understanding that it will eventually become the permanent church site. Countless churches have slipped into oblivion because they've built on a poor parcel of land all the while believing it was "what the Lord provided."

If, however, you do acquire a parcel of land some communities will allow you to place a portable building on the property. Some groups such as the Church of God (Cleveland) own portable "chapels" or buildings that are reused with multiple church starts.

You'll probably need to have a minimum of 5,000 square feet for your temporary home. Expect to set aside 10 square feet in the worship area for every potential worshiper. Generally speaking you'll need one off-street parking space for every three seats in your auditorium/sanctuary but some cities will require more. Plan to provide 30-35 square feet in the nursery and early childhood education areas for every child that you anticipate to be in attendance. If you are utilizing a traditional Sunday school approach to Christian Education plan 20-25 square feet in your educational area for every child and teen. Adults generally need about 10-15 square feet each in their classrooms. All of this means that at the minimum you'll probably need about one acre for every 150 people that you anticipate to be in attendance at any given time.

The key to temporary space is flexibility. Use portable room dividers to make Sunday school space and to adjust the size of your sanctuary so that you don't look empty on Sundays when attendance is lower than average. Make sure that your worship area is large enough to allow you to reach critical mass. Critical mass is the size that you have to be so that visitors don't feel uncomfortable because they've walked into a small group.

## **Funding a New Church**

In the past new Covenant churches were started almost exclusively with denominational and conference funds. We will continue to start some congregations in this “traditional” fashion but it has become increasingly clear that it is not economically feasible to start every new church with a massive financial infusion from the denomination.

This means that we're having to come up with alternative forms of financing for new churches. The most effective is to rely on the parenting model, where an existing congregation or coalition of congregations in an area not only sends the people to start a church but also sends money. The side benefit to this approach is that it shifts the church planting responsibility back to the grassroots where more people can own the process and reap the benefits of sponsoring a new church.

Another way to fund new churches is by using bi-vocational pastors. This approach requires not only a pastor who can juggle a lot of responsibilities but also an increase in the amount of leadership responsibility on the part of lay leaders. While less expensive this can be a very time consuming way to start a church.

A variation of the bi-vocational pastor model is to use lay pastors. Currently there are about 110 licensed lay ministers in the Covenant. Although in the past some of these have been church planters there are currently no lay licensed church planters. It is one of the purposes of this handbook to recruit qualified lay pastors for the purpose of leading new churches—especially in rural and urban areas where conventional funding might be harder to find.

Yet another approach to funding new churches is personal fund raising. Leaders approach people outside the core group and ask them to contribute to the mission for two or three years. This is similar to the methods used by parachurch groups to fund staff members. Groups considering this approach should invest some time in studying the funding methods of various parachurch ministries.

When it comes time to financing the purchase of land or a building you will find that the Covenant's in-house “bank,” National Covenant Properties, will offer extremely competitive rates. In order to qualify for a loan your congregation must generate new investments in NCP equivalent to 20% of the amount you want to borrow. This means that if you're intending to borrow \$100,000 you need to get members, friends, and relatives to invest \$20,000 in NCP (they return to investors dividends equivalent to or at times greater than various bonds on the open market). Contact the President of National Covenant Properties at Covenant offices or the Director of Technical Services in the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism for more detailed information. The Director of Technical Services can also provide you with information about Covenant Development Corporation, which is a land-holding and development company affiliated with the denomination.

Don't be afraid to use a stewardship development consultant to help you with fund raising as the programs more than pay for themselves. There are many approaches to fund raising so make sure that you are philosophically in line with the consultant. The

Covenant has a fund raiser on staff with the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism. Contact them for information.

### **Youth Ministry in the Small New Church**

Not all new churches start out small but if small describes you, one of the most frustrating comments you'll hear over and over again (unless you're starting your church in Sun City, Arizona) is, "We like the church but we really need something for the kids." If I could assemble all the children of the visitors who have passed by our congregation because we don't have a big youth group we'd have a *mega* youth group.

Actually, there is nothing you can do about this until you find a family with vision for the future. You can try reasoning with parents, explaining that studies have shown that kids are not spiritually stifled by being a part of a small youth group. As a matter of fact, they may have an edge on kids from big groups because they take on more responsibility in the life of the whole church than do kids in larger congregations. (Most youth workers struggle to get even a few of their kids to take on the responsibility that many of the teens in our church carry). But don't expect to persuade too many parents. The most narrow-minded, of course, are people who have grown up in churches with strong youth ministries. They want their children to have similar, if not identical, experiences to their own.

There are, however, some things that you can do until your group comes together and which might even speed up the process.

- Work to include youth in the life of the church. High schoolers make great ushers and greeters. They direct traffic in our small parking lot, read scripture in our worship service, and help with Sunday school and children's church. I have never been more proud of our high school kids than when they planned and led our Thanksgiving Eve service. Everyone of them was outstanding—the 10 minute sermon by a high school girl would have received an "A" in any seminary preaching class.
- Encourage your kids to do things with parachurch ministries such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes or Young Life. This gives them the best of both smaller and larger groups.
- If there are other small churches around, plan some combined activities. If there are larger Covenant churches within driving distance piggyback onto some of their activities.
- Bring on a part-time youth worker before you have enough kids to justify it. A gifted youth worker will create a group.
- Pray specifically that the Lord would bring a family with kids to form a core for a group.
- Remain optimistic. It will eventually come together.

## **The Media and the New Church**

The new church will want to expand its network of relationships and contacts as rapidly as possible. One way to do this is through the free publicity provided by newspapers, television, and radio. Send out press releases (newspaper) and public service announcements (radio and television) on a regular basis announcing every event. Don't be discouraged if all of your information isn't published or if you don't see a large response to the publicity. Response will vary according to area and time of the year.

If you are going to run an advertising campaign choose an appropriate medium. You might be able to find someone to pay for a combined billboard and television blitz—a blitz which might be very effective. The problem is that people responding to a billboard and television campaign are likely to be looking for a big flashy church. If you are not a big flashy church most of the people you meet through the campaign will quickly move on and your money will be wasted. A smaller more targeted approach utilizing direct mail or small but consistent newspapers ads may pay off in the long run. Increasingly people are turning to homepages on the Internet for church information. The most effective church advertising dollar in many places is spent in the yellow pages.

## **The Challenge**

I've spent many hours interviewing people and poring over the written input from lay church planters throughout the United States and Canada. This handbook is an attempt to respond to some of the basic needs that have been identified and is written toward the end that others might become more effective in church planting.

The more I've worked with the insights and input from veteran church planters the more optimistic I've become about church planting in the Covenant. We have an outstanding cadre of leaders and I can now envision a church planting movement bigger and more vital than we'd previously imagined. Should the Lord tarry, we will in 25 years be looking back on these times as the period when the most effective Covenant churches of all time have been born. However, without you and your commitment to reaching people through new congregations, it won't happen. Yes, we need strong clergy leadership—but at least as important is the need for strong lay leaders who understand the process of starting churches and have committed themselves to this ministry.

God bless you!

## Appendix A

### Organic Church Planting

by David T. Olson  
 Director of Church Planting  
 The Evangelical Covenant Church

In 1988 Chemlawn, the Columbus, Ohio-based lawn-care company, settled a lawsuit in which New York state alleged its advertising was false and misleading. Chemlawn agreed to no longer advertise its lawn-care applications as “safe” or “non-toxic,” under the agreement with the New York Attorney General.

“Lawns treated with chemical fertilizers are like drug addicts,” said Kathleen Mills, a horticulturist with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. The “good guys” such as earthworms, microbes, bacteria and other organisms are killed by the regular use of synthetic fertilizers, making the lawn unable to green-up on its own. Once the fertilizers are stopped, the soil can take three years to recover, she said.

According to a 1992 article in the Philadelphia Inquirer, lawn-care companies are jumping on the environmental bandwagon by offering natural and organic fertilizers. New companies such as Nature's Way and NaturaLawn hope to take away business from traditional lawn-care companies such as ChemLawn. NaturaLawn and services similar to it wean lawns from the synthetic fertilizers. Bill Englehart, CEO of NaturaLawn, says they use an organic-based fertilizer that can range from 25 percent organic matter to 100 percent, "depending on how badly chemically abused the lawn is," said Englehart. "As we thicken the lawn, we take the percentage of natural organic chemicals and increase it."

Just as the organic/inorganic controversy rages in the lawncare business, it also provides a significant distinction for competing models of church planting. There is a huge paradigmic difference between “inorganic” church planting and “organic” church planting. Once the old paradigm is cast off, a whole new vista presents itself, with new and productive ways to look at personnel selection, developmental stages and growth processes.

### Inorganic Model

Here’s how the old paradigm of inorganic church planting worked. From the 1950’s into the 1980’s, the dominant theory of church planting was based on what might be called the demographics of location. Notice what the key factors in church planting were:

- finding the right demographic growth in an emerging suburban community;
- securing the right piece of property upon which to build a facility;
- starting in a location sufficiently distant from any other church of the denomination;

- providing substantial financing until the new church was self-supporting (as long as 10 years or more).

Although it worked well in very homogeneous Anglo suburbs, by the early 1980's its effectiveness even there was diminishing. And all along, an astute observer would have noticed these very significant weaknesses:

- It did not work well in urban or ethnic settings; (Interestingly, denominations instinctually understood this, but had no interest in applying the inorganic method of church planting to ethnic or urban populations. Instead, they were willing to start ethnic churches in poor locations, targeting marginalized groups with undertrained and underpaid pastors, never noticing the inconsistencies of their position!)
- It did not work well in poor or rural environments;
- It did not work well in the global environment of overseas missions;
- It did not work well in settings experiencing fast-paced cultural and societal change.

Why then did the inorganic model last so long, and indeed remain the gospel truth in many settings? The answer is that there were always just enough success stories among those homogeneous Anglo suburban church plants to keep people from questioning their hypotheses. (In many of these cases, the reality was that the success happened because they accidentally used organic church planting principles, but the power of the dominant model kept that from being noticed.)

By the 1980's, the present church planting movement was just beginning to develop. With its development came rapidly increasing knowledge of how to be more effective in church planting. In answer to the question, "*What makes a church plant succeed?*", research discovered that while demographics and site location were valuable secondary pieces of information, they did not adequately explain the reasons for the growth or failure of a church plant.

The root cause of the failure of the old model was that it was based on an inorganic model of church planting. It posited that the crucial issues lay in the external and institutional factors of a church plant. These tended to be the fixed assets that an organization tried to leverage for growth, specifically money, land and buildings. The failure in using this model in church planting can be illustrated by two examples from the business world.

First, the use of fixed assets to leverage growth occasionally works with mature companies, but usually is of little consequence in the initial phases of high growth businesses. For example, in a 1992 *Inc.* magazine list of the 500 top growth companies, 34% were launched with less than \$10,000, 59% were launched with less than \$50,000 and 75% with less than \$100,000! New companies succeed because of innovative ideas that outperform the competition and leaders who use force of character and hard work to create a significant market niche. These ideas, products and leadership then cause venture capital to become available.

In the business and the church world, institutional structures have always been poorly equipped to begin startup endeavors. One of the startling facts of church planting is that the growth rate of a new church is in inverse proportion to the money it receives from outside sources! Denominations that invest the largest amounts of capital per church plant have the lowest new church growth rates.

Second, business leaders are beginning to talk about another type of asset called intellectual capital. Intellectual capital is the company's non-physical resources, such as personnel, ideas, customer base, experience and efficiency. In a new business, much of the value of the company lies in these areas rather than in the more traditional asset-based areas of measurement. In new churches, dynamic growth occurs best when it is the intellectual capital that is leveraged.

### **Organic Model**

A much healthier paradigm for the starting of new churches is organic church planting. The theological base for this type of church planting is in the parables of Jesus about seeds and plant growth. Whether Jesus is talking about the parable of the soil types (Mark 4:1-20), the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32) or the seed that must die (John 12:24), each one illustrates that when a planted seed is properly cared for, it can geometrically grow in quantity and productivity. This model operates on the theory "think big, but start small and let natural and supernatural growth processes produce a miracle."

Or consider II Corinthians 9:6-11. The law of sowing and reaping is called upon by Paul to illustrate the multiplicative effect when we give something away. The organic law of growth comes into play so that the store of seed will be increased and enlarged.

Rather than focusing on fixed (and limited) resources, organic church planting builds on strengths in quality people, visionary ideas and flexible structures. New churches based on this model use these resources to grow naturally through the intrinsic strength and motivation of a new endeavor. It could be called "growing the old fashioned way."

Organic church planting works equally well in different ethnic situations, different economic situations, different developmental models and different global environments. It is more productive than inorganic church planting, cost much less to implement and is usually immune to the changes caused by cultural and societal change.

Organic church planting focuses on three key areas that most often accompany success in church planting: the right church planter, the right core group and the right networks in the community.

If the three most important words in real estate are location, location and location, then the three most important words in church planting are personnel, personnel, personnel. Most unsuccessful situations have their primary root mistake in the wrong person in the wrong situation.

Correct personnel selection is not that difficult. Unfortunately, it often does not happen because those responsible for hiring do not understand either how crucial the choice is

or what character and giftedness qualities embody the truly exceptional church planter. Often the selection problem can be summed up by saying that bureaucrats do not understand the crucial role of the barbarian in church planting. A concise description of the ideal church planter is a godly person with good relational skills, who excels in leadership and communication, and has a passion for reaching the unchurched and for producing disciples.

The two other keys are interrelated. The right core group encompasses a minimum of 30 committed adults who have a passion for creating a new church that both reaches the unchurched and meets the spiritual needs of Christians. The core group should have a contagious personality that combines spiritual intensity with equal parts of fun and laughter. The third key states that it is critical that the church planter and/or the core group have excellent networks in the community. If not, developing those as quickly as possible is essential. Most of the best church planters have lived in their community for some time, understand the pulse of the population and have a built in web of relationships they can develop.

The recent history of church planting has had a checkered career. The transition to organic church planting has been a difficult one for many in denominational leadership. Years of inorganic church planting have left 'chemical' residue that often takes years to flush out! When the old model is used in the 2000's, it usually results in Anglo congregations that remain small, and ethnic congregations that remain consistently weak. In a stereotypical American denomination, the average Sunday attendance of a 5 year old church is 60. The failure rate is often 33 percent or higher. Many new churches take 10 years or more to become self-supporting. The production rate is only one new church per one hundred existing churches. New churches can cost as much as half a million dollars each! Something has gone wrong with the harvest!

Yet God's kingdom field is increasingly seeing strains of seed that produce effective, efficient and strong new churches. Often it has been independent or Pentecostal church planting movements that have intuitively understood this new paradigm (actually the original paradigm of the early church). Overseas and third world missions have understood this for over a generation. Ironically, it has often been the financial resources and the bureaucratic bent of many denominations that have kept them from adopting this more natural and productive model.

Just as our world has changed dramatically in the last generation, in the last 15 years the shift of power in church planting is rapidly flowing toward the organic model. In our diverse, postmodern society, the need for vital new churches that are reaching the whole spectrum of people groups is great. As organic church planting takes root, healthy new church plants will be springing up all over!

## ***Networking for accelerated growth***

### **The Key to Networking**

**Networking happens best in a new church when 3 types of potential core group**

**members are identified:**

1. **The Gatherers**--key Christians who are doing ministry and have many contacts with people in general and new Christians in particular.
2. **The Bringers**--New believers who have no church affiliation yet and lots of non-Christian friends.
3. **The Comers**--People who simply come because they have been invited by a Gatherer or a Bringer. They can be either seekers or unchurched Christians.

(adapted from an article by Dr. Tim Keller)

## ***Definitions***

### **Organic Church Planting**

**Organic Church Planting** focuses on people resources and natural growth processes to start a new church. It builds off of strengths in quality people, visionary ideas and flexible structures. New churches based on this model use these resources to grow naturally through the intrinsic strength and motivation of a new endeavor.

**Inorganic Church Planting** focuses on inert physical assets to start a new church. It believes the crucial issues lay in the external and institutional factors of a church plant. These tend to be the fixed assets that an organization tries to leverage for growth, specifically money, land and buildings.

### **Spiritual Dynamics**

Inorganic Church Planting unintentionally abrogates a number of very important principles related to spiritual dynamics:

- *It depends on the collection of human resources for its strength rather than the call and power of a creative God;*
- *It helps reinforce the demon of territorialism--the theory that within our denomination God has given a church the exclusive rights to a selected geographical territory;*
- *It elevates to leadership people who are good, likable managers of ministry, rather than identifying true apostolic leaders.*

Appendix B

Budget Worksheet

**Estimated Income:**

Local \_\_\_\_\_  
Denominational \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Fund raising \_\_\_\_\_

**Expenditures:**

MISSIONS

Evangelical Covenant Church (10% of income) \_\_\_\_\_  
Conference (5% of income) \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

STAFF SUPPORT

Pastor's Salary \_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor's Pension (12.5% of salary) \_\_\_\_\_  
Health and Life Insurance \_\_\_\_\_  
Conferences and Annual Meetings \_\_\_\_\_  
Auto allowance \_\_\_\_\_  
Personal outreach \_\_\_\_\_  
Continuing education \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary (Including FICA) \_\_\_\_\_  
Guest speakers \_\_\_\_\_  
Custodial \_\_\_\_\_

FACILITIES

Rent or mortgage \_\_\_\_\_  
Furnishings/equipment \_\_\_\_\_  
Insurance \_\_\_\_\_  
Maintenance \_\_\_\_\_  
Utilities \_\_\_\_\_

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/YOUTH

Curriculum \_\_\_\_\_  
Ministry supplies \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth groups \_\_\_\_\_  
Vacation Bible School \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher training \_\_\_\_\_  
Library \_\_\_\_\_

EVANGELISM

Advertising \_\_\_\_\_  
Special events \_\_\_\_\_

ADMINISTRATION

Office supplies \_\_\_\_\_

Postage	_____
Postal permit fees	_____
Printing	_____
Phone	_____
Other annual fees	_____
<b>FELLOWSHIP/MEMBERSHIP</b>	
Fellowship supplies	_____
* <i>Covenant Companion</i>	_____
<b>WORSHIP/MUSIC</b>	
Music Supplies	_____
Music Copyrights (CCLI)	_____
<b>TOTAL</b>	_____

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\*Churches on denominational appropriations are required to participate in the *Covenant Companion's* every member plan. The first year is free for the members of new churches. For information write to the *Covenant Companion*, 5101 N. Francisco Ave., Chicago, IL 60625-3699.

Appendix C  
Sample Church Membership Application

Evangelical Covenant Church  
of Your City  
Application for Membership

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address  
\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth _____	Date of Birth ___/___/___
Marital Status _____ single _____ married _____ divorced _____ widowed	
Name of Spouse _____	
Marriage Anniversary ___/___/___	
Other members of my family are:	
Name _____	Age _____
Name _____	Age _____
Name _____	Age _____
Name _____	Age _____

Give a brief description of how and when you came to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

Have you been baptized? Y/N If so, when and where?

Have you been "confirmed"? Y/N (*Confirmation is not a membership requirement but is an important event in the lives of many people. We ask only for the purpose of maintaining complete church records*). If so, when and where?

Are you a member of another congregation? Y/N  
If so, name and location (include address if available)

---

Do you believe the Bible to be the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct? Y/N

Do you purpose to live a life that is morally and ethically consistent with the lordship of Jesus Christ? Y/N

Do you purpose to participate in the life of \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelical Covenant Church on a consistent and regular basis—sharing in its worship, ministry, and fellowship? Y/N

Do you promise to give regularly and sacrificially of your time, money, possessions, and energy for the work of the Gospel as carried out by this congregation and the denomination to which it belongs ? Y/N

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

Appendix D  
Valley Hope Covenant Church  
PARTICIPATION SURVEY

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City and Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (W) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

**We need you!**

We're in the process of forming a new and exciting church  
designed to share the good news with people in our area.

**And we need your help!**

**1. How did you hear about our church?**

" Friend " Brochure " Mailer " The Internet " Another church

**2. What qualities would attract you most to this church? Check all that apply.**

" Interesting biblical messages " Friendly people " Youth programs  
" Excellent music " Quality children's programs " Singles Ministry  
" Small group Bible study " Couple's ministry " Other \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Here are some "next steps."**

" I would like more information. Please add me to your mailing list.  
" I would like some more information. Please invite me to an informal "open house" meeting.  
" I am ready to have fun at the monthly socials, gym nights, and more!  
" Count me in! I have been looking for a church like this!  
" I would like more information about the Christian life.

**4. Count me in! I am interested in helping launch this new church!**

Here are some areas in which I might be interested in helping (this is not a commitment form. It simply indicates your willingness to help. Contacts will be made as needs arise.)

**Welcome Ministry:**

" I would like to help usher. " I would like to welcome people.  
" I would like to work at the name-tag table. " I would like to help with coffee/food.

**Scenic Engineering:**

" I would like to be a roadie—helping with setup and takedown. " I would like to make a banner.  
" I would like to help design a new worship stage area.  
" I would like to work with sound and technical stuff.  
" I would like to help store and cargo church equipment.

**Other Excellent Options:**

" Children's programs " Facilitate small group Bible studies. " Drama team member  
" Musician/singer for worship team " Jr. High worker " Sr. High worker

**5. At what time on Sundays would you like this church to meet?**

" 8 am " 8:30 am " 9 am " 9:30 am " 10 am " 10:30 am  
" 11 am " 11:30 am " 12 noon " 12:30 pm

**Appendix E**

Sample Request to be included in Group Exemption

Office of the Secretary  
The Evangelical Covenant Church  
5101 North Francisco Avenue  
Chicago IL 60625-3611

To: The Secretary

We understand that the Internal Revenue Service has issued to the Evangelical Covenant Church a "Group Exemption" which included, in addition to the denomination, local churches, regional conferences, and certain other organizations and agencies of the denomination. We further understand that this "Group Exemption" establishes the exempt status of each included affiliated organization as an organization described in Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

This letter authorizes you to include the undersigned in the "Group Exemption" of the Evangelical Covenant Church,

Very truly yours,

(Insert church name here)

By: \_\_\_\_\_, Pastor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

E.I.N. # \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix F

**Quick Reference**

The Evangelical Covenant Church  
Department of Church Growth and Evangelism  
5101 N. Francisco Ave, Chicago IL 60625  
(773) 784-3000 FAX: (773) 784-4366  
Email: [ecccge@aol.com](mailto:ecccge@aol.com) or [cerickson@covoffice.org](mailto:cerickson@covoffice.org)  
[www.covchurch.org/cov/cge/](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/cge/)

Map and address listing of CONFERENCE OFFICES:  
[www.covchurch.org/cov/home/conferences.html](http://www.covchurch.org/cov/home/conferences.html)

## Appendix G

**Equipment Needs for a Typical New Church**

2 main speakers .....	_____	Sandwich signs .....	_____
4 monitor speakers .....	_____	Interior signs .....	_____
4 microphones .....	_____	Coffee makers .....	_____
Wireless microphone .....	_____	Serving trays .....	_____
Speaker cables .....	_____	Cups .....	_____
Monitor cables .....	_____	Registration cards .....	_____
Microphone cords .....	_____	Large thermos jugs .....	_____
Snake cable .....	_____	Sugar packets .....	_____
16 channel board .....	_____	Creamer packets .....	_____
Amplifier .....	_____	Koolaid cans .....	_____
Equalizer .....	_____	Yet more plastic storage bins .....	_____
Electronic drums kit .....	_____	Table covers .....	_____
Rack .....	_____	Bulk napkins .....	_____
4 microphone stands .....	_____	Bulk garbage bags .....	_____
4 music stands .....	_____	High quality inkjet printer .....	_____
Video projector .....	_____	Office computer .....	_____
Projector table .....	_____	Office suite software .....	_____
Projector screen .....	_____	Fax/answering machine .....	_____
Laptop computer .....	_____	Desk phones .....	_____
Curtains and background .....	_____	Desks .....	_____
4 collapsible cribs .....	_____	Credenza .....	_____
Changing table .....	_____	Desk chairs .....	_____
Diapers .....	_____	Glide pads .....	_____
Baby supply kits .....	_____	Lamps .....	_____
Crib sheets .....	_____	Guest chairs .....	_____
Crib blankets .....	_____	Cases of paper .....	_____
Rocking chair .....	_____	Letterhead .....	_____
Fisher Price toys .....	_____	Bulletins .....	_____
Baby swings .....	_____	Business cards .....	_____
Plastic storage bins .....	_____	Assorted office supplies .....	_____
40 scissors .....	_____	Files .....	_____
100 glue sticks .....	_____	Bookshelves .....	_____
40 crayon boxes .....	_____	Lighting system .....	_____
20 marker sets .....	_____	Stage platform .....	_____
Construction paper .....	_____	Sound absorbing equipment .....	_____
Sunday School material .....	_____	Communion set .....	_____
More plastic storage bins .....	_____	Lectern .....	_____
Name tags .....	_____	Banner supplies .....	_____
Large vinyl signs .....	_____	Bibles .....	_____

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