ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CHURCH PLANTING: A STRATEGIC METHOD FOR INCREASING MISSIONAL

EFFECTIVENESS IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE

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ABSTRACT

Worldwide the Church continues to grow and flourish in the most hostile environments. Today's church provides living proof that Jesus actively, intentionally, and powerfully builds His church. Around the world wherever the Church grows, it is growing through a church planting movement of unprecedented proportions.

This project proposes to show that church planting in America, as in the rest of the world, is a crucial, strategic, and biblical method for increasing the missional effectiveness of the Assemblies of God (AG). Historically, the AG in the United States has committed to fulfilling the Great Commission through a two-fold emphasis of planting new churches and sending out missionaries to foreign fields. The missional importance of church planting will be demonstrated through research data from over 8,000 AG churches, comparing the spiritual metrics of church plants to existing churches over thirteen years of age. Additionally, research will compare the missional metrics of churches that plant churches with churches that do not engage in planting other churches.

Today, the AG shows encouraging signs of growth. However, two realities must temper these signs. AG numerical growth as a whole is not keeping up with population trends. Nationwide the number of AG churches per one thousand people continues to decline, and the AG continues to be underrepresented in the growing urban areas. Although the AG should rejoice in God's continued blessings, it must intentionally prioritize proven ways to increase missional effectiveness. God strategically uses the planting of new churches to break new ground for the gospel and increase the harvest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many well-earned "thank yous" go to the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary D.Min. project team. Dr. Dale Bruggemann, my first biblical adviser—your enthusiastic embrace of my project and personal investment in me propelled me off the launching pad into the outer space of D.Min. work. Thank you to Dr. Roger Cotton, my second biblical adviser; you asked the hard questions and patiently and realistically offered midcourse correction. Dr. Lois Olena, D.Min. Project Coordinator, thank you for your quick and helpful responses to my inquiries, for challenging me to dig further; my respect and appreciation for you continues to grow. Dr. Stephanie Nance, your editing work and your words of "Good work, Paul" always spurred me on to the next chapter; your encouragement and advice helped me navigate an often cloudy D.Min. path. Finally, Dr. Randy Walls, my project adviser—thank you for your genuine friendship and support; I could always count on you for the right words and perspective during the challenging times. Thank you for keeping it real and believing in me. You are the best!

My friends and fellow students of the Church Life Cohort absolutely enriched my life and our times together always strengthened and inspired me to keep on keepin' on. To my many wonderful colleagues in church planting leadership across the AG fellowship, our times together of strategizing, caring for our fellowship, and equipping church planters added blessing upon blessing to me and consequently to this project.

I reserve my deepest gratitude for my family and especially for Chris, my wife and best friend. My family, from my children to my grandchildren, unselfishly gave me the gift of time and room for the project. My youngest daughter Cammy Willett, commiserated with me as I pursued my D.Min. and she pursued her Ph.D. Her words of, "Dad you can do this, and just think how you'll feel when you finish" always lifted me

up. Finally, Chris, my lady-in-waiting, I could not have done it without you and would

not have wanted to. It is my turn to return the many favors. Where is the honey-do list? I

will start right away.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Context

Currently, I serve as the lead pastor of Grace Assembly of God (AG), in Bel Air,
Maryland. My primary roles as pastor are to disciple the church, to expand God's
Kingdom and influence in the local context, to equip the church for the work of the
ministry, and to partner in fulfilling the Great Commission around the world.

Bel Air, Maryland is the county seat of Harford County and lies in the heart of the
East Coast as part of the Greater Baltimore Metro Region. Demographics show Harford
County has an ethnically diverse population; it is suburban. The county enjoys a strong
economy with a growing population. Education, work, career advancement, family, and
self-determination drive the majority of the county's population of 240,000.

Additionally, I serve as part of the Potomac District Church Planting Task Force.
The district has charged this Task Force to raise the vision for the planting of new
churches and to create processes and resources to establish more and healthier church
plants.

Finally, I serve as an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God, the largest
Protestant denomination in the world. The AG formed in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914
with two express purposes to fulfill God's mission: the planting of new churches in the
United States and the sending out of foreign missionaries.[1] The core strength of the AG

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[1] Constitution and By-Laws of the Assemblies of God, adopted September 16-22, 1927.

places missions, through church planting at home and sending out missionaries to foreign soil, as its heartbeat.

Worldwide, wherever the church is growing, church planting occurs at a vibrant pace. Historically, this also applies to the AG. In the United States, the AG showed the greatest amount of growth when it proportionately planted the most number of new churches. In forty-seven years from 1914 to 1961, 300 AG churches grew to 8,141 churches. However, in the last fifty-three years, the 8,141 churches existing in 1961 added only another 4,600 churches. Since 2000, 12,000 AG churches have only added another 700 churches.

Most importantly, after several decades of adopting Church growth teaching and influence, the American church overall continues to decline in attendance and in vital spiritual metrics. David Olsen, a leading church researcher, states, "United States church attendance since 1990 has stayed the same and since 1990 in no single state did church attendance keep up with the population growth."[2] Local churches can reverse this decline by purposely planting new churches to establish God's Kingdom and increase their spiritual vitality.

The Problem or Opportunity

The spiritual need in present-day America continues to increase. Correspondingly, the American Church continues to fall behind in meeting that need. AG churches as a whole also follow the trend of falling behind in meeting the growing spiritual need. Well-documented past and present statistics reveal the validity and urgency of the need.

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[2] David, T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 36-37.

Current churches do not keep up with the current growth in population, the increasing ethnic population, and the rapid rate of cultural changes.

The AG as a whole and its local churches face formidable challenges in carrying out their mission. They are challenged from without and within. Outside challenges include a massive sea change in how our world communicates, what it values, and the flattening of historic cultural barriers. Challenges internal to the AG include pressures to institutionalize, which mitigates against missional purpose and function, the increasing ineffectiveness of time-worn ministry methods, an aging clergy, and a fifty-year decline in historic church health metrics.

AG statistics show a decline in the rate of church planting and missional effectiveness; however, recent statistics show an encouraging increase in the number of new churches. These declines correlate with the predictable patterns of the Sigmoidal curve. Additionally, the increasing average age of AG churches follow similar patterns of the Sigmoidal curve. A close examination of AG statistics reveals that as the denomination's churches have aged, there is a corresponding decrease in the rate of new churches planted and a corresponding decrease in the rate of historic spiritual metrics.

Lyle Schaller, noted American church expert, states, "Every evangelical church organization in America was raised up for two purposes; sending out foreign missionaries and planting new churches here at home. When an organization moves away from one or both of these objectives it is the beginning of the end."[3] The declining rate of church plants by churches of the AG USA and the decline in historic spiritual metrics cause grave concern. These two factors do not bode well for the fulfillment of God's mission

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[3] Lyle Schaller, interview by author, Wheaton, IL, December 2002.

through local AG churches. The decline in the rate of church planting and corresponding decline in spiritual metrics should cause the AG prayerfully and intentionally to seek out God's methods of fulfilling His mission and then implement them with renewed vigor.

However, the eternal purposes of God powerfully juxtapose themselves against all formidable challenges. From the beginning of creation God purposed to use humankind to fulfill His mission by filling the earth with His glory, His governance, and His people. God commanded Adam and Eve as His agents: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28).[4] In Exodus 19 God called out a nation as His special possession to be a priesthood of believers who would demonstrate His grace, steward His Law, and establish His governance in the earth. Further, Joel prophesied in the last days that God would pour out His Spirit on His people to vivify and empower them for His purposes (*missio Dei*).

In the New Testament, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ ushered in the Church as God's primary agent to fulfill His mission. Jesus Christ declared, "I will build my church and the gates (strategies) of hell will not prevail" (Matt. 16:18). To that end our present world witnesses an historic growth of the church.

The worldwide Church now encompasses 2.2 billion people, and of that number, Pentecostals make up a full one-third. Corresponding with the historic growth of the church is a worldwide church planting movement. Missiologists show church planting and Pentecostalism as major growth factors of the Church.

Further, when Jesus called the Church into existence, He promised to baptize believers for powerful service and witness. The book of Acts records the acts of the

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[4] All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the *New American Standard Bible.*

Apostles as the Spirit empowered the Early Church to establish God's Kingdom by spreading the gospel, starting new churches, and making disciples.

Today the AG USA, through its local churches, has a God-given opportunity to fulfill its calling. Mission and Holy Spirit empowerment characterize our calling and historic core. Worldwide, God is pouring out His Spirit. This outpouring results in a vigorous Christianity, growing around the world in spite of the most formidable challenges. This growth is accompanied by and fueled by a worldwide church planting movement of historic proportions. Historically, when these two foci of mission and Spirit-empowerment remained front and center, the AG experienced its greatest rate of establishing new churches and highest rate of spiritual growth.

The Purpose

This project purposes to show church planting as a strategic key to increase the missional vitality of an existing congregation and by extension, increase the missional vitality of the Assemblies of God. The increase in missional vitality enables congregations and the AG to establish God's Kingdom in a more potent way. This will be done by showing the vital link between the rate of church planting and historical spiritual metrics.

Definition of Terms

AG Church Planting Rate - The numbers of church plants started per year divided by the number of existing AG churches in that year.

Church Parenting - the planting of new churches by a sponsoring church, known as a parent church. The parent church may provide resources, funds, people, and coaching.

Church Planting - The establishing of a new body of believers, regularly meeting together for worship, discipleship, evangelism, ministry, and fellowship.

Establishing the Kingdom of God- Establishing God's presence and governance.

Mission of God - God's redemptive purposes made possible by the advent of His Son and now carried out by His people, the Church.

Missional Vitality – A combination of factors including AG Church Planting Rate and Spiritual Metrics per one hundred congregants.

Multiplication - The concept that all living organisms, including the church, are created by God for multiplication and reproduction.

People of God - God has called out a people to be His witnesses, keepers of His Word, and to be a priesthood of believers. This was illustrated by God's calling of Israel in Exodus 19:1-4; in the New Testament God has called His Church to be chosen people (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

Sigmoidal Curve - A standardized s shaped curve demonstrating the predictable patterns of organizational growth.

Spiritual Metrics - the measurement of numbers of conversions, water baptisms, Spirit baptisms, and main worship service attendance.

Strategic Church Planting - the intentional planning and preparation of launching a new church and selecting its planting pastor.

Description of the Proposed Project

Scope of the Project

This project will utilize a two-part research approach. The first part will include research from the AG, demonstrating the vital link between church planting and the

historical metrics of spiritual health and growth in the AG. Components of this research will include (1) surveys comparing the spiritual metrics of a cross section of AG church plants with a cross section of existing AG churches, and (2) research that validates the ongoing necessity for strategic AG church plants by comparing the number of AG church closings and openings from 1965-2013. Overall, the research intends to demonstrate how church plants increase the AG's spiritual vitality and missional effectiveness. The research will be obtained from the AG Statistician's Office, the AG Church Multiplication Network office, and personal compilation from other legitimate, verifiable sources.

The second research part will show the missional vitality of churches planting churches compared with churches that choose not to engage in church planting through church parenting. Missional vitality will be measured by the spiritual metrics the AG has historically used. These include things such as conversions, water baptisms, attendance, and Holy Spirit baptisms. The selected churches will demonstrate a diversity of demographics, size, age, and geographic locations.

However, the project will not attempt to develop a national church planting strategy. Further, it will not propose how to plant churches, how to select planters, or where to plant churches. It is limited to helping existing churches and AG spiritual leadership see how they can expand God's Kingdom and increase missional effectiveness through church planting. The motivation for increasing spiritual vitality and missional effectiveness is to empower the local church to establish the kingdom of God in a more potent way.

Phases of the Project

The five phases of the project will include research, planning, implementation, evaluation, and writing. Each phase will receive ample time for completion. Additional time for flexibility will allow for the inclusion of new findings and learning that inevitably surface in a project of this magnitude.

Research

The research process for this project will build upon three components, each contributing a vital element to undergird the main thesis of the project. The three components are biblical-theological research, general literature review, and last, extensive research using data from over 8,000 ACMR churches.

First, thorough and scholarly biblical-theological research will build a solid theology for church planting, useful for the AG's present and future. The theology for planting churches to expand God's Kingdom will begin with the Creation Mandate of Genesis and end with the establishment of the New Heavens and New Earth in the Revelation. It will provide the foundation for the entire project.

Second, the general literature review will explore the historic role and present day role of church planting in the United States and the AG. I will accomplish this through five main areas of review: 1) The Missional Church, 2) The Value and Priority of Church Planting, 3) Context: Understanding the Harvest Field, 4) Edge Effect and Church Planting, and 5) Multiplication: Churches Planting Churches. These five main areas of review will demonstrate the historical strategic importance of church planting to missional effectiveness. Additionally, the five areas will demonstrate why church planting uniquely provides a strategic method to meet the swirling currents of change in

the United States. The direction and depth of the general literature review will receive regular input from my project adviser, so the work will stay on course and provide a substantial contribution to the field of church planting.

Third, I will do the data research component in consultation with experts in the field of statistics-based research. The use of accepted research methods will result in truthful results, versus anecdotal stories, which will be useful across the AG as a whole.

Planning

The project proposes to present research to support its title, "Church Planting: A Strategic Method for Increasing the Missional Effectiveness of the Assemblies of God." The D.Min. Project Design committee granted approval for research to comprise the majority of the project's work. A research-based approach contrasts to the more common D.Min. method culminating in a seminar for presentation. The more commonly used method uses a combination of research and the preparation of a seminar to present to participants with pretest and posttest evaluations by the seminar participants. My project will singularly utilize research gathered from the biblical-theological literature review, the general literature review, and the statistics-based research will determine the final direction of the project.

Implementation

To demonstrate the missional effectiveness of church planting, I will confer with Sherri Doty of the AG Statistics Office to determine the best way to gather missional data from the AG. The process will gather data from existing churches, over thirteen years of age to demonstrate their missional effectiveness, and from two categories of church plants: 1) churches planted from 2008-2012, or five years of age or less, to demonstrate

the missional effectiveness of church plants; and 2) all church plants from 2000-2012, or thirteen years of age or less, to demonstrate the continuing missional effectiveness of young churches.

I will conduct the second part of the research to show the missional effectiveness of churches that multiply themselves by planting other churches, commonly known as church parenting. I will partner with the Church Multiplication Network office of the AG and a statistician to develop a national survey to go out to hundreds of churches that plant other churches. Additionally, I will personally interview, using the national survey, several pastors of churches that plant churches. The data gathered from a national survey of planting churches will be compared with data of several thousand AG churches that do not engage in multiplication through planting new churches.

The data gathered from the national survey will then be processed using accepted methods of statistics processing; this will ensure the integrity of the results, which then can be used in much broader contexts.

Evaluation

After the completion of research I will evaluate the results of the data showing the missional effectiveness of church plants, churches that plant churches, and churches that do not plant churches.

Prior to writing chapter 5, I will reflect upon the research results of chapters 2, 3, and 4 to determine their combined effectiveness in supporting the theme that church planting is a strategic method for increasing missional effectiveness in the AG. Additionally, the research for these chapters should surface many important implications for AG churches and leadership. Finally, chapters 2, 3, and 4 should result in

recommendations for increasing AG missionality and also point toward future studies in the field of missional effectiveness.

Writing

After thorough academic research of my project subject I will write a biblical-theological review (chapter 2) in September and October of 2013 and a general literature review (chapter3) in February-April of 2014. Following the extensive compilation of missional research data, I will write a summary of the results (chapter 4) in August of 2014 and then conclude with the overall project summary (chapter 5) in September of 2014. Finally, I will write chapter 1, front matter, and compile the appendices in October of 2014.

CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter proposes to provide a sound biblical theology for establishing God's

Kingdom through spiritual multiplication, specifically church planting and churches

planting churches. Consequently this chapter focuses on several themes—strands woven

together to form the larger cord of a sound biblical theology for church planting. These

strands include (1) the mission of God, (2) the Genesis 1:26–28 creation mandate to the

people of God, (3) God as a missionary God for all peoples, (4) the tabernacling presence

of God, (5) the command to be fruitful and multiply, and (6) the blessings of obedience to

the mission of God. These themes woven together create a strong cord linking God's

historical ways of fulfilling His mission to church planting.

A strong biblical theology for spiritual multiplication through church planting will

demonstrate to the Church and its leaders the vital role church planting plays in fulfilling

the mission of God. This biblical foundation will clearly communicate the necessity for

the Church to engage actively in planting and establishing new churches.

**The Creation Mandate: The Foundation
for Church Planting**

From the beginning God revealed His purpose for His creation—for the cosmos,

humanity, and creation's inhabitants. God wills to establish His presence and governance

in the earth and to bring humanity to salvation; in other words, God wills to establish His

Kingdom in all the earth. This storyline permeates the Bible and must serve as the

foundation for church planting as well.

According to Genesis 1:26–28, God created humankind in His image and gave

them a seminal command known as the creation mandate: "Be fruitful and multiply, and

fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over [it]."[1] Paul Enns describes this mandate, "God

placed man in the Garden to rule over His Creation. Adam was God's Mediator, placed

on earth to dispense His will on earth."[2] God created humankind in His image and

likeness not just to have children, but to represent Him, ruling over creation and

expanding, or multiplying, and filling it with God's ways and presence. The creation

mandate forms the foundation of church planting, which establishes a new community of

believers to bring God's ways and presence into its neighborhood.

The creation mandate serves as the foundation for establishing God's Kingdom.

Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks see the kingdom of God being established by

God's people throughout history:

> Although the 'Kingdom of God' expression does not occur in the OT … the
> concept informs the whole. The Primary History of Israel, which traces Israel's
> history from the creation of the world (Gen. 1) to the fall of Israel (2 Kings 25), is
> all about what the New Testament calls the Kingdom of God.[3]

The establishment of God's Kingdom results from the fulfillment of God's

mission. The creation mandate includes several components or motifs: the seed, the ruler,

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[1] All Scripture references unless otherwise noted are from the New American Standard Bible, 1995

[2] Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 40.

[3] Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 44.

the land, God's rule. These components or motifs empower and equip God's people to fulfill His purposes through the covenants of both the Old and New Testaments.

<div align="center">The Seed</div>

God said, "Let us make man in our image," and designated humankind as seed to reproduce and multiply true to form (Gen. 1:26–28). Humans were to fill the earth both physically and spiritually, carrying God's presence with them. The image of God or *imago Dei* is unique to humankind:

> The term has its roots in Genesis 1. Here God is presented as sovereign Creator of the universe; since to make means to possess, He is therefore sovereign Owner or Lord of the world. As the image of such a deity man is made and rules the world in the place of God as His *locum tenens* or vizier. It is precisely because he is the image of the God of Genesis 1 that he is ruler.[4]

Of all God's creation, humankind, created in the image of God, uniquely possesses qualities of God. J. I. Marias comments on the implications of humankind alone being a soul created in God's image: "The Hebrew word for soul is *nephesh,* which means the essence of life; the animating principle, ultimately derived from God, who 'breathed' into [hu]mankind, thereby creating a living soul."[5] Other animals were also living beings but only humankind was a living soul in the image of God.

T. D. Alexander explains why "seed" is used in the context of humankind and God's charge to multiply and fill the earth: "The Hebrew word *zera* conveys the idea that

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[4] D. J. A. Clines, "*The Image of God in Man,*" Tyndale Old Testament Lecture, *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968) 98-1, accessed November 12, 2013, http://98.131.162.170//tynbul/library/TynBull_1968_19_03_Clines_ImageOfGodInMan.pdf.

[5] J. I. Marais, "Soul," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 2837.

there is a close resemblance between the seed and that which produced it."[6] Genesis

1:11–12 shows that plants and trees reproduce seeds "according to their kind." Likewise,

God charged humankind made in His image to be fruitful and multiply offspring in the

image of God.

The concept of "seed" made in the image of God reveals another strategic aspect

of humankind's role in the overarching purposes of God. In addition to filling the earth

physically and spiritually, God commanded humankind to rule over the earth. This refers

directly to humankind's role as the royal agent of God on earth. Ian Hart explains, "This

background makes it likely that when the author of Genesis 1 claimed that man was made

as the image of God, he meant that man was to be God's representative on earth, ruling,

or having dominion, on God's behalf, like a king."[7]

Human beings created in the image of God act as His royal representatives,

reflecting His glory, to govern and fill the earth with His presence and ways. James K.

Hoffmeier notes that many Middle Eastern cultures believed the concept of divine entities

having human representatives on earth:

> In the ancient Near East it was widely believed that kings represented the patron
> deities of their nations or city-states. Among the Mesopotamians and Canaanites,
> royal figures were considered "sons" adopted by the gods to function as vice-
> regents and intermediaries between deity and society. Egyptian society recognized
> pharaoh as divine who was Horus in life and Osiris in death. Some royal stelae
> describe the king as the "image" of god.[8]

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[6] T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002), 105.

[7] Ian Hart, "Genesis 1:1–2:3 As a Prologue to the Book of Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46 (1995): 319, accessed November 12, 2013. http://98.131.162.170//tynbul/library/TynBull_1995_46_2_06_Hart_Gen1Prologue.pdf.

[8] James K. Hoffmeier, "Some Thoughts on Genesis 1 and 2 and Egyptian Cosmology," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 15 (1983): 39–49, 47, accessed November 12, 2013, http://www.jtsa.edu/Documents/pagedocs/JANES/1983%2015/Hoffmeier15.pdf. The word "image" is

The language of Genesis 1:26 reflects this idea of a royal figure representing God as His appointed ruler or regent on earth.[9] God charged human beings, created in His image, to have dominion over the earth and uniquely blessed them as the crown of all creation. Today, as God's royal agents, His people must represent Him as faithful witnesses and carry out His mandates.

The Ruler

Genesis reveals the development of the role of seed in God's purposes: the ruler. Walter A. Brueggemann observes God's seed mediating God's rule: "God elects Abraham and his offspring that reproduce his faith to represent God's moral rule and to mediate God's blessing to all the tribes and nations of the earth."[10] John H. Sailhamer describes the importance of Abraham's seed: "The identity of the seed of Abraham is one of the chief themes of the following narratives. This seed who is to come, to whom the right of kingship belongs, will be the 'lion of the tribe of Judah' (cf. 49:9); and the 'obedience of the nations is his (49:10).'"[11] In other words, God chose a ruler to lead and hold responsibility for His mission.

This role promised to Abraham finds further fulfillment with Israel's conquest of the Holy Land (Gen. 15:5; Deut. 1:10). God promised David that a son would sit on

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frequently written with a hieroglyphic statue that kings left in conquered territories to symbolize their rule of that area.

[9] Kenneth A. Matthews, *The New American Commentary,* vol. 1A (Nashville: Holman Publishers, 1996), 169.

[10] Walter A. Brueggeman, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Richmond, VA: Knox, 1982), 46.

[11] John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, vol. 2 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 112.

David's throne forever. This promise would culminate in the incarnation of God's eternal Son. Christ would mediate salvation for all (Isa. 55:3; Rev. 22:16), climaxing God's promises begun in Genesis and accomplished in the New Testament.[12]

The Land

The land motif in the creation mandate finds its fulfillment in a variety of ways in both the Old and New Testaments. God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to rule over it and enjoy fellowship with God. Humankind also was to fill the land, or earth, with God's ways, presence, and governance. This land motif carries significance throughout the Bible.

Through the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised Abraham the land of Canaan. God planted Israel in the Promised Land and called them to possess the surrounding nations for His glory. King David's military victories, also promised in the Davidic Covenant, expanded the kingdom that Solomon inherited from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (1 Kings 4:21), the dimensions promised in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:18).[13] Out of this Promised Land a Messiah and Savior would come from the faithful remnant to make salvation available for all people.

In the New Testament, Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to establish the kingdom of God. The book of Acts records the Early Church carrying out the Great Commission in ever increasing circles from Jerusalem. Acts also details the remarkable sea change of intentionally including the

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[12] J. Barton Payne, "David," in *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by J. B. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 258.

[13] Alexander, 52.

Gentiles (Acts 11). In the Revelation of John, God creates the new heavens and the new earth for His people to dwell in and enjoy His eternal presence. God's people plant churches to establish the ways and presence of God in the earth.

<div align="center">God's Rule</div>

God's rule comprises the final component of the creation mandate. He commanded humankind to rule and have dominion over the earth; this included witnessing and teaching the ways of God to the inhabitants of the earth. Greg K. Beale describes it as the intention "that Adam was to widen the boundaries of the Garden in ever increasing circles by extending the order of the garden sanctuary to the inhospitable outer places … including the goal of spreading the glorious presence of God."[14]

In Exodus 19 God elected Israel to be His people—a national royal priesthood serving Him, bearing witness to Him, and representing Him to the nations. Israel's possession of the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 7 and the expansion of the Davidic kingdom and God's rule demonstrate the creation mandate and the effort to fulfill the mission of God in their age. Acts 13:36 declares that David "fulfilled the purposes of God in his generation."

In the New Testament, the Church carries on the creation mandate and continues God's mandate to His people to exist as a priesthood of believers (1 Pet. 2; Exod. 19:5,6). Waltke and Fredricks explain this covenantal shift from the people of Israel to the Church:

> In sum, God now reckons the church, because it is baptized into Jesus Christ, who is the true Judah and Israel, as recipients of the new covenant (cf. Heb. 8). Thus

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[14] Greg. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downer's Grove: IL, Apollos/InterVarsity, 2004), 58.

Peter says to a church composed of Jews and Gentiles, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. In a similar vein, Paul calls the church "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). With respect to the third motif [the rule of God], one must conclude that Christ administers this "nation" (i.e., the Church) by means of a new covenant.[15]

Church planting finds its authority in the motifs of the creation mandate: the seed, the ruler, the land, and God's rule. Christ is the seed through which the blessing of Abraham flows to the nations (Gal. 3:7-9). The Church as the body of Christ includes both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus (vv. 7-8); God blesses and commands the Church as He did Adam. Regarding the land, God commands His disciples to go into all the earth and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). Regarding the ruler, Christ reigns as the King of kings building God's Kingdom through the Church. Regarding His rule, Christ commands His followers to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19).

<div align="center">

**The Mission of God: The Umbrella
for Church Planting**

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The *missio Dei,* or mission of God,[16] refers to the dynamic story of God's relationship with His creation that brings restoration between the two. The mission of God ties all of Scripture together to reveal God's eternal plan for His creation. The grand narrative of the Bible demonstrates God's redemptive purposes and how He uses His people to fulfill His mission.

The focal point of God's mission is Christ crucified and risen. Today Christ works through His church to carry out God's mission. Craig Van Gelder discusses the centrality of the Church in the mission of God: "In understanding the *missio Dei*, we find that God

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[15] Waltke and Fredricks, 51.

[16] Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Baker Books, 2007), 9.

as a creating God also creates the church through the Spirit, who calls, gathers, and sends

the church into the world for His purposes."[17] Thus planting healthy churches plays a

crucial role in accomplishing the purposes of God.

God's people must hold a basic assumption that the mission of God serves as the

underlying force of the whole of God's Word. Charles Van Engan explains that "a

missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that the whole Bible renders to us

the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world

for the sake of the whole of God's creation."[18] Christopher J. H. Wright adds that this

hermeneutic "derives from 'biblical *imperatives* characteristically founded on biblical

indicatives.' An indicative is simply a statement of reality."[19] These imperatives inform

the people of God of their response to His mission. Wright succinctly points out that

Christians need "both a missional hermeneutic of the whole Bible and its great

indicatives as well as committed obedience to a major imperative text like the Great

Commission."[20] The indicatives of a strong biblical theology for church planting become

imperatives for church planting initiatives.

Alan J. Roxburgh and Scott M. Boren see the interdependence between God's

mission and biblical narratives: "The biblical narratives revolve around God's mission in,

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[17] Ibid., 9

[18] Charles Van Engen, "The Relation of Bible and Mission in Mission Theology," in *The Good News of the Kingdom*, ed. Charles Van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland, and Paul Pierson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 27–36.

[19] Wright, 59.

[20] Ibid., 60.

through, and for the sake of the world."[21] God formulated His plan of redemption before He laid the foundations of the world and called out a people to carry out His mission.

Two words describe the action and outcome of the mission of God concerning humankind: salvation and governance. D. L. Baker articulates it this way: "God saves men to live under His rule, God's ultimate purpose is that His Kingdom should be established over all creation, and Jesus came to set up God's Kingdom."[22] Walter C. Kaiser defines God's Kingdom as "the state and sphere of the rule of God that has begun already and will embrace everything in that final day," going on to say that "the church is called to be a missionary agent of God's Kingdom in this world."[23] God saves people so they can experience deliverance, transformation, forgiveness, and knowledge of the benefits of His saved ones living and participating in His Kingdom.

In Matthew 6:11 and Luke 1:2, Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God as God's activity in establishing a realm in which His subjects obey His law *ex animo,* that is, from the heart.[24] *Ex animo* means that God's people sincerely obey Him, willingly, with their whole hearts.[25] As noted earlier, Waltke and Fredricks observe that the idea of the

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[21] Alan J. Roxburgh and Scott M. Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 70.

[22] D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 132–135.

[23] Walter C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker: 2000), 84.

[24] Waltke and Fredricks, 45.

[25] *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Ex animo," accessed September 14, 2013, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ex%20animo.

kingdom of God exists through the entirety of Scripture, from creation through the fall of Israel and of course on into the New Testament.[26]

Whatever God does has the ultimate purpose of bringing salvation to humanity and establishing His Kingdom, first in human hearts and finally throughout the earth. Salvation brings eternal life, blessings, and relationship with God. His governance defeats enemies, brings divine order, and serves to guarantee what salvation has wrought in humankind. God now establishes His Kingdom, His presence, His governance, and His ways through the Church. When the Church intentionally plants more kingdom-minded churches, it increases its capacity to fulfill the mission of God.

<div align="center">
The Mission of God through the
Old Testament Covenants
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The Bible shows the task given to the people of God from the first Adam to the second Adam, Jesus Christ. God administers His mission through covenants with His people. Covenants help God's people understand the narrative of the Old Testament. Wright observes how the covenants provide a framework for this understanding:

> The biblical story can be organized and told in many ways. But the key point is that it is a narrative in which we can look backward to its beginnings in Genesis and forward to its anticipated climax in the new creation. The sequence of covenants is one way to make our way through the historical narrative and also provides a major clue to its significance and eventual outcome.[27]

The covenants all possess certain characteristics that detail what God wills to do, the people He calls to fulfill His mission, His presence in the midst of His people, and the blessings of keeping His covenant. The characteristics of God's covenants apply to His

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[26] Waltke and Fredricks, 44.

[27] Wright, 325.

people of all times. While many of God's people in the Old Testament failed to keep the covenants, God has always had a faithful remnant to carry on His unchanging purposes. Likewise, the Church under the New Covenant must give heed to the purposes of the covenants to fulfill God's mission and experience God's full blessing.

The Garden

The mission of God began before the foundations of the earth in His eternal plan and intention. In Genesis 1:26–28, God gave a seminal command: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over [it]." The creation mandate served as humankind's blueprint for carrying out God's mission. Also referred to as the cultural mandate, it can be defined as "that activity of doing and making given to man at his creation whereby he is to glorify his Creator."[28] God created humankind in His image as His representatives to rule over God's creation and fill the earth with the ways and presence of God.

Tragically Adam and Eve loved the temptations of the serpent more than their faithful relationship with God, and sin entered God's creation. Their rebellion caused a massive upheaval of God's created order. Humankind lost the unique privileges it enjoyed before the fall. Chaos and death replaced immortality, painful childbearing was introduced, and creation lost its intended fertility. Waltke and Fredricks observe one of the tragic consequences of our broken relationship with God: "God leaves Satan to test

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[28] Ronald E. Manahan, "A Re-Examination of the Cultural Mandate: An Analysis and Evaluation of Dominion Materials," 2, accessed March 22, 2014, http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/books/manahan-cultural/manahan-cultural.pdf.

the fidelity of each succeeding generation of the covenant people (Judges 2:22) and to teach them to 'fight' against the untruth (Judges 3:2)."[29]

Because humankind's failures will not thwart God's purposes, God intervenes with a reordering of creation. In Genesis 3:15, God promises redemption to lost people through the coming of Christ the Redeemer; this is known as the proto-evangelion.[30] God intervenes multiple times in the world's affairs to continue His mission. He does so by either an act of re-creation or by enacting another covenant with the people of God. Kaiser astutely observes that "there is only one 'People of God' in both Testaments. All were to be agents of God's blessing to all on the earth."[31] Brueggemann sees God's purpose revealed to His people in these events: "They occur to give the people of God a new discernment about the character of the world and its locus in relation to God."[32]

The Noahic Covenant

Because of the ongoing wickedness of humankind, in Genesis 6–9, God interrupted humankind's sinful course through the Great Flood. Once the flood cleansed the earth, God gave Noah the Noahic Covenant to continue God's mission through His people. Sailhamer points out the new beginnings made possible by the Noahic and Abrahamic Covenants:

> There is a striking thematic parallel between the picture of God's calling Noah out of the ark (8:15–20) and the call of Abraham (12:1–7). Both Noah and Abraham

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[29] Waltke and Fredricks, 93.

[30] Desmond T. Alexander, et al., eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 663.

[31] Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament,* 24.

[32] Brueggemann, 76.

represent new beginnings in the course of events recorded in Genesis. Both are marked by God's promise of blessing and his gift of covenant.[33]

God's cataclysmic cleansing of the world testifies of His unwavering faithfulness to His mission, His creation, and His absolute requirements of those called to fulfill His mission.

Derek Kidner connects the purpose of the flood to God's redemptive purposes in the New Testament:

> As almost a second Adam (Gen. 9:1) [Noah] steps into a virgin world washed clean by judgment, and the spectacular deliverance in the ark is seen as a mere preliminary to salvation proper, which is a new creation. The New Testament sees the flood and the rite of baptism as twin expressions of this reality (1 Pet. 3:18–22), that is of the provision of a way through death into life.[34]

God's unwavering faithfulness to His mission requires from His people full-hearted fidelity and unwavering intentionality in fulfilling His mission.

The Abrahamic Covenant

The first eleven chapters of Genesis show a remarkable cycle of God's people failing to recognize God's authority and tragically neglecting to carry out His mission. God's intervention in Genesis 3 and again in Genesis 6–9 did not change humankind. Brueggemann aptly describes the situation: "God has concluded that the world has betrayed his intent. The noble decisions of God have been treated shabbily. God deals with that reality with great seriousness." His creation was filled with great perversion, wickedness, violence, corruption. Brueggemann argues that the narratives of the first six chapters "all suggest that what is wrong is that creation has refused to be God's creation,

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[33] Sailhamer, 91.

[34] Derek Kidner, *Genesis,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 92-93.

refused to honor God as God."[35] God's seriousness in dealing with the world's betrayal

resulted in a covenant that would offer blessing to all the people of the earth.

Genesis 12:1–9 introduces one of the most dramatic and important aspects of the

mission of God: the Abrahamic Covenant. Sailhamer describes the Abrahamic Covenant

as a new beginning to fulfilling the mission of God:

> The theme of Abraham and his descendants marking a new beginning in God's plan of blessings is developed in a number of other ways as well in Genesis. Most notable is the frequent reiteration of God's "blessing" in [Genesis] 1:28 (and 9:1) throughout the narratives of Abraham and his descendants … . The "promise to the fathers" is none other than the reiteration of God's original blessing of humankind … . Abraham is represented here as a new Adam and the "seed of Abraham" as a second Adam, a new humanity.[36]

Stephen L. Cox and Kendall H. Easley note that the Abrahamic Covenant finds its

fulfillment in Christ:

> The Abrahamic Covenant is the beginning announcement of the coming of the kingdom. The declarations made by God in this covenant represent promises that He will surely bring to pass. Thus the first aspect is found in this covenant to Abraham. God promised him a land, a seed, to make of him a great blessing, and to make his name great. Paul teaches us that this covenant finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and those who have placed faith in Him.[37]

This new beginning was different from the others; while the people of God before

Abraham demonstrated a tragic capacity for failing God, this beginning would find its

fulfillment in Christ as the focal point of God's redemptive history. Indeed Christ is both

the seed of Abraham and the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world.

Sailhamer says of this seed, "He is the one who is to come, to whom the right of kingship

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[35] Brueggemann, 76.

[36] Sailhamer, 111-112.

[37] Stephen L. Cox and Kendell H. Easley, *Harmony of the Gospels* (Nashville: Holman Publishers, 2009), 309.

belongs, he will be the 'lion of the tribe of Judah' (Genesis 49:9); and the obedience of the nations is His (Genesis 49:10)."[38] This seed, Jesus Christ, said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

Church planting grows out of the Abrahamic Covenant and Jesus' declaration to build His Church. New church plants help fulfill His mission. As the Head of the Church, Christ builds, leads, and empowers His people as His faithful witnesses to the nations.

The Covenant of Sinai

The mission of God continues with the calling of Israel in Exodus 19:3–6. Walter Eichrodt comments on the importance of this passage:

> The single historical event in which God encountered the nation becomes what the mediator declared it to be, *the point of alignment for their belief in God;* the redemption from Egypt received its definitive interpretation at the covenant-making on Sinai—and thus became *the foundation and the orientation of all the mutual relations of Yahweh and his people.*[39]

God uniquely chose Israel to carry the seed of Abraham. He gave them a land to possess; out of Israel would come the Savior and Messiah, Christ the Lord. God promised to make them a great nation and to bless them, but obedience was the key to God's promises.

Exodus 19:3–6 contains Moses' famous "eagles' wings" speech, detailing how God had carried and protected His people from the patriarchs up to that present time.[40] Wright explains that this text serves as the key missiological text of Exodus. "It is as pivotal in the book of Exodus," he writes, "as Genesis 12:1–3 is in Genesis. It is also a

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[38] Ibid., 112.

[39] Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 292.

[40] Walter C. Kaiser, "Exodus," in *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, vol. 2 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 415–416.

combination of imperatives (how Israel must behave) and promises (what Israel will be among the rest of the nations)."[41] God calls Israel as His people to bear witness to Him throughout the whole earth.

Peter Enns expands upon Wright's comments:

Exodus is about God's keeping a promise he made to Abraham. What is about to transpire on Mt. Sinai is … the continuation and deepening of an existing covenant God made with Israel's ancestors long ago. Israel as God's peculiar people are the means to bring the nations to have knowledge of him."[42]

Francis J. McConnell makes this observation about Israel's status as a peculiar people: "In the Old Testament, God had both a claim on Israel as their maker, and an obligation towards them as His possession."[43] God will not forget His word to Israel; He made them and He will fulfill His obligation toward Israel. Likewise, God created the Church; He will keep every promise of His power and presence.

Exodus details the continuation of God carrying out His mission through Israel. R. Alan Cole explains how Exodus 19:3–6 sums up Israel's mission:

Acting as God's representative for, and to, other nations … cannot be ruled out. Whether realized … or not, this was to be the Mission of Israel (*cf. the ultimate promise to Abraham in Gn. 12:3)*. God's "particularist" choice of Israel has a wider 'universalist' purpose; [the nations were to be blessed through Israel.[44]

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[41] Wright, 224–225.

[42] Peter Enns, *Exodus*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 387–389.

[43] Francis J. McConnell, ed., "Redeemer, Redemption," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 2, 541.

[44] R. Alan Cole, *Exodus,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 145.

God's call to His people in Exodus 19 directly bears on why the Church must plant more churches. The Church carries on the historical calling of God's people as instruments of faithful witness to the nations.

The Davidic Covenant

Despite God giving Israel the status of chosen possession, they demanded a king like the surrounding nations. The first king, Saul, failed miserably; consequently, God appointed David and promised to establish David's kingdom forever (2 Sam. 7:13).

The Davidic Covenant is a crucial component for understanding God's rule over the nations and realizing the fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant through Israel and Jesus Christ. Joyce G. Baldwin points out how vital the Davidic Covenant was to the ongoing mission of God:

> Two distinct but related themes in the subsequent literature of the Bible have their source in [2 Samuel 7]. First the Davidic line is given the right to rule *for ever,* and the Lord gives his word that he will not withdraw his steadfast love from David's son. Thus the Lord is to build David's house; that is David will found a dynasty. … [The second theme is] a Davidic child would establish his throne with justice and with righteousness (Is. 9:6–7); a branch from the stump of Jesse would yet create an ideal kingdom (Is. 11:1–9, Je. 23:5; Zc. 3:8). In other words this chapter was to become the source of the messianic hope as it developed in the message of the prophets and psalmists.[45]

The Davidic Covenant carries both a focus on Israel and a focus on reaching the nations. Wright connects these two foci, noting that the language of the covenant "links the Davidic kingship to the kingship of YHWH over all the nations" and that the building of the temple is "the focus of worship initially of Israel but ultimately of the nations," describing kingship and temple as two missiologically pregnant themes of the Davidic

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[45] Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 & 2 Samuel,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 213.

Covenant.[46] These two themes of kingship and temple as the embodiment of God's

presence began with the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26–28.

The fulfillment of these promises under King Solomon serves as a model of

accomplishment through obedience to God's mission. A. J. Köstenberger details the

fulfillment of these promises:

> During the reign of David's son Solomon, various promises to Abraham and
> David are fulfilled: the promised land is fully conquered; Israel becomes a great
> nation; and the Jerusalem temple is built. … Jerusalem becomes a world centre,
> epitomized by the Queen of Sheba's visit to the city. This visit serves as a
> paradigm for the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to Zion in later
> prophecy (Is. 2:2–4; 60–62; Mic. 4:1–5; Pss. 36:7–8; 50:2). Zion in turn is
> depicted in some … Old Testament passages as the centre of the new creation (Is.
> 35:1–10; 65:17–18).[47]

The Old Testament frequently links the Davidic Covenant to the promises of God

for His creation and the nations. Psalms 2:7–9 and 72:8–11 link the Davidic Covenant to

the coming universal kingship. The psalmists point to Zion as the permanent center for

worship of God, as Köstenberger explains:

> Like the tabernacle and Mt. Sinai before it, Zion [and its people are] holy owing
> to Yahweh's presence," and hence Israel "is separated from the nations (Ps. 78).
> [The nations'] salvation must therefore involve their coming out of the world to
> Zion in order to worship the Lord; this will happen in the end times (Pss. 72:8–11;
> 102:12–22).[48]

Likewise, Isaiah links David's kingship to the coming reign of the son of David

(see Isa. 11, 9:1–7). Isaiah 55:3–5 prophesies of the fulfillment of the heart of God's

mission: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to

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[46] Wright, 345.

[47] A. J. Köstenberger, "Mission," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Downer's Grove InterVarsity Press), 664.

[48] Ibid., 665.

David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you." Isaiah 56:1–7 foretells the inclusion of foreigners in all the sacrifices and worship in God's house: "For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." Isaiah's words, while initially directed at Israel, also foretell blessing for the nations. This follows a pattern similar to the promises of Abraham, reiterated at Mt. Sinai and guaranteed in the Davidic Covenant.

Likewise those who plant new churches must ensure that the leadership possesses a never-ending hunger for God's presence and an outward, missional focus for all nations rather than an inward focus. Above all, the focus must remain on Jesus as Lord and King.

<h2 style="text-align:center">The Mission of God and the New Covenant</h2>

The New Testament, or New Covenant, reveals how the mission of God unfolds through the birth of Jesus Christ to the second and final advent of Christ in Revelation and it continues the storyline, or narrative, of the Old Testament. Jeremiah prophesied about the New Covenant to come (Jer. 30:3-4, 31:31-40), and Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant with His disciples on the eve of Passover (Matt. 26:26–29).

It is significant that Jesus' first disciples were part of the faithful Jewish remnant, thus fulfilling the promise that Israel would be a "light to the nations." Although there were those within the religious establishment who opposed the Messiah and His followers, many became a part of the faithful remnant, such as Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimethea, the Apostle Paul, and the messianic Pharisees of Acts 15.

E. M. Blaiklock sheds light on the faithful remnant of Israel at the time of Christ:

> There is evidence of a stronger and purer tradition out of which came the expectation, the outreaching faith, and the yearning for redemption, which gave

the Lord His contact with human hearts, and recruited the first disciples of the Church. … Luke's Gospel introduces us to men like Zacharias the priest, and Elizabeth his wife, to Simeon and Anna, not to mention Mary herself. John gives us a glimpse of the eager disciples of the Baptist, and Nathanael, 'the Israelite indeed' The old clean sources of the Jewish faith had not been choked.[49]

The incredibly rich and diverse collection of New Testament Scriptures details how God's plan for the nations is realized through the person and work of Christ and His church. George Eldon Ladd summarizes the focus of the New Testament:

Teachings of the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels, eternal life in John, justification and the life of Christ in Paul, the heavenly High Priest in Hebrews, and the Lamb who is a Lion and a conquering Son of Man in the Revelation are diverse ways of describing various aspects and depths of meaning embodied in the one great redemptive event—the person and work of Jesus Christ.[50]

This New Covenant will not fail because it rests on the eternal one, Jesus Christ the Lord.

G. K. Beale argues the importance of understanding the mission of God through the lens of a Christ-centered eschatology: "I contend that the goal of the NT storyline is God's glory, and that the main stepping-stone to that goal is Christ's establishment of an eschatological new-creational kingdom and its expansion."[51] Jesus creates His Church and provides for the expansion of His Kingdom through the planting of new churches.

The Synoptic Gospels and Acts

Matthew and Mark display a dramatic turn in the mission of God. After the historical failures of God's people, with the exception of the faithful remnant, to carry out their mission, God sends His Son, Jesus. What the first Adam could not do, this second

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[49] E. M. Blaiklock, *The Acts of the Apostles,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1971), 41.

[50] George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 28.

[51] G. K. Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 16.

Adam would. God's long path of bringing salvation and governance culminates in Jesus.

His mission aimed to inaugurate the kingdom of God and provide salvation to all. Jesus

came from the lineage of David, but also from Gentile ancestors; another demonstration

that God's mission included people of all nations.

Matthew's Gospel portrays the mission of God being fulfilled through Jesus, the

Son of God. Köstenberger describes the Jesus portrayed in Matthew as

> fulfilling Israel's destiny as the representative, paradigmatic Son of God, …
> God's blessings to the nations, promised to Abraham, are to be fulfilled through
> Jesus in the mission of his followers. It concludes with the "Great Commission"
> which calls Jesus' followers to make disciples of the nations (28:18–20).[52]

Carrying out the Great Commission brings Abraham's blessing to the all the nations.

Craig S. Keener comments on the Jewish role in the Great Commission found in

Matthew: "What is important to remember is that the Gentile mission extends the Jewish

mission—not replaces it; Jesus nowhere revokes the mission to Israel (10:6), but merely

adds a new mission revoking a previous prohibition (10:5)."[53] Keener also marks how

Matthew intentionally reminds the predominantly Jewish-Christian community of their

responsibility to evangelize the Gentiles:

> Given the context of his whole gospel it is most reasonable to suppose that
> Matthew lays the emphasis here on Gentile peoples, whom his predominantly
> Jewish-Christian community most needs to be encouraged in evangelizing; they
> are already deeply engaged with the needs of their own ethnic communities.[54]

Like God, the Church must intentionally reach out to all peoples.

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[52] Köstenberger, 665.

[53] Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 719.

[54] Ibid, 720.

Jesus introduces the concept of the Church in Matthew 16 and Matthew 18. Jesus'

words had a profound impact on how the Church would function as a new community of

believers to act as God's agent in His mission. Jesus declares in Matthew 16:18, "I will

build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." It is Jesus who builds

the Church, and He will ensure that the strong strategies of hell will not defeat its

mission. As Keener notes, the Church's authority is granted by Christ: "Jesus gives to

Peter—and those who share his proclamation of Jesus' identity—authority in the

kingdom."[55] Church planting requires intentionality in going beyond the paradigms of

existing churches to establish God's Kingdom in new territory. Jesus' promise to build

His Church and His promise of spiritual authority for the Church to expand God's

Kingdom serve to motivate and empower.

The New Covenant contains the essential elements of all the covenants God has

made with His people. It is significant that Jesus inaugurates the New Covenant with

Jewish believing disciples who have inherited the Abrahamic Covenant, being a light to

the world and a blessing to all the earth (Gen. 12). God calls His people to live as His

agents of reconciliation, promises to bless all peoples through them, and promises to

bless His faithful followers. R. V. G. Tasker comments on what the inauguration of the

New Covenant means:

> Jesus is the Messiah, and in Him Jewish prophecy is fulfilled. The old law of
> Judaism, while it has not been overthrown, has been filled with new meaning and
> supplemented in the teachings of Jesus. The ancient Church of God [people of
> God] has been transformed in the new fellowship of those who have accepted
> Jesus as Messiah.[56]

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[55] Ibid., 429–430.

[56] R. V. G. Tasker, *Matthew,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 18.

Matthew records God's activity through Jesus and His people to fulfill His mission.

Mark's Gospel narrates the special story of the good news centered in the ministry of Jesus the Messiah, connecting it with its beginnings in the Old Testament. He quotes from Isaiah, Malachi, and Exodus to let the readers know that God's plan of deliverance and salvation resided in Israel's wilderness experience and that now John the Baptist was the messenger preparing the way for the fulfillment of God's mission.[57] Mark's Gospel demonstrates action as characterizing the mission of God. This action, characteristic of God's mission, directly challenges the Church to action in ministry; mere talk or theorizing alone will not accomplish His work.

Luke–Acts highlights the inclusiveness of the mission of God as God expands His Kingdom in the world. The concept of salvation is central to the theology of Luke–Acts. Other than Luke–Acts, the Gospels mention the word "salvation" only once in John, but thirteen times in Luke–Acts.[58] Salvation for all peoples is key to Luke's theology; he includes those who were seen as having lesser status in that world. Leon Morris observes Luke's focus on salvation for all people, noting that "Luke included women, Gentiles, widows, Mary the virgin mother of Jesus, Elizabeth, Anna in the Temple, slaves, and the poor."[59] Likewise, God calls the Church to reach all classes of society.

Regarding the narrative unity of Luke–Acts, Joel B. Green observes,

It is possible to see in its entirety a simple narrative cycle, painted in broad strokes. In it we see the working out of God's purpose to bring salvation in all of

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[57] Darrell L. Bock, *Mark,* Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 397–404.

[58] Leon Morris, *Luke,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 36.

[59] Ibid.

its fullness to all people. Luke records the *anticipation* of God's purpose made *possible* by the birth and lives of Jesus and John. The realization of God's aim is made *probable* through John the messenger and the death, burial and exaltation of Jesus.[60]

Acts continues the narrative of God's mission found in the Gospel of Luke.

Beginning in Luke, a crucial aspect of the narrative cycle appears in the equipping of disciples for missionary activity. In Luke 24:44–47, Jesus reemphasizes to His disciples that the Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled in Him, that the gospel will be preached to all nations, and that they will serve as His witnesses to these things. He commissions them as His witnesses, or agents, of the mission of God and promises to clothe them with power from on high. Green points out that Luke "draws a direct connection between their service as 'witnesses' and their reception of the Holy Spirit."[61]

Green points out the narrative cycle of the mission of God, begun in Luke, materializes in Acts:

> The subsequent story in Acts consists of a narration of the *realization* of God's purpose, particularly in Acts 2–15, as the Christian mission is directed by God to take the necessary steps to achieve an egalitarian community composed of Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. The *results* of this narrative aim (Acts 16–28) highlight more and more Jewish antagonism to the Christian movement, and the church appears more and more to be Gentile in makeup.[62]

Acts reveals that Christ's work did not end with His death. Jesus continues His mission in the earth through the Holy Spirit and the Spirit-empowered church.

Acts reveals the strategic role of church planting in fulfilling God's mission. The Church plants churches because it establishes another community of Christ followers

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[60] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 9.

[61] Ibid., 858.

[62] Green, 9.

who faithfully witness Jesus to their communities. Lesslie Newbigin asserts the necessity

for the Church to live out the gospel, writing that "the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a

congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it."[63] The Church experiences

blessing and life when it fulfills its mission and ceases to receive blessing when its

mission no longer seizes the Church. Newbigin bluntly contends that "when the church

becomes an introverted body, concerned with its own welfare rather than the Kingdom of

God, it loses its very life."[64] Healthy church planting requires a community of believers

on mission with Jesus; at the core it concerns itself with those outside the Church.

Luke 24:49 connects "power from on high" and effectiveness in mission, but Acts

demonstrates the strategic necessity of Spirit-empowered disciples to proclaim the

gospel, battle spiritual enemies, and expand God's Kingdom into new territory. In Acts

1:5, and 8, Jesus declared the absolute priority of being baptized in the Spirit in order to

fulfill God's mission. F. F Bruce explains the necessity of the Holy Spirit's power:

> Jesus assured them that they would be clothed with heavenly power—that power
> by which, in the event, their mighty works were accomplished and their preaching
> made effective. As Jesus himself had been anointed at His baptism with the Holy
> Spirit and power, so His followers were to be similarly anointed and enabled to
> carry on the work.[65]

Leaders and churches setting about to plant churches must value the baptism in the Holy

Spirit as an imperative for their efforts. If Jesus told His disciples to wait for His baptism

with the Holy Spirit before attempting anything, then the Church needs it.

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[63] Lesslie Newbigin, *Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1954), 164.

[64] Ibid., 227

[65] F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 38–39.

Beginning in chapter 11, Acts highlights the spread of Christianity to the Gentiles, in which the Apostle Paul played an instrumental part. Wright points out,

> Paul … identifies his own mission with the international mission of the Servant of the Lord. Quoting Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47 he declares quite bluntly: This is what the Lord has commanded *us:* "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."[66]

The "mother" church of Jerusalem, comprised of a Jewish majority who took seriously their responsibility to fulfill the law of God, made the choice to support and encourage new Gentile believers in Antioch. Peter reported to the Church elders his going to Cornelius and the resulting conversion and Spirit baptism of Cornelius's household. This incited much debate. However, Peter's passionate arguments persuaded the elders to receive these new converts on the basis of repentance and God's gift of the Spirit on them. The reliance on the Spirit for divine guidance empowered the Early Church to carry the gospel to all the nations.

This pivotal choice to rely on the Spirit's guidance and make room for the Gentiles reveals the necessary crucial values to fulfill God's mission when new opportunities arise: a willingness to continually adapt and a prevailing spirit of self-sacrifice. Because the leaders of the Jerusalem church willingly submitted their "chosen" status to the mission of God, the evangelization of the Gentiles moved forward. Blaiklock writes insightfully about the great challenges of the Jerusalem church's exemplary behavior:

> It required indeed, a major readjustment of all thinking for a people, fiercely conscious of racial privilege and stirred anew by the thought that the Messiah of Promise had appeared and spoken, readily to abandon the thought that a unique national destiny approached fulfillment. To accept re-interpretation of ancient

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[66] Wright, 67.

prophecies, to admit a spiritual rendering of old promises accepted and cherished as literal and material, to see Israel melt into the Church, and the minority of the chosen lose identity, privilege, and special place in a global organization, called for insight, faith, self abnegation, magnanimity, and a transcendent view of God rarely found in any but the most enlightened souls. … [We should] appreciate the greatness of the men, who rose to the occasion, and especially of that mighty spirit towards whose work the story is tending.[67]

The book of Acts came about because the Early Church fathers demonstrated a remarkable spirit of cooperation with the mission of God.

The response of the Jerusalem elders made the way for Antioch's unimpeded carrying out of its vision and God-given mission. Antioch became the second great center for Christian missions. Simon J. Kistemaker notes the result of the Jerusalem elders' support of the emerging Antiochan church:

In time the Antiochan church became the mission center for the Christian faith and overtook the mother church of Jerusalem. Even though Jerusalem provided leadership and direction, Antioch had vision and ambition. After the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Antioch filled the leadership vacuum in the church at large.[68]

From Antioch, Paul the apostle and others embarked on a series of missionary journeys that would establish churches in most of the known world. God calls the Church to navigate the challenge of change with a consecrated spirit of adaptability, with eyes to see new opportunities for His sake, and with a spirit of self-sacrifice so that new ventures in Christ can rise to their intended fruitfulness.

Then and now, church plants often excel at reaching a new demographic or reaching people unreached by other churches. New church plants provide a new community of believers manifesting the saving grace of the Lord Jesus. Luke–Acts has

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[67] E. M. Blaiklock, *The Acts of the Apostles,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 97–98.

[68] Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1990), 420.

no ending because God's work of expanding His Kingdom remains unfinished. Church planting remains just as crucial to the fulfillment of God's mission for the Church today as it was in the Early Church recorded in Acts.

The Pauline Writings

Romans 1:1–5 reveals the centerpiece of a Pauline understanding of the mission of God. Paul declares himself "set apart for the gospel of God," (v. 1) for which he would ultimately give his life. Bruce describes the gospel of God as "His *euangelion,* His joyful proclamation of the victory and exaltation of His Son, and the consequent amnesty and liberation which men may enjoy through faith in Him."[69] Paul connects Jesus' human descent from David to the promises of the Davidic covenant. Wright says that this passage "presents the scriptural basis on which the gospel declares that the nations can be included in the saving work of God along with Israel. Indeed the inclusion of the nations is part of what actually constitutes the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel."[70] Paul's focus on the Gentiles served as proof of his deep conviction that the gospel exists for all.

Paul purposed to go where nobody had preached the gospel (Rom. 15:20–21). That included nations and people, hence his insistence on appealing to Caesar so he could declare the gospel along the way. Paul established new churches as the converts' center for fellowship, worship, discipleship, and witness to their area. Köstenberger explains that Paul's goal was "to establish Christian congregations in strategic [urban] centres

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[69] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 71.

[70] Wright, 349.

from which the gospel could spread further to surrounding nations."[71] Paul's methods

provide a strategic model and missional reason for planting churches.

The Gospel of John

John 20:31 states the purpose of this gospel: "That you may come to believe that

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his

name." John centrally places Jesus as the Messiah of the mission of God. D. A. Carson

further distills the aim of John's Gospel:

> John's purpose is not academic. He writes in order that men and women may
> believe certain propositional truth, the truth that the Christ, the Son of God, is
> Jesus, the Jesus whose portrait is drawn in this Gospel. But such faith is not an
> end in itself. It is directed toward the goal of personal, eschatological salvation:
> *that by believing you may have life in his name.* That is still the purpose of this
> book today, and at the heart of Christian mission.[72]

Only the cross makes it possible to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. The cross

is central to the mission of God. Wright highlights this centrality, noting "all that God has

achieved and will finally complete through the cross of Christ. … The cross was the

unavoidable cost of God's mission. … The cross [is] central and integral to every aspect

of holistic, biblical mission, that is of all we do in the name of the crucified and risen

Jesus."[73]

The strength of the Church derives from doing God's will and accomplishing His

work. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20:21). God sends

and empowers individuals to accomplish His redemptive purposes. God the Father sent

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[71] Köstenberger, 667.

[72] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 663.

[73] Wright, 314 (emphasis omitted).

His Son; the Son sends His people, the Church; and the Son empowers them by sending

the Holy Spirit. Wright powerfully declares,

> Before we set about the essential task of working out what it means in practice that Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you," (Jn 20:21), in terms of our personal participation in God's mission in our own context and generation, we first of all need to kneel with Thomas before Christ and confess, "My Lord and my God" (Jn. 20:28).[74]

An obedient, missional heart has profound implications for the Church—for its strength,

for its success, and for its future.

The General Epistles

First Peter offers a succinct description of God's mission and how He mediates

that mission through His people. Peter emphasizes God building a holy habitation for

himself through Jesus Christ, the chosen cornerstone of God, and through believers in

Jesus—living stones. God mediates His mission through these living stones.

The Church now fulfills the specific calling of God's people found in Exodus

19:3–6, forming the priesthood of believers described as a chosen race, a royal

priesthood, and a holy nation. Alan M. Stibbs connects the Old Testament mission of

God to the New Testament mission of God:

> In the Old Testament such phraseology as is here used indicated God's purpose for the people whom He forms for Himself by redeeming them from bondage in Egypt and later once again openly declared to be His by bringing them back from captivity in Babylon. The use of such phraseology here implies that what is typically and prophetically anticipated in OT history finds its fulfillment in the Christian community.[75]

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[74] Ibid., 535.

[75] Alan M. Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 105.

Peter depicts the Church as a holy nation, a dwelling place for God, an instrument of witness, and a holy priesthood. This depiction provides the measuring rod for the mission of new church plants. A church planted for these great purposes can expect God to dwell among its people, can expect Holy Spirit empowerment for witness and holiness, and can expect to shine as a lighthouse of salvation to the nations.

The Revelation of John

The mission of God finds its glorious fulfillment in Revelation, which describes the culmination of the *missio Dei* that began before the foundations of the earth. God's mission purposes to fill the earth with His glorious presence and to bring humankind into a saving relationship with Him. God promised Abraham that He would bless all the nations through him. God's mission included having a people for His own unique possession to mediate His mission to the nations through proclamation, witness, and holy living.

These promises will finally be realized when God creates the new heavens and the new earth and establishes the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21 and 22). These new creations signify that the presence of God and the Lamb of God will dwell among God's people forever. The nations will come to the New Jerusalem, and Revelation 21:3 says, "They shall be His people." Ladd succinctly sums up this final consummation:

> This is an echo of the Old Testament idiom, "I shall be their God and they shall be my people," which expresses the oft-repeated aim of the divine self-revelation and of all of God's dealings with his people. All the promises of God's covenant with men, made first through Abraham, renewed through Moses, and embodied in Christ, are at last brought to full realization.[76]

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[76] George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 277.

Church planting for any other reason than to fulfill the mission of God misses the mark. But church plants glorify God, and more people come to know the salvation and governance of a loving God when church plants act as a community of believers for God's presence and bear witness to the grace and love of God in their community.

God's Missionary Heart Propels
Church Planting

God is a missionary God. The Scripture details God in action through His people for and toward His creation. Kaiser observes, "The Bible actually begins with the theme of missions in the Book of Genesis and maintains that driving passion throughout the Old Testament and on into the New Testament."[77] It serves as the "envelope … framing the whole Bible."[78] One cannot escape the primary motivation of God's heart; He does not wish that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9) but that all should come to repentance.

The idea of mission means there must be people sent to initiate and carry out the mission. Beale refers to the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26–28 as "the first 'Great Commission,' which was repeatedly applied to humanity. The commission was to bless the earth, and part of the essence of this blessing was God's salvific presence."[79] Understanding who God's people are in the scope of God's order instructs them in what they must do. "This is why, at the very beginning, the Bible informs us of our role and introduces us to the Director. How we understand ourselves dictates how we behave."[80]

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[77] Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 7.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 57.

[80] Waltke and Yu, 210.

Understanding the Church's role in God's mission and in helping to fulfill it propels the Church in mission.

Kaiser observes that this propulsion, this sending out, appears in both Old and New Testaments:

> Mission points to a central action: the act of being sent with a commission to carry out the will of a superior. It is God who commissions and God who sends. And it is this word of "sending" that lexically links the Old Testament to the New Testament. The Hebrew word for "to send" … is found over eight hundred times in the Old Testament.[81]

God's missionary heart initiates action in His Church to fulfill His will and purposes.

Consequently God commissions humankind as His missionaries. The primary purpose of God's missionary activities is salvation. "Salvation, whatever the word employed, is therefore seen as the characteristic activity of God: It is the very nature of God to rescue the helpless and the oppressed."[82] God calls the Church as missionaries to engage in acts of salvation to bring people to Christ.

In Genesis 3, as a result of the Fall in the Garden, God initiates salvation through the seed of woman. God gives Abraham a covenant and a commission in Genesis 12. Kaiser emphatically states that "if an Old Testament 'Great Commission' must be identified, then it will be Genesis 12:3," when God calls Abraham.[83] Waltke and Fredricks explain that this call

> is the sneak preview for the rest of the Bible. …. the story of God bringing salvation to all the tribes and nations through a holy nation, administered at first by the Mosaic covenant and then by the Lord Jesus Christ through the new covenant. …. The expansion of the promise of Gen 12:1–3 from individual to

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[81] Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament,* 8.

[82] Cole, *Exodus*, 27.

[83] Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 7.

national to universal salvation is the essential movement of scripture. The Bible is a missionary guide: concerned with bringing salvation to all the families of the earth.[84]

The record of God as a missionary God continues throughout the Old Testament. At Sinai, God initiated His salvation to all the nations by choosing and commissioning Israel as a blessing to the whole earth (Exod. 19:3–6). Wright explains that in this text God gives Israel their goal—"a mission that encompasses God's purposes for the entire world."[85] Several psalms reveal God's missionary intention through His people: "Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples" (Ps. 96:2–3). Kaiser calls Psalm 96 "another of the great missionary psalms," explaining that "clearly the content is Good News and salvation. The extent of this declaration is also clear: among all the nations and among all the peoples."[86]

The prophetic books continue the record of God calling and sending His people. Isaiah prophesied that through God's people there would shine a "light" to the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6). While many think this refers to the Messiah and eschatological Israel, good reasons exist to believe this text also applied to God using Israel before the eschaton. Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47 as his defense for going, as a Jew, to the Gentiles. Kistemaker notes that Paul

> bases his teaching on the Old Testament scripture and thus follows the example of Jesus Christ. From this quotation the church leaders were able to see for themselves that centuries earlier God had planned to grant salvation to the

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[84] Waltke and Fredricks, 209.

[85] Wright, 225.

[86] Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 34.

Gentiles. In other words, the Scriptures prove the missionaries correct and the Jews wrong. Scripture has the last word.[87]

In the New Testament, God initiates the formation of the Church as His missionary agent. Matthew reveals the missionary heart of God in many ways: God sending the Spirit upon Jesus (Matt. 3:13–17), Jesus going about the villages to heal and telling His disciples to pray that God would send out laborers (9:35–38), Jesus sending out the apostles to proclaim the Kingdom and to heal (10:1–15), Jesus saying He would build His church (16:15–19), and Jesus giving the Great Commission to His disciples and telling them to take initiative and go into all the world with the gospel (28:18–20). Likewise, today Jesus commissions His disciples to go and proclaim His Kingdom. Church plants exist as a proclamation point for the gospel, announcing that God's Kingdom is near.

The Gospel of John strikingly demonstrates God as a missionary God who initiated reaching His creation by sending His Son in the flesh to live among people so they could see and understand Him. God did this so they could become His sons and daughters. Carson writes of God's purpose, "God sent His Son into the world to become the Jesus of history, so that the glory and grace of God might be uniquely and perfectly disclosed."[88] Further, one of the greatest missional verses in the Bible, John 3:16, shows the unfathomable price God was willing to pay to redeem and demonstrate His love for the world: the life of His only Son.

In John 20:21, Jesus says, "Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." God sent Jesus to fulfill His mission; likewise Jesus sends, or commissions,

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[87] Kistemaker, *Acts*, 495.

[88] Carson, *John*, 111.

His followers to continue that mission. Carson sees obedience as the main connection of Jesus' "sentness" by God and Jesus' command to His disciples, stating that Christians "never have an excuse to rest on their laurels, or to define their task too narrowly."[89] God sends believers to fulfill His mission; His mission demands nothing less than whole-hearted obedience to God.

Luke–Acts similarly records God's initiative to bring salvation to all. The Acts of the Apostles serves as the record of a missionary God and the progress of His mission. Wright comments that the overall structure of Luke–Acts expresses the progression of God's mission to the Gentiles is "a fulfillment of the Scriptures, especially the prophecies of Isaiah. … It begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome; from the heart of faith of Israel (the temple) to the heart of the world of all the nations."[90] God continues to send His Church to Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

The expansion of the Church from Jerusalem to Antioch represented an expansion from Jews to Gentiles. It also demonstrated a new missionary technique: multiplying God's presence through the planting of new churches. Unlike Jewish believers, the temple did not function as the focal point of worship for Gentiles, so Paul appointed elders and bishops in new churches, which served as the meeting places of Gentile believers.

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[89] Ibid., 648.

[90] Wright, 514.

Church Planting Manifests God's
Redemptive Presence

God's purpose to fill the earth with His people in order to manifest His presence begins in the Garden of Eden. God's presence dwells in and through His temple, making it a sanctuary of His presence. Greg K. Beale describes God's historical presence in the temple: "The first sanctuary was in Eden."[91] Just as Israel would later experience God's presence in the temple, "Eden was the place where Adam walked and talked with God. The same word Hebrew verbal form (hithpael) … used for God's 'walking back and forth' in the Garden (Gen 3:8) also describes God's presence n the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14; 2 Sam 7:6–7)."[92] The Old Testament shows the progression of God's people manifesting His presence from Eden to the Promised Land. Likewise the New Testament reveals the manifestation of God's presence through the Church, consummating in Revelation 21 and 22 with the new heavens and new earth.

God called Adam to guard and to serve in Eden, the first sanctuary of God's presence. Beale connects the words for "guard" and "serve" with the same words used for the Old Testament priesthood that served in the temple sanctuary and guarded the temple from unclean things.[93] Beale interprets Genesis 1:28 as God's mandate Adam to extend the geographical boundaries of Eden until it extended throughout and covered the whole earth, implicitly meaning that God's presence was to fill the whole earth.[94]

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[91] Greg K. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 7.

[92] Ibid., 7.

[93] Ibid., 8.

[94] Ibid., 10.

The mandate given to Adam extended to his progeny, or seed. God appeared to Abraham and gave him the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; 17:5–8), a covenant to fulfill the creation mandate (1:26–28), which prescribed God's intention for the earth and its inhabitants. Subsequent to Abraham, several instances exist when the patriarchs built altars or pitched a tent and God appeared to them. Beale asserts that these areas of worship were built to mark God's presence, quoting T. Longman "It was 'like planting a flag and claiming the land for God.'"[95]

Israel established the tabernacle in the wilderness, and later Solomon built the temple. These both consisted of three sections: The Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the outer courtyard. Beale connects these three sections to God's will to fill the entire cosmos with His presence. "The Holy of Holies represented the invisible heavenly dimension, the Holy Place represented the visible heavens, and the outer courtyard represented the visible sea and earth, where humans lived."[96] Later Solomon's temple served as a reminder to Israel that God intended to fill the universe with His glory. Further the temple served to remind Israel that they were a holy nation and a kingdom of priests bearing witness to God.

The Scriptures draw a connection between the Promised Land—the land of Israel—and the Garden of Eden (Gen. 13:10, Isa 51:3; Joel 2:3; Ezek. 36:35–36). Ezekiel prophesied that God would cause the sacred precinct of the temple, God's sanctifying presence, to expand from Jerusalem to the entire land of Israel (Ezek. 37:24–28): "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My

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[95] T. Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001), 16.

[96] Beale, *Eden, The Temple, and The Church's Mission,* 16-18.

people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My

sanctuary is in their midst forever." Prophecies also show the progression of God's

presence to the whole earth: "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a

kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another

people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure

forever" (Dan. 2:44–45; also see Isa. 2:2–4, 11:10, 54:2–3). J. Alex Motyer explains the

progression of God's presence and salvation (Isa. 51:1–8):

> The first (1–3) addressing the remnant, promises *comfort* to *Zion*. The promise is
> addressed in Abrahamic (2) and Edenic (3) terms, and these worldwide
> implications are pursued in the second appeal (4–6) with its promises to *nations*
> and *islands* (5). The third appeal (7–8) is an affirmation that no opposition can
> survive (8ab) and that the Lord's purposes are eternal (8cd).[97]

The progression of God's presence included both Israel and the Gentiles (56:6–9).

Ezekiel 40–48 details an important depiction of the temple to come. Striking

similarities exist between Ezekiel's temple and the temple depicted by Revelation 21 and

22. Beale notes these similarities:

> John's temple is like Ezekiel's because it is, in fact, what Ezekiel prophesied. It
> was a prophecy of an eschatological temple and John's temple depicts the
> eschatological temple. … [It] is a figurative vision of a real heavenly temple that
> would descend and be established on the earth … in the latter days. This
> conclusion … fits well with the biblical-theological patterns of the Garden of
> Eden.[98]

God comforts His people with His promise to dwell literally among them one day.

Christ and the Church constitute the temple and presence of God in the New

Testament. The Old Testament anticipated Christ as the builder and ruler of the temple (2

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[97] J. Alex Motyer, *Isaiah,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 361

[98] Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 351, 353.

Sam. 7:12–14; Zech. 6:12–13). The incarnate Christ epitomizes God's presence on earth, and He repeatedly referred to himself as the "cornerstone of the temple" (Mark 12:10; Matt. 21:42; Luke 20:17; John 2:18–21). God is building His people, both Jews and Gentiles, into His temple as a dwelling place for God's presence (Eph. 2:19–22).

Paul refers to believers as the temple of God at various times: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16); "For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (2 Cor. 6:16); "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:21–22)." Francis Foulkes comments on the meaning of Ephesians 2:21–22 in light of the Old Testament: "When Christ came, … He Himself was the place of the divine dwelling among men. … The temple is no longer among men, but now God seeks as His habitation the lives of men who allow Him to enter by His Spirit."[99]

First Peter 2:5 states the place of believers in the temple: "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Stibbs draws a connection between the body of believers and the temple: "God's chosen sanctuary is His people; … in this new Christian community all enter the priesthood and can, therefore themselves constitute the sanctuary, in whose midst God's presence is manifested.[100] The

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[99] Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 88.

[100] Stibbs, 100.

declarations of Jesus reveal that He is the temple of God and His body, the Church, constitutes that temple. Paul and Peter testify that believers comprise both the temple and the priesthood so the world can see and know God.

God's purpose to dwell among all humankind reaches consummation in the Revelation to John:

> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them" (Rev. 21:2–3).

John again writes in chapter 22 that the temple is the Lord God and the glory of God, and the lamp of the Lamb will be its light; the nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Beale explains the significance Revelation 21:

> The theme of the new creation in its finality is continued …[God creating a new heavens and a new earth]. All the people of God together with the heavens and the earth will be transformed into a new creation. [God will dwell among His people and the earth for eternity].[101]

The creation mandate at last is realized. God's creation will forever experience His ways, presence, salvation, and loving rule.

Beale succinctly and powerfully summarizes what this means for the Church: "Our task as a Church is to be God's temple, so filled with his presence that we expand and fill the earth with that glorious presence until God finally accomplishes this goal completely at the end of time!"[102] This has direct bearing on church planting. Knowing the body of Christ is the temple of God gives added impetus to plant more churches. The witness for Christ increases as the Church plants more churches.

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[101] Greg K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1052.

[102] Beale, *Eden, The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 31.

**A Multiplying God Compels the Church to
Multiply through Church Planting**

The creation mandate shows the main facets of how God's people fulfill His

mission: "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the

earth'" (Gen. 1:28). Inherent in the creation mandate is God's empowerment of

humankind to fulfill it. God's blessing includes the capacity to multiply "seed" so that

humanity fills the earth, bearing the stamp of God's image and carrying with them the

presence of God.

Scripture shows that God expected the patriarchs and Israel to multiply. God told

Noah to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen. 9:1, 6–7). Likewise, God told

Abraham that He would make him exceedingly fruitful (17:2, 6, 8) and promised to

multiply Abraham and his seed greatly (22:17–18; 26:4, 24; 28:3–4). God said to Jacob,

"I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall

come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. The land which I gave to Abraham

and Isaac, I will give it to you, and … to your descendants after you" (35:11–12).

God's expectation of multiplication also applied to Israel in captivity. Isaiah

prophesied that God would multiply and enlarge captive Israel. "Enlarge the place of

your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords and

strengthen your pegs. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your

descendants will possess nations and will resettle the desolate cities" (Isa. 54:2–3). God's

multiplication would only happen after Israel made the preparations for His

multiplication. God instructed Israel concerning their captivity in Babylon. "Multiply

there and do not decrease, seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile

and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer.

29:6b–7). These serve as powerful instructions for today's church living in a modern-day Babylon: multiply, occupy, pray for, and seek the welfare of the city.

Tragically, Israel succumbed to worldly concerns and did not fulfill the mandate to multiply and fill the earth by being a witness to all the nations. God, however, would send the Messiah through a faithful remnant of Israel, the seed of Abraham, the son of David, to bring the Good News and mediate a New Covenant for the world.

Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Jesus mandated the disciples to multiply themselves. David L. Turner comments on the implications of their obedience:

> The central responsibility of the disciples is to reproduce themselves, to make more disciples. When people from all nations are discipled, a new humanity begins to form. Obedience to the mission mandate turns out to fulfill (as a byproduct) the original creation mandate that God gave to humanity's first parents in the Garden of Eden.[103]

Since disciples are made in and through the Church, Turner's comments capture the importance of fulfilling the mission of God with spiritual multiplication through church planting. Planting more churches results in making more disciples.

The book of Acts records God multiplying the disciples through His Church: "More believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their* numbers" (Acts 5:14); "the disciples were increasing *in number*" (6:1); and "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord"

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[103] David L. Turner, "Matthew," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary,* ed. Philip W. Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2005), 376–378.

(11:21). Acts chapters 13-20 records the Church's increase through Paul's three missionary journeys.

Church Planting Flows from the Blessings of God

God's mandate to Adam empowered Adam with blessing for God's mission, and God said humankind's blessing was in fulfilling His mission (Gen. 1:26–28). In effect, God said the same thing to Noah, Abraham, and the patriarchs. Waltke observes the author's careful use of language in Genesis:

> His use of key words such as "seed" (i.e., "offspring," "descendants") and "blessing" ("making fertile and victorious") reinforces the book's theme that God elected the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to bless the earth. They are heirs of the promissory covenant God made with Abraham.[104]

In 2 Samuel 7, God made a covenant with King David, promising to make David's house great and that to be with David's progeny. If David obeyed God's covenant, God promised to appoint a place for Israel and plant them there.

In 2 Samuel 5:12, Hiram, king of Tyre, offers to help David. In this offer David recognizes a non-negotiable aspect of why God blesses His people. David perceives that the Lord has exalted David's kingdom for the sake of His people Israel. Baldwin notes that David recognized the purpose of God's blessing in Hiram's offer: "David put it down as the Lord's doing *for the sake of the people of Israel,* not for the sake of David personally. This awareness … kept David from exaggerating his own importance (Dt. 17:20) and from extravagant policies involving oppressive taxation."[105] As David

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[104] Waltke and Yu, 305.

[105] Baldwin, *2 Samuel*, 199.

navigated the critical challenge of God's blessings and used them primarily for God's

priorities rather than for personal gain, God used David to expand Israel and bless many.

But in those times that Israel's leadership, like King Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 1-21,

misused God's blessings, they became proud and unfaithful toward God. Their selfish

pride and turning away from God had disastrous results. Kaiser remarks that "Israel's

provincialism and chauvinism forced her into a jaundiced position of envy and partiality.

She paid for this by being deliberately scattered among the nations and by being put in

exile more than once."[106] The prophets repeatedly warned Israel of the consequences of

unbelief and selfish pursuits (1 Sam. 1:7-9, Isa. 1:4-7, Jer. 16:5). The Church must

perceive that God has richly blessed it, like Israel, in order to bless the nations and to

avoid using God's blessings for selfish purposes.

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to the disciples, He stated that all

authority in heaven and earth was given to Him. Keener connects the authority of Jesus

with their mission: "Because Jesus has all authority, because he is king in the kingdom of

God, his disciples must carry on the mission of teaching the kingdom."[107] They could not

reach the nations in their own strength, but with His authority they could and they did.

Today Christ empowers and blesses His people with phenomenal blessings to

reach the nations. The Apostle Paul said, "[God] put all things in subjection under

[Jesus'] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22–23).

Foulkes notes that this passage implies that "the church has authority and power to

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[106] Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament,* 74.

[107] Keener, 718.

overcome all opposition because her Leader and Head is the Lord of all."[108] God has given the Church a powerful promise for a great mission.

Jesus promised to baptize His followers with the Holy Spirit to empower them to expand His Kingdom (Acts 1:8). The multiplying growth of the Church provides evidence for the power following the baptism in the Spirit. Pentecostals make up a full one-third of today's Christians, and 82 percent of those coming to Christ come through the Pentecostal churches.[109] Missiologist David Barrett shows the worldwide growth of Pentecost at an annual rate of 9 percent and now comprises approximately one-third of all the 2.1 billion Christians in the world.[110] A worldwide church-planting movement corresponds with the historic growth of the Church. Missiologists show church planting and Pentecostalism as major growth factors for the Church.

God blesses the Church to fulfill His will, but correspondingly its blessing comes from fulfilling His will. Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). Carson believes Jesus asserted this because "there was a greater satisfaction in doing the Father's will than any food the disciples could offer him. All of Jesus' ministry is nothing other than the submission to and the performance of the will of the one who sent Him."[111] The Church enjoys God's greatest

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[108] Foulkes, 65.

[109] David Lim, "The Holy Spirit in the New Testament Church" (class notes for PTHB 533 Course at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Orlando, FL, June 16–19, 2009).

[110] Dean Merrill, "Five Faces of Pentecost," Fellowship of Christian Assemblies, accessed September 21, 2009, http://www.fcaequip.net/view_resource.php?cat_id=22&resource=FIVH4NCR.

[111] Carson, 228.

blessing when it does the will of the Father, but turning away from God's mission results in ineffectiveness.

Obedience to God's mission brings God's blessing, but disobedience to it and using God's blessing for selfish purposes brings terrible consequences. Domesticating God's mission for selfish reasons strips the vitality from being God's faithful witness. Newbiggin observes that when the Church domesticates its mission, the results are disastrous: "The mistake of eighteenth century Christianity was to domesticate the gospel to fit the reigning plausibility structure."[112] This happens when the Church subjugates its mission to what and how the world thinks about God and His people.

God's promises to His people who obey Him bring assurance to the Church today:

> Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments. … It shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His loving kindness which He swore to your forefathers. He will love you and bless you and multiply you (Deut. 7:9, 12–13a).

God is a faithful God. May the Church faithfully respond to God's mission and the call for the Church to multiply by planting more churches.

Conclusion

A solid biblical theology posits God's mission and humanity's mission side by side to bring clarity and authority to a compelling church planting vision. God uses church planting as a strategic method for increasing missional effectiveness.

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[112] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 10.

Church planting rests on several scriptural principles. The creation mandate forms the foundation for church planting, and the mission of God forms the umbrella for it. Because God has a mission, His missionary heart propels the Church to take action through the strategic method of church planting. God has promised to dwell among His people, and church planting provides more opportunities to actualize God's redemptive presence. Because living things grow through multiplying their seed, God calls the Church to multiply by planting more churches. Finally, God blesses and empowers the Church to multiply, and He blesses the Church when it does multiply.

Church planting out of obedience to the Lordship of Christ and His mission means more people experience reconciliation with God through Christ, more disciples are made, and more of God's transforming presence comes to bear among His lost creation.

Today, around the world, God strategically uses church planting to bring in an historic harvest of souls. Likewise, God has called the Assemblies of God and its churches to a great church planting initiative. As the Church uses God's blessings to plant more new churches, it can expect increased missional effectiveness, God's blessings, and God's hand upon it.

CHAPTER 3: GENERAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

From its inception the Assemblies of God (AG) purposed to fulfill the Great

Commission. Multiple leaders and church organizations proposed to do this by forming

the AG in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1914. They singled out two biblical methods to

fulfill God's mission: planting new churches in the United States and sending out foreign

missionaries.[1] Missions has served as the heartbeat of the AG, both through church

planting at home and sending out missionaries to foreign soil.

This chapter focuses on five topics from current literature that undergird the

strategic importance of church planting to increase missional effectiveness: (1) The

Missional Church, (2) The Value and Priority of Church Planting, (3) Context:

Understanding the Harvest Field, (4) Edge Effect and Church Planting, and (5)

Multiplication: Churches Planting Churches.

The Church in North America, and particularly the AG, faces increasing hurdles

to accomplish its mission. Some of those hurdles stem from the rapidly changing world, a

commitment to outdated strategies, and the organizational realities as both leadership and

church organizations age. However, vigorous church planting will enable the Church to

overcome these current hurdles to mission.

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[1] Constitution and By-Laws of the Assemblies of God, adopted September 16–22, 1927.

Despite the hurdles the Church faces, Jesus' call and commission remain the same. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His Church, commanding it to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Matt. 28:19). He called the people of His Church to be His witnesses in the world (Acts 1:8). Undoubtedly, Jesus understood the hurdles His Church would face, but He also proclaimed in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."[2] The record of the New Testament Church and the record of church history to date show that when a missional church carries the gospel to the ends of the earth, God uses those actions to plant and establish His Kingdom. In fact, today Christianity comprises 2.18 billion people. Data from the Pew Research Center reveals Christianity is the largest religious group in the world: "Taken as a whole … Christians are by far the world's largest religious group. Muslims, the second-largest group, make up a little less than a quarter of the world's population, according to previous studies by the Pew Forum."[3]

As the leadership and constituents of the AG navigate into the future, several key values will serve as an unfailing guide. First, in spite of enormous hurdles, Jesus continues to build His worldwide Church; no group or nation can claim to be at the center of what God is doing. Second, God historically chooses to use a mission-focused church led by those with prayerful, broken hearts focused on fulfilling the Great Commission. Dan Kimball describes crucial leadership qualities for the emerging Church:

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[2] All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from the New American Standard Bible, 1995.

[3] "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," Pew Research Center, accessed February 7, 2014, http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf, 9-11.

> Leadership in the emerging church is no longer about focusing on strategies, core values, mission statements, or church growth principles. It is about leaders first becoming disciples of Jesus with prayerful, missional hearts that are broken for the emerging culture. All the rest will flow from this, not the other way around.[4]

Third, God chooses to use church planting as a foundational method to expand His Kingdom. Elmer L. Towns powerfully connects the strategic role of church planting to world evangelism: "The Great Commission implies that church planting is the primary method to evangelize the world. To reach lost people in every culture of the world, a church must be established in every culture to communicate the gospel and nurture those who are saved."[5]

Church planting is a strategic method essential to the well-being and missional vitality of the Church. The degree to which the constituents of an organization value church planting determines its role in the organization's future. A high value of church planting will ensure the Church steps into its future with great confidence and effectiveness.

The Missional Church

Any discussion concerning the missional effectiveness of the Church must begin with understanding the missional church. Throughout Scripture God has chosen one people to call His people, and He has committed to work through them to accomplish His unique purposes. Concerning why the church exists, Christopher J. H. Wright succinctly states, "it is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church;

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[4] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 248.

[5] Elmer L. Towns, "The Great Commission and Church Planting," in *Church Growth: State of the Art*, ed. C. Peter Wagner, Elmer L. Towns, and Win Arn (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1986), 10.

the church was made for mission-God's mission."[6] God works everywhere, all the time, but God chooses uniquely the missional church to accomplish His redemptive purposes. It reflects His heart for a lost world by faithful witness and proclamation. God has no "Plan B."

The Missional Church Explains God

A missional church commits itself to following Jesus' example. Jesus came to earth to explain God. In John 1:14 and 1:18c, John declares that Jesus "became flesh, and tabernacled among us" and that "He has explained [God]." Jesus' works matched His words. A faithful incarnational witness offers a clear explanation of God. Being incarnational witnesses means doing the works of Jesus in such a way that His words, and the proclamation of the gospel, have validity. Darrell Guder suggests that "a fundamental commitment to incarnational witness demonstrates congruence between the gospel it proclaims and the way its goes about its work."[7]

To explain God well, the Church must be intentional so it does not simply mirror the beliefs of the world or culture in which it lives. This is not an easy task, as the values of the world have often shaped the values of the church, rather than vice versa. Alan R. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren incisively demonstrate how this reality plays out in Western culture:

> The focus has been on our rights, our needs, our freedom to choose as we please, our freedom to cut and run whenever we get bored or it gets sticky and tough and things aren't working quite the way we expect. It is assumed that the appropriate

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[6] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God, Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 62.

[7] Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 202.

means of living in a tolerant and open society is to create an environment that does not step on or over any specific set of personal rights, feelings, or desires.[8]

In the 1980s, Lesslie Newbigin prophetically warned the Church that "we must reject the invitation to live in a society where everything is subjective and relative, a society which has abandoned the belief that truth can be known and has settled for a purely subjective view of the truth—'truth for you' but not truth for all."[9] A church misses the mark when it is so seeker sensitive that it strips the gospel of its power and domesticates the power of a living God to serve its own agenda.

The world does not accept the Church as an authoritative source for life's answers. Consequently, the world demands the Church live out its message rather than simply declare it. Explaining God requires a shift from declaring truth to understanding the Church as a sign, witness, and foretaste of God's plan for the world. This requires the Church to move away from explaining itself and move toward explaining God.

This shift must occur both within a church and, more importantly, through a church to the community and neighborhoods surrounding it. The Church must not only think outside the box but act outside the box. As Newbigin perceptively points out, "that will only happen when congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as a sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society."[10] This

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[8] Alan R. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 71.

[9] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 244.

[10] Ibid., 223.

kind of powerful witness causes its neighbors to see God in action through the lives of a

powerful church community; such a church loves people like God loves people.

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The Missional Church Is a Learning
and Adapting Church

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God calls the Church on a journey similar to navigating a river. Roxburgh and

Boren outline the three powerful currents that shape and direct that river: "*mystery,*

memory, and misson"[11]—a mystery because God sovereignly chose the Church to serve

as the indwelling of His presence in the world, a memory because of the vital necessity

for God's people to remember the story of where they came from, and a mission because

God calls the Church into existence for the sake of the world. However, even if the

Church recognizes the currents of mystery, memory, and mission, it does not suffice. The

other changing currents of the river demand the Church learn and adapt to navigate new

opportunities the Spirit presents.

A crucial part of learning purposes to understand how the Church arrived at its

present waypoint. Os Guiness insightfully writes of Modernity's impact on the Church:

> No persecutor or foe of in two thousand years has wreaked such havoc on the church as has modernity … *The Christian church contributed to the rise of the modern world; the modern world, in turn, has undermined the Christian church. Thus, to the degree that the church enters, engages and employs the modern world uncritically, the church becomes her own gravedigger.*[12]

The Church's future depends upon recognizing how and why it arrived at this point.

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[11] Roxburgh and Boren, 39.

[12] Os Guiness, "Mission Modernity: Seven Checkpoints on Mission in the Modern World," in *Mission as Transformation*, ed. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1999), 292.

Organizations that have survived shifting currents can offer valuable insight. M. Rex Miller distills several lessons from companies that adapted to make the necessary shifts:

> Companies that prospered during times of economic, social, and technological restructuring had four crucial elements: 1. They externally integrated into the social and economic context of times, 2. Each had a cohesive identity that gave it the ability to withstand the traumas of shifting circumstances, 3. They were risk takers; they understood how to take the kind of risks that allowed them to adapt— they were particularly tolerant of activities on the margin, 4. They were financially conservative and maintained the kind of cash reserves that gave them flexibility and independence of action.[13]

Likewise, the Church must embrace adaptability to remain a viable witness.

Peter demonstrated spiritual adaptability when the Spirit called him to the house of Cornelius—a Gentile—in Acts 10. Peter obeyed and then reported his experiences to the elders of the Jerusalem church—urging that God was also calling the Gentiles. Because of his stature and passionate persuasiveness, the elders agreed to receive his recommendation. By its willingness to adapt, the Jerusalem church navigated the shifting tides of the Spirit's work in the Gentile world. Their response to one Gentile paved the way for their further generosity and care for the Gentile world and for the missionary expansion of the gospel to the Gentiles through the church of Antioch, as chronicled in Acts 11. Without the willingness to adapt and learn, the Church would have missed the Spirit's new initiative.

The Church must operate with a new imagination and in new ways or lose its effectiveness. Harvie M. Conn's research on why city churches die has led him to conclude, "churches tend to resist change while their communities are drastically

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[13] M. Rex Miller, *Millennium Matrix* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2004), xv.

changing. They become so out of step with their communities that before long they essentially lose the ability to attract nearby residents."[14] Missional adaptability, however, requires the Church to begin with a different set of questions. Roxburgh and Boren believe that "a missional understanding moves in a different direction, beginning with questions about the gospel and the context and then moving to the church so that the shape and life of the latter comes out of the interactions of the first two."[15] When established churches begin with new questions, it often means unwanted risk; however, the nature of church plants enables them to begin with new questions and find current answers for missional effectiveness.

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The Missional Church is a Spirit-empowered,
Multiplying Church

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Jesus has promised to build His Church—a living organism not a structure. An organism, to survive, receives feedback from its environment and multiplies itself to perpetuate its own kind. This unique characteristic of the missional church sets it apart from churches that choose not to adapt and multiply.

A missional church must look to its builder, Jesus Christ, for empowerment and sustenance. In Acts 1:8 Jesus promised His followers they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them so they could be His witnesses in all the world. Faithful witnesses need the continuous empowerment of the Spirit. To be missional means to be Spirit-filled and empowered; powerless missionality does not work. The fruit and life of a Spirit-filled church manifests in several ways, all crucial to its mission.

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[14] Harvie M. Conn, *Planting and Growing Urban Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 41.

[15] Roxburgh and Boren, 72.

The missional church requires Christians to operate as part of the priesthood of all believers, but in the attractional church a staff leads, and they see people as volunteers to help with ministry, to fill up the pews, and to give offerings. Citing the historical example of Pentecostal churches, Eric Patterson and Edmund Rybarczyk correctly note,

> Pentecostalism's populist character, … "the priesthood of all believers" is not only intellectually affirmed, but intentionally and practically implemented. [Its conviction is] that all believers are given spiritual gifts for both the edification of the church and cooperation with the Spirit of God in establishing the Kingdom of God … [It is] a biblically and theologically based impetus that seeks to involve each believer in the life and work of the church."[16]

The priesthood of all believers goes into the world with the responsibility to connect people to God and to one another. God calls each member of His church, not just paid staff, to worship, initiate, connect people to God, and participate in His mighty work with Kingdom imagination and power.

A missional church is naturally viral and flows into apostolic function. It affects those within the church with the mission of God to go outside the church and establish His presence. Missionary and author Alan R. Johnson argues that this apostolic function does the work the Apostles did, proclaiming the Kingdom, bearing witness to Jesus, and planting churches. It has Spirit-led ministry with power, signs, and wonders, and cares for the weak and experiences suffering for doing these things.[17] Apostolic function multiplies God's presence everywhere by participating with God's activities beyond the church.

Alan Hirsch observes the preoccupation of churches with improving what they have always done; for too long the church has contented itself with pursuing the right

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[16] Eric Patterson and Edmund Rybarczyk, *The Future of Pentecostalism in the United States* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 2.

[17] Alan R. Johnson, *Apostolic Function* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 62-67.

ministry mix, along with fulfilling its sacerdotal functions—teaching, preaching, caring, and baptizing—to maintain what exists and to attract new people.[18] The Spirit-filled nature of a missional church infects its members to fulfill the Great Commission by practicing the presence of Jesus and doing His works wherever He calls them.

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The Missional Church Continually
Evaluates Itself

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Organizations that practice the discipline of ongoing evaluation guard themselves from complacency, ineffectiveness, and straying from their mission. They position themselves to better navigate the changing tides and to succeed. The missional church practices the discipline of evaluating itself against the demands of Christ and Scripture, against its willingness to engage with and change with its surrounding culture, and ultimately in light of the Great Commission. Roxburgh and Boren affirm the necessity for ongoing evaluation:

> The life of the church must be changed through renewed dialogue with Scripture and by letting Scripture speak to us through a serious dialogue with the cultural context. This is a process we call "engaging the context," in which people of a congregation recognize the changing character of life and the need to reenter the particularity of their neighborhoods and communities so that the gospel can become alive in that situation.[19]

Guder gives a crucial list of markers by which a church can evaluate itself:

> 1. Its fundamental commitment is to incarnational witness. 2. It demonstrates congruence between the gospel it proclaims and the way it goes about its work. 3.It intentionally confronts its conformities. 4. It will be open to the continuous conversion of the church.[20]

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[18] Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways, Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 42-44.

[19] Roxburgh and Boren, 85.

[20] Guder, 202.

As the missional Church navigates a stream with ever-changing currents, only by engaging in ongoing courageous evaluation and risk-taking for the Master can the Church thrive. More importantly, the results must contribute to the Church's ongoing conversion. Church planting embodies many of the characteristics that lend themselves to increased missionality. As the AG embraces new church plants, their missional characteristics serve to continue the AG's solid record of missional effectiveness.

The Value and Priority of Church Planting

Church Planting Increases
Missional Effectiveness

The single most important strategy for increasing the missional effectiveness of the Church and the AG in particular is the intentional planting of new, vibrant, multiplying churches. Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City and eminent voice for church planting, elaborates:

> The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for the 1) the numerical growth of the Body of Christ in any city, and 2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else—not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes—will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting. This is an eyebrow raising statement. But to those who have done any study at all, it is not even controversial.[21]

The passionate spiritual vision and vitality that encourage and facilitate new churches express Jesus' heart as found in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20. The heart of Jesus builds all of His Kingdom and leaves nothing behind. Thus the old adage, "The water level that raises one boat also raises all boats," holds true in this

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[21] Tim Keller, *Why to Plant Churches* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2002), 1-2.

context. Church planting's missional aim brings missional effectiveness not only to new churches but also to whomever and whatever embraces it. The focus, resources, and energies dedicated to church planting in any given community, whether a local congregation or overseeing denominational organization, has a direct bearing on the missional effectiveness of all churches in that community.

C. Peter Wagner, missiologist, missionary, and church growth expert, observes that "as the number of individuals who are evangelized increases, so also must the number of churches and the variety of churches … . In any given geographical area, the Christian community will grow or decline according to the degree of effort given to planting new churches."[22] A community needs established congregations, but it also needs new churches to increase more effectively the redemptive presence of the Church.

Worldwide, an increasing number of people distance themselves from the Church by choice or by life and culture. Church plants help bridge that divide because they more easily cross cultural boundaries than established churches and plant new communities of believers. As David J. Hesselgrave, renowned cross-cultural missionary and missiologist, points out, 40 percent of the world's population

> are culturally distant non-Christians. These people may or may not be far removed from active Christians geographically. But they are far removed linguistically, socially, economically, and culturally. In no way can they be expected to come into existing congregations. New churches must be planted among them.[23]

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[22] C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1990), 12.

[23] David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 30.

Hesselgrave further reinforces this idea, noting that eminent missiologist Ralph Winter "emphasized that the church's highest priority today must be to cross cultural boundaries in order to win people to Christ and establish communities of Christians."[24] Planting a church establishes a new community of Christians.

Because of the missional nature of new churches and their ability to cross cultural boundaries and adapt methods to the culture, church plants serve as an indispensable part of fulfilling the Great Commission. Hesselgrave lays out in no uncertain terms the reason established churches must plant and value new churches: "so intimate is the relationship between gospel proclamation and church planting that they cannot be divorced without doing violence to the mission of the church."[25]

Church planting increases missional effectiveness because new churches tend to act like missionaries in a new culture. They are "thinking and acting like missionaries. They understand their culture, lead biblically faithful and culturally relevant churches, and think in missionary ways about their contexts."[26] Healthy new churches begin out of a missional call from God to reach their communities, and they tend to reach effectively those not in existing churches.

Although most church plants lack the resources, especially the monetary resources, of established churches, they possess other, indispensable, if intangible, resources, such as a missional urgency, new people full of energy, vision, and the capacity to see the culture with a new set of eyes. The sense of urgency to be a church on

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[24] Ibid, 29.

[25] Ibid, 27.

[26] Kimball, 56.

a mission with Jesus presents a powerful new redemptive presence in the community.

Wagner concludes that the things new churches have in abundance attract the de-churched or the unreached: "New churches on old ground tend to have those things that attract many that are not reached or dechurched."[27]

Church planting increases missional effectiveness because at its heart it is apostolic in function. From its earliest days, apostolic function lay at the root of the AG. The great Pentecostal outpourings of the early twentieth century were apostolic in nature: powerful manifestations of God's power to cast out demons, do great exploits for God, heal the sick, and call men and women to leave all to take a compelling gospel to the ends of the earth. These qualities marked the earliest, potent days of Pentecost. Johnson sets forth the necessity of this function for missional effectiveness:

> Apostolic function as missionary identity takes on paradigmatic status because it acts as a master rubric for all that we do. It covers why we do missions (for the sake of His name), where we do it (where Christ is not known), what we do (proclaim Christ and plant churches that live under God's rule), and how we do it (by the leading and power of the Spirit, with signs and wonders confirming the Word).[28]

Church planting embodies what it means to operate with apostolic function.

The Church must value apostolic function if it desires to renew itself continually and remain effective in its mission, as Johnson affirms, explaining that "apostolic function is a heuristic that defines for us what, why, and how we work."[29] An important term, *Merriam-Webster* defines "heuristic" as "involving or serving as an aid to learning, discovery, or problem-solving by experimental and especially trial-and-error methods …

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[27] Wagner, 20.

[28] Johnson, 77.

[29] Ibid.

[and] of or relating to exploratory problem-solving techniques that utilize self-educating techniques (as the evaluation of feedback) to improve."[30] Because of its apostolic nature and service on the front lines of culture, church planting provides an invaluable heuristic for the Church for missional learning, discovery, problem solving, and new techniques to serve as more powerful witnesses of Christ and the gospel.

Church planting increases missional effectiveness because it attracts the spiritual entrepreneurs and those with an apostolic spirit, which fuels much of today's innovative and missional church growth. This fact has tremendous implications for God's Kingdom and for a denomination.

For numerous reasons, church plants tend to present quickly new spiritual and ministry opportunities to attendees. Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird observe that a benefit of being new and smaller than large, existing congregations is that "'big' produces more consumers, but 'small' produces more contributors."[31] Many find this open-heart and open-door attitude a refreshing alternative to more established churches. This type of attitude forms fertile soil for quickly placing newcomers into service and values their new set of eyes to innovate and advance the gospel; additionally, the church can quickly train eager newcomers for leadership. New people bring new energy.

Along with the major impact of church planting, it also offers many valuable secondary benefits. For instance, new churches generally have an affect on established churches. Keller explains their affect: "new churches bring new ideas to the whole Body. New churches are one of the best ways to surface creative, strong leaders for the whole

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[30] *Meririam-Webster*, s.v. "heuristic," accessed May 26, 2014, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heuristic.

[31] Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, *Viral Churches* (San Fransico: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 144.

Body. New churches challenge other churches to self-examination. [And] New churches may be an 'evangelistic feeder' for a whole community."[32]

Another overlooked benefit is the low cost of new churches. Fully staffed churches require large amounts of resources to maintain themselves and move forward. However, because their strong vision characteristically attracts willing volunteers, new churches require far fewer resources to start. In other words, ministry often costs less in a new church than in an established one.

One final, crucial, but often overlooked benefit of new churches has to do with the next generation of believers. In *Finding Common Ground*, author Tim Downs observes that preceding generations of churches adapted to their culture to sow the gospel, resulting in a harvest for the next generation. Downs comments on the necessity of existing churches to adapt to and sow into their surroundings, pointing out that "we are responsible to sow or the next generation will have nothing to reap."[33] New churches find it much easier to adapt than established ones. For various reasons, older churches often view adaptation as too risky, not worth it, or simply out of reach; a new church, however, often prefers adaptation and views it as low-risk. This enables a new church to plant gospel seeds for the next generation to harvest. Not only do new church plants plow up fallow ground, they plant many different seeds, ensuring an ongoing harvest.

The Worldwide Impact of Church Planting

A dramatic change has moved the center of Christianity from Europe to a growing Christianity with no geographic center. In 1910 Europe comprised 66.3 percent of

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[32] Keller, *Why to Plant Churches,* 4.

[33] Tim Downs, *Finding Common Ground* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 18.

Christians, but today no single center exists, with 74 percent of the world's Christians living outside of Europe. The Pew Research Center's study explains, from its findings, that "Christians are also geographically widespread—so far-flung, in fact, that no single continent or region can indisputably claim to be the center of global Christianity."[34]

Around the world, wherever the church grows at a rapid rate, church planting fuels that growth. Author and missiologist David Garrison, who has served as a leader on the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board, believes that

> without exaggeration we can say that Church Planting Movements are the *most effective means in the world today for drawing lost millions into saving, disciple-building relationships with Christ.* That may appear to be an ambitious claim, but it is an accurate one, and an honest description of how God is winning a lost world.[35]

Church plants that are Pentecostal/Charismatic in their piety contribute most of the growth, regardless of their denominational affiliation.[36]

Although Christianity is growing remarkably in many parts of the globe, in the United States, over the last thirty years, the Church has effectively plateaued. Many consider America a Christian nation, but George C. Hunter points out the facts paint a more sobering picture: "the U.S. is now the 5th largest mission field in the Western Hemisphere and on earth."[37] The American church cannot afford to ignore the centrality

[34] "Global Christianity," Pew Research Center, 9.

[35] David Garrison, *Church Planting Movement: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 8.

[36] David Householder, "10 Things You Didn't Know about Pentecostals," accessed June 28, 2014, http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/44242-10-things-you-didn-t-know-about-pentecostals.

[37] George C. Hunter, *The Apostolic Congregation, Church Growth Reconceived for A New Generation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 10.

of church planting as a strategic method for growing and establishing God's Kingdom at home.[38]

*Current Impact of Church Planting
in the U.S. Assemblies of God*

The latest statistics of the AG in the United States reveal the huge impact of church planting; of all AG churches currently open, 13 percent were planted in the past five years, between 2009 and 2013.[39] Additionally, new AG church plants missionally lead the way in salvations and Holy Spirit baptisms per one hundred attendees.[40] Without church planting, the total number of AG churches would be 11,536, the same as in 1991, and missional effectiveness expressed in number of salvations, water baptisms, Holy Spirit baptisms, and attendees would be highly incapacitated.[41]

The perception of church planting has shifted dramatically; not too long ago it was seen as something to avoid, but now it is "cool" to plant a church. Additionally, many of the young and gifted church leaders, rather than seeking a staff position, now turn to church planting to establish churches creatively to better reach the harvest. Increasingly, established churches view planting satellite churches as a strategic way to grow their Great Commission effectiveness. The momentum for church planting has

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[38] See Appendix N, "Reasons Why We Plant New Churches."

[39] General Secretary's Office, Statistics, "U.S. AG Churches Opened and Closed 1965-2013," accessed January 3, 2014, http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/AG.org%20TOP/AG%20Statistical%20Reports/2013/ChuOpCl2013.pdf.

[40] AG Statistician's Office, October 2013.

[41] General Secretary's Office, Statistics, "U.S. AG Churches Opened and Closed 1965-2013."

shifted from one-of-a-kind success stories to many churches planting and reaping

exponential results.

<center>Lessons from History</center>

American Church History Lessons

A look at the history of the American church presents valuable lessons

demonstrating how important missional churches and church planting were to the

churching of America. Lyle Schaller, consummate American churchman, author, and

church growth expert, makes this provocative statement connecting the role of church

planting to the spiritual vitality of a denomination: "The best indicator of the health of a

church organization is the number of new churches it plants each year."[42] He goes on to

note that "every American church movement was formed with two main objectives: one

was the planting of churches in America and the other was to send out missionaries to

foreign lands. Whenever a denomination moves away from one or the other objective it is

the beginning of the end."[43] The current church planting emphasis by so many U.S.

church organizations stems from the realization that planting new churches serves as a

strategic key to a viable future characterized by missional vitality.

In their seminal work, *The Churching of America*, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark

present valuable insights to the specific components necessary for missional vitality.

They detail the churching of America with solid research to show that

> On the eve of the Revolution only about 17 percent of Americans were churched.
> By the start of the Civil War this proportion had risen dramatically, to 37 percent.
> … by 1906 slightly more that half of the U.S. population was churched.

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[42] Lyle Schaller, interviewed by Paul Drost, Wheaton, IL, December 2002.

[43] Ibid.

Adherence rates reached 56 percent by 1926. Since then the rate has been rather stable although inching upwards. By 1980 church adherence was about 62 percent.[44]

Finke and Stark report their findings on the remarkable expansion of the Methodists and Baptists, which they term the "upstarts." The vigorous establishment of new churches characterized the upstarts and flowed out of their missional vitality.

Finke and Stark's findings reveal several values that caused growth and the eventual churching of America.[45] They quote C. C. Goss's analysis of what contributed to the rapid growth of the Methodist upstarts,[46] concluding,

1. Its Mode of Preaching: "As a rule, a Methodist addresses himself directly to the heart, while many others appeal to the intellect … Methodist preachers never converted the pulpit into a professor's chair; but with earnestness have urged and beseeched men to flee the wrath to come.[47]
2. A Self Sacrificing Spirit of Ministry
3. A System of Free Churches where there was no charge for seats
4. Frequent Revivals
5. Lay Efforts: "The Methodist Episcopal Church is not a spiritual lounging place, in which members can simply take comfort, it is not a spiritual restaurant, where persons enter to feast upon the good things of the kingdom; but it is a spiritual workshop, where persons who enter are expected to work for Christ."[48]
6. Missionary Spirit: "While the mission of some other churches may be to settle, the peculiar prerogative of the Methodist Episcopal Church is to push

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[44] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 12.

[45] Ibid., 113-116.

[46] C. C. Goss, *Statistical History of the First Century of American Methodism* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1866), 162-186.

[47] Finke and Stark, 113.

[48] Ibid., 115.

out into destitute regions, to break new ground, to urge upon the masses generally the saving truths of the Gospel."[49]

7. Doctrine of Sanctification: "It is this spiritual essence that satisfied the spiritual nature, for which thousands are hungering and thirsting."[50]

Finke and Stark submit that religion's deregulation led to "a constant stream of new innovations" and note that the upstarts often paved the way:

> Throughout American history we will find that the upstarts are a source of innovations in music, communication, religious education, preaching, revival and organizational strategies … . The new freedoms unleashed entrepreneurial religions, churches and clergy that sought new ways of appealing to the people. The flurry of new techniques, fueled by the power of their religious beliefs, resulted in the churching of America.[51]

The contributions of church plants, seen by many as upstarts, played a crucial role in the ongoing missional vitality of the American church in general. Today, the strategic role of church planting in increasing missional effectiveness has not changed.

Finally, Finke and Stark highlight the sobering distinctions between the upstarts and the established religious organizations of their day:

> How did the upstart sects win America? Partly by default. As free market conditions increasingly prevailed in the religious economy, the old mainline denominations failed to meet the competitive challenges and eventually abandoned the marketplace to the upstarts.

> Comfortable, well-paid mainline clergy rarely decided to go West and had no taste for ministering to the ignobile vulgus. They earned more esteem from publishing their sermons in books than from bellowing them to multitudes in open fields.

> Moreover, clergy accustomed to gentlemen's agreements limiting competition and who thought good manners forbade recruiting from a colleague's flock were ill-equipped to hold their own in a free market. In contrast, when Baptists and

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid, 116.

[51] Ibid, 12.

Methodists collided in pursuit of flocks no holds were barred and no quarter was asked or given.[52]

Lessons from American church history show church planting's crucial role in establishing new Kingdom frontiers and drawing people through a passionate message and devotion to Jesus. The missional factors, including church planting, which caused the remarkable churching of America, have not changed and remain potent.

Lessons from the History of the Assemblies of God

From its beginning, church planting has held a vital role in the history of the AG. Joshua R. Zeifle confirms this, noting that

> for almost a century, the Assemblies of God has been a leader in church planting. Early Pentecostals were visionaries and entrepreneurs, buoyed by a vision to save the world and anchored by a deep commitment to Christ and God's Word. Evangelists and pastors in the early 20th century traversed America, holding gospel services in tents, brush arbors, storefront buildings, rented churches and homes. These rugged pioneers gathered converts, organized churches and impacted entire communities.[53]

Because of the deep impact of church planting, the Assemblies has historically responded with initiatives, ministries, structures, and resources to enable the furtherance of church planting.[54]

The viral nature of Pentecost, the priesthood of believers, and missional urgency all combined to cause the remarkable growth and expansion of the AG's early years, resulting in clarity of purpose, a clear identity as God's chosen, and a realization that with

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[52] Ibid., 112.

[53] Joshua R. Ziefle, "Missionary Church Planters and Developers: An Entrepreneurial Heritage," *AG Heritage Magazine*, January 1, 2013, 26.

[54] See Appendix A, "Assemblies of God Responses and Initiatives to Increase Number of New Churches."

the Spirit's help it was possible to take the gospel to the ends of the earth for the glory of

God. Spirit-empowered workers seized the moment to plant churches that took advantage

of spiritual and socio-demographic edge effects.

Table 1 shows the robust vitality of the AG Movement, as evidenced by the

planting of new churches.

Table 1: AG Number of New Churches Added Years 1914–2014[55]

1914—300 churches	
1921—700	3,648 added 621% growth
1941—4,348	
1961—8,141	3,793 added 185% growth
1980—9,562	1,441 added 17.7% growth
1999—12,000	2,438 added 25.5% growth
2014—12,750	750 added 6.25% growth

Statistics show the AG's growth fitting the pattern of the Sigmoidal curve. The

first forty years plotted a powerful and robust time of growth, while the next forty years

show a slow downturn in growth and the inevitable plateauing of growth in the AG. A

remarkable 621 percent growth rate occurred 1921-1941, but at the current rate of

growth, using the Rule of 72, it will take 232 years to double the present number of

churches.[56] The planting of new churches comes out of a strong missional urgency and

correspondingly renews the missional urgency of its denomination and constituents.

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[55] Paul Drost, Compiled from AG Archives and History of Home Missions while National Director of Church Planting, 1999–October 2005 and 2009–2014 General Secretary's Report.

[56] Rule of 72 divides 72 by the rate of growth to determine the number of years it takes to double the original number. Investopedia, s.v. "Rule of 72," accessed August 30, 2014, http://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/ruleof72.asp.

Church planting serves both as a bellwether for the future and as a barometer for the

present missional urgency—or lack thereof.

Church planting has had a significant role in the establishments of the AG as a

major force for Christianity in the United States and around the world. Wagner attributes

the growth of the AG in large part to church planting:

> year after year one of the fastest growing denominations in the United States has
> been the AG. They have constantly held church planting high … . Their message?
> "New congregations become part of the vanguard, God's elite task force, which
> marches forward in advance in world conquest for Christ."[57]

For the last one hundred years, the new church plants in the AG have been a major reason

for its growth and for its strong missional effectiveness.

Hesselgrave succinctly summarizes the value and importance of church planting:

"The New Testament makes it abundantly clear that, though both our Jerusalem and the

uttermost parts are included in the Great Commission, the call to some to bear the gospel

to and build the church on the spiritual frontiers is a major part of the divine strategy."[58]

These spiritual frontiers go beyond geography, to include such demographic frontiers as

economic and social spheres, along with age, language, culture, and education. As the

Church heads into the future, its ability to navigate several crucial factors will determine

whether it will rise to the challenge it faces. History clearly demonstrates that church

planting is a strategic, biblical method for fulfilling the Great Commission, and it

continues to play an essential role in the missional effectiveness of the Church.[59]

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[57] Wagner, 14.

[58] Hesselgrave, 66.

[59] See Appendix P, "Executive Presbyters' Response to Church Planting Report."

Context: Understanding the Harvest Field

Navigating the future God has for His Church requires it to know and understand where it is. Further, the Church needs to understand how it got to where it is and what roads to take to realize God's preferred future. The Church resides at a crossroads. The accepted roadmaps of yesteryear will no longer suffice for navigation. Just as navigation has largely moved from printed maps to a Global Positioning System (GPS), so the church faces challenges that require continual updating in order to increase missional effectiveness.

Postmodernism and Change

Today the Church lives in a world of exponential change affecting the way people think and interact with one another. Miller aptly describes the exponential changes in the world today, explaining that "our new world, the digital world, is a world of interconnection, complexity, acceleration, intangibility, convergence, immediacy, and unpredictability."[60] In the last few years, the embrace of postmodernism in the United States has created fertile ground for rapid and unpredictable societal change.

Postmodernism, particularly with its value on pluralism, has radically altered what society thinks, promotes, and permits. Downs succinctly states how pluralism affects beliefs, "Pluralism is the belief that no single explanation or view of reality can account for all the phenomena of life."[61] What a majority of Americans held as societal taboos just a few short years ago has become a commonly accepted American way of life. Some of these sweeping changes include the legalization of same sex marriage, nationalized

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[60] Miller, 3-8.

[61] Downs, 26.

health care reform, legalization of marijuana use, the rejection of God's Word as an

honored source of truth, and an increasing marginalization of the Church. These changes

profoundly affect how the Church carries out its business.

Stanley J. Grenz admonishes the church to consider the impact of this shift:

The shift from the familiar territory of modernity to the unchartered terrain of postmodernity has grave implications for those who seek to live as Christ's disciples in the new context. We must think through the ramifications of the phenomenal changes occurring in Western society for our understanding of the Christian faith and our presentation of the gospel to the next generation.[62]

How the Church reacts to change affects its future. For the Church, the

unsettledness of a changing world creates fertile ground for two options, one of which is

deadly and the other of which produces new life. For many, the unsettledness and deep

unrest strengthens their call to institutionalize the church, hang on to the past, resist

change, or defend familiar territory. Ed Stetzer, however, warns that "the

institutionalizing of the church is essentially its immunization to an evangelistic

impulse,"[63] thereby threatening the mission of the Church. Without an evangelistic

impulse, the Church faces a grim future.

But for those who adopt a missional mindset, the changing world also presents

unprecedented opportunities for increasing God's Kingdom on earth. The research

findings of Stetzer and Dodson on missional churches underscore the need to prioritize a

missional response to the changing world:

Missional leaders and churches are ones that are thinking and acting like missionaries. They understand their culture, lead biblically faithful and culturally relevant churches, and think in missionary ways about their contexts. The end result may be traditional, contemporary, emerging, ethnic, or some other approach

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[62] Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 162.

[63] Stetzer and Bird, 171.

… . What they have in common is not their style, but their mission … . They started to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and think and act like missionaries.[64]

This presents good news for the leadership, churches, and constituents of the AG; the past is not an enemy but rather a reliable teacher for the future. Miller reminds the Church that the "challenge in moving forward is not to leave the past behind, but to reclaim it and take its best gifts in reframing the future."[65] Adopting the missional mindset of the formative years of the AG paves the road for a future of increased missional effectiveness.

Daniel H. Pink observes that change and response to it must interconnect:

We are moving from an economy and a society built on the logical, linear, computer-like capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathetic, big picture capabilities of what's rising in its place, the Conceptual Age. It is animated by a new thinking and a new approach to life that prizes the aptitudes of high touch and high concept.[66]

Pink further notes that "the capabilities we once disdained or thought frivolous—the … qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning—increasingly will determine who flourishes and who flounders … [For organizations and individuals to succeed, this will] now require a whole new mind."[67] The values Pink espouses motivate spiritual entrepreneurs, or church planters, to dream big dreams and plant new churches to fulfill the Great Commission more effectively.

Adapting to change by adopting new methods to maximize the possibilities of the day holds great potential for the Church. The Church, however, can only accomplish this

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[64] Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville, TN: B & H, 2007), 56.

[65] Miller, 221.

[66] Daniel H. Pink, *A Whole New Mind* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 2.

[67] Ibid., 3.

if it purposes to understand its context by listening and moving quickly to respond accordingly. Business scholars Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens show how evaluative listening can lead to an appropriate response: "The salesman's listening becomes an on-the-spot form of customer research that can immediately be put to work in formulating a sales talk."[68] This idea effectively sums up how the witnesses of Jesus must attune to their world in order to tailor their proclamation and witness to the hearers' hearts, rather than simply proclaim gospel propositions regardless of where the hearer is in life.

The Effects of Change and the Church

Along with the sweeping societal changes in America, research shows the Church is not faring well. Author and researcher Thom S. Rainer understands the plight of the Church: "Unchurched persons in North America remain generally untouched by this evangelical subculture and abide in darkness because the evangelical subculture is not providing culturally relevant gospel witness."[69] A 2005 study by sociologists C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler, known for their scholarly research concerning the Church, backs up Rainer's findings. Their report reveals that the actual number of people worshipping each week is closer to 52 million people instead of the pollster-reported 132 million (40 percent):

> We knew that over the past 30 to 40 years, denominations had increasingly reported a decline in their numbers … . Even a still-growing denomination like the Southern Baptist Convention had reported slowed growth. Most of the

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[68] Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens, "Listening to People," in *Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 17.

[69] Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 10.

mainline denominations were all reporting a net loss over the past 30 years. And at the same time, the Gallup polls had remained stable. It didn't make sense.[70]

In *The American Church in Crisis,* an extensive work on the state of the American church, researcher and author David T. Olson researched 100,000 churches in America. His research uncovered remarkable data, leading him to well-founded conclusions about the American church and about what it takes to be missionally effective. For instance, he found "no growth in church attendance since 1990, and since 1990 in no single state did church attendance keep up with population growth."[71] He also discovered that "the number of people actually attending church on a weekly basis is far lower than commonly thought."[72] According to Olson's conclusion, "Often the church has chosen not to rethink but retreat."[73]

Olson's research also revealed 104 as the average age of mainline churches and sixty-four as the average age of evangelical churches.[74] The age of a church, in almost all cases, has a direct bearing on its missional effectiveness. Bruce McNichol describes the interconnectedness of church age and missional vitality:

> Older churches lose their missional effectiveness. In general churches typically plateau in attendance by their 15th year, and by about their thirty fifth year they begin having trouble replacing the members they lose. Plus the more established a church is, the older the average age of both its pastor and its people, often far older than the surrounding community—this is one more obstacle to evangelism.

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[70] Rebecca Barnes and Linda Lowery, "7 Startling Facts: An Up Close Look at Church Attendance in America," Churchleaders.com, accessed February 28, 2014, http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/139575-7-startling-facts-an-up-close-look-at-church-attendance-in-america.html.

[71] David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 36-37.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 169.

[74] Ibid., 85.

> The fruit of conversions follows a similar pattern: among evangelical churches, those under three years old will win ten people to Christ per year for every hundred members. Those three to fifteen years old will win five people per year for every hundred members. After age fifteen the number drops to three per year.[75]

These statistics present a significant challenge for the Church, as a direct connection exists between the age of a church and its missional effectiveness. However, the statistics also present a clear case for planting more churches in order to increase missional effectiveness.

<div align="center">Demographic and Ethnic Change</div>

U.S. Census findings show increasing growth in the percentage of minorities in the population and show that minority children under five years of age are rapidly moving to majority-minority status. Census findings also reveal a trend away from suburbs and toward metropolitan centers. These demographic realities create fertile soil for change and growth and offer to the Church a unique opportunity to penetrate the darkness, to shine the light of the gospel, and to salt the edge with the witness of the Church. These opportunities call the Church to advance missionally rather than retreat.

The Changing Ethnicity of America

The 2012 Census Bureau Report shows the rapid increase of diverse ethnicities and non-white races in the U. S., immigrants contributing to much of the increase:

> Asians and Hispanics have long been among our nation's fastest-growing race or ethnic groups … Asians were the fastest growing race or ethnic group in 2012; … their population rose to 18.9 million, [and] Hispanics remain our nation's second

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[75] Bruce McNichol, "Churches Die with Dignity," *Christianity Today* 35, January 1991, 69.

largest race or ethnic group (behind non-Hispanic whites), representing about 17 percent of the total population [53 million].[76]

The overall population total of the nation's minority is now 37 percent, or 116 million.[77]

The rapid increase of minorities and immigrants also manifests in other significant ways. There exists a disproportionate number of minority children compared to the rest of the population:

> The population of children younger than 5 is close to becoming majority-minority nationally, standing at 49.9 percent minority in 2012."[78] Furthermore, the number of counties that are majority-minority increases at a rapid pace, with "more than 11 percent (353) of the nation's 3,143 counties [a] majority-minority as of July 1, 2012. Six of these counties became majority-minority populations since July 1, 2011.[79]

Overall, minorities are having more children than whites, and the increasing trend of counties becoming majority-minority represent new opportunities for the gospel's advancement.

The Changing Ethnicity of the Assemblies of God

The AG likewise reflects the changing ethnicity of the United States.[80] In 2010 the AG Office of Ethnic Relations reported that in 1992, out of the 11,689 churches, 9,174 were classified as majority "white," with multi-ethnic churches making up 21.5 percent of the total; however, by 2008, out of the total 12,377 AG churches, the number

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[76] Hadas Gold, "Report: Asians Fastest Growing Group, Politico," June 13, 2013, accessed September 1, 2014, http://www.politico.com/story/2013/06/census-asians-population-92709.html.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] For example of ethnicity changes and their strategic importance see Appendix K, "Vital Contributions of Ethnics, 1997" and Appendix L, "Vital Contributions of Ethnics, 2010."

of majority "white" churches had fallen to 8,490. Overall, by 2008, multi-ethnic churches

totaled 3,887 or 31.4 percent of all AG churches.[81] The latest statistics show an

increasing trend; in 2013 ethnics made up 41.4 percent of the total AG adherents.[82]

The AG remains one of the few major denominations bucking the trend of

decreasing membership and attendance, much of this comes from vibrant growth among

ethnics and those twenty-five years of age and under. A recent article by Religion News

Service reported why the AG continues to show growth: "At its General Council meeting

this week (Aug. 5–9), the denomination touted its formula for defying the seemingly

irreversible decline of other religious groups: contemporary music, arts and high-tech

quality communication, outreach to young people, immigrants and ethnic minorities."[83]

Further, the article quotes Steve Strang, founder and CEO of Charisma Media,

who connects the historical ability of the AG to adapt and change to its ongoing growth:

"They've always hustled," he says. "When entrepreneurs look and see that things are not

growing, they make a judgment and adapt, and that's what's happening."[84] Historically,

the ability to change with the times has served the AG well, and church planting by its

nature has resided at the forefront of the kind of change and adaptability that attracts

people to Christ and His Kingdom.

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[81] Assemblies of God Office of Ethnic Relations, "Changing Demographics Equals Growing Opportunities," 2010.

[82] General Secretary's Office, Statistics, "AG Vital Statistics by Section, District Summary, 2013," accessed July 21, 2014, http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/AG.org%20TOP/AG%20Statistical%20Reports/2014/Acm762%202013%20Sect%20Sum.pdf.

[83] Mark I. Pinsky, "Assemblies of God Defies Denominational Decline," Religion News, August 9, 2013, accessed July 21, 2014, http://www.religionnews.com/2013/08/09/assemblies-of-god-defies-denominational-decline/.

[84] Ibid.

Edge Effect and Church Planting

God's Kingdom, like His creation, grows best and most creatively at its edges. Ecologists use the term "edge effect" to describe how the edges of ecosystems constantly undergo changes, resulting in fertile ground for growth and the ongoing adaptation needed for survival. The *American Heritage Science Dictionary* defines the edge effect as

> the influence that two ecological communities have on each other along the boundary (called the ecotone) that separates them. Because such an area contains habitats common to both communities as well as others unique to the transition zone itself, the edge effect is typically characterized by greater species diversity and population density than occur in either of the individual communities.[85]

For instance, in the case of a forest where the adjacent land has been cut, thus creating an open/forest boundary, sunlight and wind penetrate to a much greater extent, drying out the interior of the forest close to the edge and encouraging growth of opportunistic species. Today, as Christians from other cultures, countries, and ethnic and economic backgrounds move and settle in a new area, they create a "spiritual edge effect," influencing the existing culture and creating a fertile environment for the growth of God's Kingdom. Likewise, when a church plant community of believers, seized with the mission of God, springs up in a neighborhood, they create a new "spiritual ecotone." As ambassadors for Christ, their presence—manifested as salt and light—stand in stark contrast to the prevailing culture, and thereby bringing witness and glory to Jesus. Church planting by its nature creates a new fertile "edge" for God's Kingdom.

Historically, new church plants have taken advantage of this spiritual edge effect because of their inherent capacity to adapt, the imperative of their missional urgency, and their low start-up costs. Finke and Stark note the natural suitability of new churches to

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[85] Dictionary.com, s.v. "edge effect," accessed March 15, 2014, http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/edge effect.

take advantage this phenomenon: "Low start-up costs allow new churches from any religion to quickly emerge in new or changing settlements. Because new churches can now arise without seeking permission from the state or existing congregations, the supply of religions quickly matches the demand for religion."[86]

As a new church is planted, by taking advantage of the spiritual edge effect this new community of believers brings about the tabernacling presence of God into the situation. The powerful presence of God pushes back the powers of darkness to establish God's Kingdom.

The Edge Effect and Growth of Cities

Cities matter to God for many strategic reasons. Historically, cities have been the epicenter of economics, education, medicine, politics, art, communication, scientific research, and moral and religious influence. They exist as the capitals of influence for regions, and nations, and in some cases, like New York City, they serve as capitals of influence for the entire world. When the Church ignores cities, it falls short of its calling, settling for the familiar and abdicating strategic centers to the kingdom of darkness.

Biblically, cities have always had a major place in God's purposes. Some examples in the Old Testament are Babylon, Jerusalem, and Nineveh. In the New Testament, the book of Acts records the Church expanding God's Kingdom first in Jerusalem and then to the population centers of their world—Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, and Antioch. The apostolic missional impulse sent out apostolic bands to preach the good news with signs following and to form local churches.

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[86] Finke and Stark, 10.

Today, cities are crucial to the fulfilling of the *missio Dei*. Around the world,

there is a major movement of people toward cities. Roger S. Greenaway, noted for his

work in urban centers, shows the rapid worldwide increase in major cities: "In 1950, only

two cities, New York and London, had more than eight million inhabitants … . By the

year 2015, 33 cities are expected to have more than eight million. Nineteen of these will

be in Asia."[87] He goes on to note, "The movement of more than a billion people to the

cities over the last two decades is the largest population movement in history."[88]

William H. Fry of the Brookings Institution reports similar movement to urban

areas in the United States:

> Cities are growing faster than their suburbs for the first time in recent history, and
> this new trend applies to some of the country's smallest metro areas as well as the
> biggest. Earlier this year, the Brookings Institution released new research which
> revealed cities in the country's 51 largest metropolitan areas were, on average,
> growing faster than their suburbs for the first time in decades.[89]

Cities in metro areas between 250,000 and one million residents saw similar gains. This

trend mirrors large metropolitan areas; cities are gaining population faster than the

suburbs for the first time in recent history.[90]

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[87] Roger S. Greenaway, "The Challenge of the Cities," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,* ed. Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne, 3rd ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2004), 553.

[88] Ibid.

[89] William H. Frey, "Demographic Reversal: Cities Thrive, Suburbs Sputter," Brooking Institution 58 (2012), accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/06/29-cities-suburbs-frey.

[90] Smart Growth America, "Cities Versus Suburban Growth in Small Urban Areas," accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/city-versus-suburban-growth-in-small-metro-areas.pdf.

Fry believes the trend of thriving cities and sputtering suburbs comes from several contributing factors, and that this may mean a new found opportunity for metropolitan areas:

> This new "tipping point" clearly has its origins in the downturns in the national housing and labor markets of the past five years. Young people, retirees, and other householders who might have moved to the suburbs in better times are unable to obtain mortgages or employment. Many remain stuck in rented or shared homes that are more often located in cities. Yet what may look like a temporary lull in the broad sweep of suburban development may turn out to be an opportunity for some cities to showcase their oft cited lifestyle and cultural amenities to a new generation of residents and developers, so that in some regions a new version of the American Dream could take root."[91]

The same conditions that fuel a return to the cities also present ripe opportunities to plant new churches and present the gospel.

The 2010, U.S. Census findings reported that 80.7 percent of total population lived in urban areas.[92] In January 2012, the trend continued upward, with 83 percent of the population living in metropolitan areas.[93] The U.S. Census Bureau defines a metropolitan center with a population of 50,000 or more as an urban area, an area with at least 2,500 but less than 50,000 comprises an urban cluster, and anything less than 2,500 is classified as rural.[94] Urban areas currently fuel the population growth and trends of America.

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[91] Frey, 58.

[92] United States Census Bureau, "2010 Urban and Rural Classification and Urban Area Criteria," accessed July 26, 2014, http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html.

[93] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "NCHS Urban–Rural Classification Scheme for Counties," accessed March 11, 2014, www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_02/sr02_154.pdf.

[94] Ibid.

From a strategic standpoint, the underrepresentation of AG churches in metropolitan areas compared to other areas of the country should cause major concern. The latest statistics show that the ratio of AG churches to population is 1:7,635 in rural areas and 1:15,023 in urban cluster areas; however, in metropolitan areas with a population of 50,000 or more, it is only 1:30,476.[95] The fact that 83 percent of America no longer fits the definition of a rural or small town compels the Church to implement an intentional strategy to reach the people where they live. One half of the U.S. population lives in only 146 counties out of a total of 3,000.[96] This urban population increase will not only continue, it will escalate.

Overall, the AG has fewer churches per 1,000 people than it did thirty years ago. AG statistics show that in 1984 the denomination had one church for every 21,000 people, but by 2004 it had one church for every 23,000 people.[97] The latest statistics reveal the decline in numbers of churches per population has continued; in 2013 only one AG church existed for every 25,000 people,[98] in spite of the fact that a few years ago the AG began creatively counting churches so churches could list multi-sites as individual churches, as could house churches and separate language congregations within another congregation.

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[95] General Secretary's Office Report 2014.

[96] Walter Hickey and Joe Wisenthal, *Half of the United States Lives in These Counties,* Business Insider, accessed July 18, 2014, http://www.businessinsider.com/half-of-the-united-states-lives-in-these-counties-2013-9#ixzz37bMlzYIX.

[97] General Council of the Assemblies of God, Data Administration for the Office of the General Secretary and We Build People Office, May 2004.

[98] Assemblies of God Statistician's Office, "General Council and District Council Church Opens, 2000-2012," October 2013. Report shows 12,600 churches.

The Strategic Necessity of Planting
Urban Churches

Three powerful forces make this an optimum time for an intentional urban church planting focus: hope, movement, and spiritual receptivity. Conditions today resemble the conditions that enabled the rapid expansion of the Early Church.

Many things fuel the population increase of cities; primarily, however, hope fuels it. Viv Grigg, well-respected expert on the worldwide urban poor, says the urban poor move to cities because of the hope for a better life: "They are building their homes, finding work and developing some communal relationships similar to those of the barrios or villages from which they have come. In *slums of hope* social forces and expectations create a high degree of receptivity to the gospel."[99]

In the United States, the hope of something better also fuels a great migration to and within the major population centers. People move, not out of desperation, like much of the world, but out of the desire for better opportunities. Cities offer world-class opportunities in education, personal finance, jobs, and careers. People view the city as bigger and better and as the center of influence—where the action is. The professional perceives a move to the city as an opportunity for world-class experience, as an important addition to his or her resume, and as a chance to make a difference. To the young person, the city offers excitement and the place to gain fame and fortune. For the immigrant, cities can mean some level of familiarity and community, as many of his or her own nationality have already formed communities that offer a bridge of support to the future.

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[99] Viv Grigg, "The Urban Poor, Who Are We?" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,* ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven Hawthorne, 3rd ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2004), 581.

The significance of immigrants moving to cities has major missional implications. Greenaway highlights the opportunities for the gospel as people move to cities: "We found that the greatest openness to the gospel was among people who had arrived in the city less than ten years earlier."[100] He further notes, "As a general rule, people who are recently dislocated, and are experiencing major changes in their lives, are more open to the gospel than they were before."[101]

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the majority of immigrants to the cities came from Europe and from complex, industrialized societies naturally resistant to the gospel. Catholicism and Judaism played a major role in their lives. These faiths equipped people with an effective worldview that provided a strong network for life and gave them a spiritual prophylactic against new religions.

Today, the spiritual profile of immigrants has changed. While many come with a faith other than Christianity, many more come from countries where conservative Christianity is a dominant force. Immigrants from Asian countries like Korea, Latin America, and Africa fit this profile. Hispanic and Asian immigrants have fueled the majority of America's population increase since the 2000 census.[102] They arrive in the city with a powerful faith. This spiritual compass enables them to navigate successfully a new and bewildering environment. Accordingly, they gravitate toward churches made up of fellow immigrants, and they invite others to do the same. Equally as important, their strong faith expresses itself in evangelism and church planting. This has resulted in a

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[100] Greenaway, 555.

[101] Ibid, 554.

[102] Audrey Singer, "The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways," The Brookings Institute, March 29 2004, accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.brrookings.edu/urban/publications/20040301-gateways.htm.

boom of church planting among immigrants. In New York City alone, 200 African churches were planted from 1999 to 2004.[103] In America, many AG ethnic districts lead the way in the number of new church plants, and without ethnic adherents the AG would have had a net loss of 30,000 adherents in 2013.[104]

These new Christian immigrants also bring other important values with them. Their education, work ethic, and marketable skills make them desirable employees. Major influential city institutions, such as media, finance, medicine, education, and political entities now welcome them. This has great significance for God's Kingdom. Historically, devout Christians have not been allowed to permeate these upper-strata influencers; however, Asian, Indian, Hispanic, and African Christian professionals are being assimilated into the underbelly of these powerful forces of influence.[105]

Tim Keller sums up the strategic necessity of urban church planting:

Paul's whole strategy was to plant urban churches. The greatest missionary in history, St. Paul, had a rather simple, two-fold strategy. First he went into the largest city of the region (cf. Acts 16:9,12), and second, he planted churches in each city … Paul had two controlling assumptions: a) the way to permanently influence a country was through its chief cities, and b) the way to most permanently influence a city was to plant churches in it.[106]

The urban, ethnic, and other societal changes present edge effect opportunities for missional effectiveness and further the increase of interest in faith and religion, also giving hope for the future.

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[103] Timothy Keller, "A Vision For New York City." Denominatoinal Church Planting Leaders Meeting,, Manhattan, New York, February, 23, 2004.

[104] Darrin Rogers, conversation with Paul Drost, July 14, 2014.

[105] Keller, "A Vision for New York City."

[106] Tim Keller, *Why to Plant Churches*, 1.

More Causes for Optimism and Opportunity

Finke and Stark show the American population has actually grown from little involvement in religion and faith in its earliest beginnings to the present day, where two-thirds of the population is involved in some kind of organized religion: "America shifted from a nation in which most people took no part in organized religion to a nation in which nearly two-thirds of American adults do."[107] Their findings offer hope to any church or church governing body that desires to increase its effectiveness.

Missional effectiveness rests upon two simple ideas: high expectations of a church's constituents and a commitment to otherworldliness or God's presence in individual and corporate life. Embracing these powerful concepts provides fertile soil for vigorous missional effectiveness.

Finke and Stark have more insight into the rise of conservative faiths:

By the latter half of the twentieth century, sociologists and historians scrambled to explain the sudden rise of the conservative faiths and the rapid decline of the more liberal "Mainline" denominations. We will show that this trend was well underway two centuries earlier. The trend of growing upstart sects and declining mainline denominations has been in place since at least 1776. What everyone noticed in the twentieth century was a decline in the membership totals of the mainline bodies. But, long before this decline in membership, mainline market share (or percentage of all religious adherents) was showing a steady decline.[108]

Olson details a number of additional reasons for hope: "The American church is growing fastest in more affluent areas,"[109] he observes, "and even though in the early 20th century, Evangelical churches gave up its wealth to be more faithful to the gospel, one century later it has recouped it and more, and the church is vital when Christ is the

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[107] Finke and Stark, 1.

[108] Ibid., 3.

[109] Olson, 82.

focus."[110] This means the church can enjoy both financial freedom and potency if it keeps Christ as its focus. In fact the wealth entrusted to churches can mean more resources to expand God's Kingdom.

Stetzer's research also reveals several things signal hope for churches of all sizes and situations determined to pursue missional effectiveness. For instance, contrary to the conventional wisdom that mega-churches are big because they have softened the demands of Christ and the gospel, Stetzer's research shows that sacrifice is trending among many mega-churches. He describes these trends among many of America's top one hundred fastest growing churches of 2012:

> We saw something that excites me and is thoroughly biblical. What's more, it's something in which every church can engage. Something in which every church *must* engage if it wants to reflect the character of God as a church body: self-sacrifice. Growing churches are showing a great commitment to multiplying themselves, as we see in the discussion about multiple campuses, and this commitment to multiplication often creates a need for sacrifice. Sacrifice is inherent to the experience of every growing believer—and every growing church.[111]

Stetzer further encourages those committed to missional effectiveness:

> The word of God reminds us that the kingdom of God will advance. There is no stopping it. God will be victorious, and his bride, the church, will be glorious. We can either be a part of that or not. As I look across the landscape of contemporary evangelicalism in the United States, I am encouraged to see churches that take seriously God's call to be like Jesus and that are committed to advancing the gospel, even when it hurts. May we see this trend continue to grow.[112]

These encouraging signs for increased missional effectiveness also reflect in the ratio of AG church closings and new church openings. For the last five-year period,

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[110] Olson, 186.

[111] Ed Stetzer, "Sacrifice is Trending," *Christianity Today*, September 2013, accessed February 22, 2014, http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/september/sacrifice-is-trending.html.

[112] Ibid.

2009-2013, the AG has netted 415 churches, more than any five-year period since 1988-1993 when 437 churches were gained, but still far short of the 975 churches netted from 1979-1983.[113] The increase of churches planting churches has had a significant contribution to the overall number of churches gained.

Multiplication: Churches Planting Churches

The facts reveal that the Church is losing the war for the souls of America. Mere addition to existing churches will never accomplish the task. Like all of His creation, God created the Church as the body of Christ to reproduce and multiply. Multiplication through church planting is God's chosen method to increase His Kingdom. Melvin L. Hodges, an AG missionary and noted missiologist, puts forth that three main characteristics of the New Testament church were that it was self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting.[114] Noting the importance of multiplication, he unequivocally states that "a church which does not propagate itself will soon die out. New Testament Churches were self-propagating."[115] When a church plants another church, it propagates itself, thereby completing the life cycle that God has intended for all living creation.

Garrison notes the tremendous effectiveness of multiplying through Church Planting Movements: "Over the past decade, literally millions of new believers have

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[113] General Secretary's Office, Statistics, "U.S. AG Churches Opened and Closed, 1965-2013," accessed September 1, 2014, http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/AG.org%20TOP/AG%20Statistical%20Reports/2013/ChuOpCl2013.pdf.

[114] Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1996), 12.

[115] Ibid., 42.

entered Christ's kingdom through Church Planting movements."[116] Garrison describes a

Church Planting Movement as "a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches that sweeps

through a people group or population segments."[117] The harvest fields demand the

Church to forsake addition and embrace multiplication as God's method of missional

effectiveness.

Multiplication through church planting increases missional effectiveness, but it

also brings other benefits. Steve Sjogren comments on some practical benefits of planting

several smaller churches rather than attempting to plant one mega-church:

> I've come to believe that instead of having one church with a weekend attendance
> of 6,000, which is the size of the church I started, I would much rather have
> twelve five-hundred size churches, or twenty-three hundred size churches spread
> throughout the city.[118]

Many more planters and churches can start and lead a smaller church than they can a

mega-church.

Decentralizing church planting and placing the emphasis on the local church to

multiply relieves the financial and recruiting burden from AG districts and the General

Council. It also releases the local church to do what it was created to do, and it is

necessary for rapid multiplication. Bob Roberts affirms the value in decentralization,

calling it going "Glocal"— moving from the global authority to the local authority:

"Glocal is the decentralization of everything—power, government, all of it. The church

must be decentralized, and for that to happen we have to leave behind models of the

church that focus it on a superstar speaker, singer, educator, and shepherd. Instead

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[116] Garrison, 17.

[117] Ibid., 21.

[118] Steve Sjogren, *The Perfectly Imperfect Church* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2002), 25.

glocalization involves everyone, center stage."[119] Adjudicating bodies should facilitate rather than restrict healthy church multiplication; however, decentralization provides a quicker response to the need.

Ralph Moore, founder of the Hope Chapel Network, started with twelve people and, through churches planting churches, saw rapid multiplication to two hundred congregations. He ardently believes Jesus intends for His Church to multiply this way: "Rapid multiplication from a single location seems close to what Jesus had in mind when he sent them from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8)."[120]

Randy Hurst, director of AGWM Communications and AG Commissioner of Evangelism, comments on the indispensability of multiplying churches to lasting missional vitality:

> We can trace the acceleration and lasting growth of the Assemblies of God fellowships throughout the world to the New Testament practices to which our early leaders committed themselves in 1921. The solutions to challenges we face in the present are not found in new strategies but in a restored commitment the Lord has established.[121]

The amazing growth of the worldwide AG fellowship from 300 leaders in 1914 to 60 plus million adherents today directly ties to the exponential effect of multiplying, self-propagating churches.

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[119] Bob Roberts, *Glocalization: How Followers of Jesus Engage a Flat World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 21.

[120] Ralph Moore, *Starting a New Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002), 19.

[121] Randy Hurst, "The Multiplying Church," *Enrichment Journal*, accessed July 28, 2014. http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200803/200803_048_Multiplying.cfm.

Conclusion

The AG and its churches face many challenges to fulfilling the Great Commission. Jesus, however, continues to build His Church powerfully wherever His people combine a strong missional impulse with a strong vision to expand God's Kingdom. The commitment to mission and a vision of what God can do through the church will push through the hurdles of tradition and self-protection, leading to the planting of numerous, multiplying churches.

Historically, the AG has utilized planting churches as its main missions strategy. Now is the time for bold action; a band-aid approach will not suffice. The leadership and constituents of the AG must execute a strategy commensurate with God's call and claims on His Church. Church planting must not be placed in the position of competing with other ministries or relegated to its "fair share." The birthing of new churches is not merely something the church "should do;" it must do it.[122]

God has given the AG this stewardship of grace to win and disciple as many people as possible to become Christ followers; He will help the Church. Fueled by the power of the Holy Spirit, the AG can move forward in its mission with full confidence that God will give His grace and provision without measure to accomplish His task. Church planting must reside central in any Great Commission strategy to ensure missional vitality and effectiveness.

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[122] See Appendix Q, "VFT Northeast Regional Prioritized Themes."

CHAPTER 4: DESCRIPTION OF FIELD PROJECT

This chapter will discuss details of the following four areas of focus in the field

project: (1) preparation of the project, (2) execution of the project, (3) results of the

project, and (4) reflection on the project's contribution to ministry. Chapter 4 intends to

support the main theme of this doctoral project: the strategic importance of church

planting in increasing the missional effectiveness of the Assemblies of God (AG).

Preparation of the Project

I have a keen interest in church planting for several reasons. Currently, other

denominations, national church plant leadership, and church planting networks view the

AG as an outstanding leader in planting churches; however, most of the current church

planting research and writings have taken place outside of the AG. Furthermore, most of

the AG church planting efforts have focused on praxis, casting vision, raising resources,

and recruiting planters and churches to participate in planting new churches; however,

few people, if any, have done fellowship-wide research to support the missional necessity

of planting churches.

Consequently, when I submitted my project prospectus to the AGTS project

committee and proposed that they allow my chapter 4 to serve as research and data based

rather than an intervention, the committee approved my proposal with the caveat that I

further clarify a few details. I originally planned to do a case study on six churches

directly involved in planting other churches and a case study on six churches not directly involved in planting churches. I planned to choose these churches based on factors such as size, age, and geographic location. However, after lengthy discussion with the approving committee and my adviser, Dr. Randy Walls, I decided to go beyond selecting only twelve churches for a case study. I chose to broaden the research from a case study of twelve churches to an AG fellowship-wide study.

The first part of the research included research from the AG that demonstrates the vital link between church planting and the historical metrics of spiritual health and growth in the AG. Components of this research included (1) surveys comparing the spiritual metrics of the Annual Church Ministries Report, (ACMR) of AG church plants with all other ACMR reporting AG churches, and (2) research that validates the ongoing necessity for strategic AG church plants by comparing the number of AG church closings and openings from 1965-2011. Overall, the research intended to demonstrate the importance of church planting to maintaining and increasing the AG's spiritual vitality. I obtained the research from the AG Statistician's Office, the AG Church Multiplication Network office (CMN), and compilation from other sources.

The second part of research showed the missional effect church planting has on an existing church that chooses to plant churches. Additionally, I compared the spiritual vitality of churches planting churches with churches not engaged in multiplying themselves through church planting. I measured missional vitality using spiritual metrics the AG has historically used, such as conversions, water baptisms, attendance, and Holy Spirit baptisms. The selected churches came from a wide demographic diversity of the AG, including differences in size, age, geographic locations, and ethnic makeup.

Finally, research demonstrated the missional contribution of churches planted

through CMN,[1] which partners with and strategically invests in churches planting

churches. CMN offers a $30,000 grant to a church plant that has a parent church. The

parent church guarantees strategic investment in and oversight of the church plant. CMN

selects both the planting church and church plant based on a set of guidelines designed to

demonstrate the church plant and its lead pastor pass a high set of standards to qualify for

the grant money. In return, the church plant obligates itself for perpetuity to give 10

percent of its income to missions and return 1 percent of its annual income to CMN to

replenish the fund to plant more churches. However, if the church plant plants other

multiplying churches that in turn plant more churches, CMN releases the original church

plant from all obligations. A few of the churches involved in the churches planting

churches research/survey were also included in this the CMN results. However, no good

way existed to separate them.

Originally, the project proposed to focus on how churches planting churches

increased the spiritual vitality of parent churches and expanded God's Kingdom.

Consequently, the original approved title of my D.Min. project was "Churches Planting

Churches: A Strategic Method for Expanding God's Kingdom and Increasing Spiritual

Vitality through Existing Congregations."

However, as I got further into my research, the results showed some remarkable

evidences of missional effectiveness of not only parent churches and the churches they

planted, but also the general overall missional effectiveness of church plants and their

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[1] CMN was formed in 2007 by action of the General Council AG. For additional information see http://cmn.ag.org.

strategic importance to the AG's missional effectiveness. The research results were so important that I sought a name change for my D.Min. project and accordingly received permission to change the title to "Church Planting: A Strategic Method for Increasing Missional Effectiveness of the Assemblies of God." This title better reflected the research results.

The burgeoning research of the project led me to exclude, or only give minimum attention to, some components I originally planned to include: (1) the connection between strategic investment in and oversight of church plants to the spiritual productivity of church plants that receive this investment and oversight, (2) selected research demonstrating the necessity of intentionality in preparing the church plant for success, (3) the contribution of ethnic church planting to the missional effectiveness of the AG,[2] and (4) the rate of missions giving per one hundred attendees of existing churches compared to church plants.

This last component became impractical because of the difficulty in collecting missions-giving data, due to (1) the understandable reluctance of denominational authorities to release missions giving of individual churches and (2) the numerous ways missional churches choose to be involved in missions other than simply financially supporting missions efforts.

I narrowed the focus of the research but expanded its quantity and quality to support my main theme, which is the strategic importance of church plants in increasing the AG's missional effectiveness.

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[2] Concerning ethnic church plants, I decided to simply include all church planting for part one rather than designate churches as ethnic or non-ethnic.

Overall, the research proposed to demonstrate how vigorous church plants, both ethnic majority and white majority, whether planted by a parent congregation or planted with no parent church connection, increase the AG's missional effectiveness. I obtained the research from the AG Statistician's Office, the AG CMN office, the AG Office of Ethnic Relations, and personal interviews with district church planting leaders, parent church pastors, and pastors of church plants started by a parent church. I followed up with all of the personal interviews with an online survey document.

The online assessment tool was formed in conjunction with CMN. Additionally, I presented it to Dr. Jeff Fulks, Director of Adult and Graduate Studies at Evangel University, who works with statistics and assists in designing surveys. His valuable input ensured that the survey was designed properly to obtain valid and useful data. Fulks said to me, "One of the main objects of a properly designed survey is that it will enable one to present truth from the data collected."[3] I was delighted with his value on presenting truth and believed that the results would only serve to further the urgency to plant more churches. Additionally, Fulks lent expert credibility to the results, and his statistics background and approach solidly supported the results with actual data rather than anecdotally supporting the truth of church planting's missional effectiveness.

Execution of the Project

Part One: The Contribution of Church Plants
to the AG's Missional Effectiveness

The first part of my research intended to compare how church plants were doing compared to existing AG churches. I chose to do church plants in two groups. Group One

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[3] Telephone conversation with Dr. Jeff Fulks and Paul Drost, August 8, 2014.

consisted of churches opened from 2000-2012, or all church plants still open that were thirteen years old or less. Group Two consisted of churches opened 2008-2012, or all church plants still open that were five years old or less. I wanted to compare these groups to the national average attendance of all AG churches and to the AG national figures for salvation, water baptisms, Spirit baptisms, and missions giving. Additionally, I wanted to compare the contribution of church plants classified as Parent Affiliated Churches (PAC).[4]

Before creating and sending out surveys to individual church plants, I consulted with Sherri Doty, head of the AG Statistician's Office in Springfield, MO. She provided invaluable insights as to what kind of research could be done to demonstrate the missional contribution of church plants to the AG's overall missional effectiveness. The Statistician's Office serves under the AG General Secretary's Office, which compiles all of the AG statistics, including the ACMR.[5] It has the capacity to provide a wide variety of statistical information and also can provide customized research for a reasonable fee.

Additionally I had several conversations with Steve Pike, at that time the National Director of CMN. Pike is also a personal friend and my successor as Director of Church Planting for the AG; Pike and I share a common passion for church planting and church multiplication through churches planting other churches.

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[4] Parent Affiliated Churches are church plants planted by an AG parent church; these church plants report directly to the parent church rather than to a geographical or language district. The AG General Council created the PAC category to allow churches to plant churches without going through normal requirements for AG church plants. Normal requirements include district approval to plant, the planter holding AG credentials, and district accountability.

[5] Every AG church is asked to fill out an ACMR, which includes a variety of questions concerning attendance, water baptisms, salvations, attendance, Spirit Baptisms, ethnic makeup, financial information, ministry programs, etc.

Three issues in gathering research data immediately arose that changed the scope of the research I could do. I could not research PAC churches because the ACMR does not have a separate category for them; the Parent Church figures on the ACMR include the PAC figures. Second, researching the missions giving data entailed challenging, cumbersome, and costly methods due to the number of different agencies, other than the Statistician's Office, that had to be involved. Consequently, I excluded missions giving and developed another way of gathering information from Parent Churches. Third, it was not possible to gather missional metrics in terms of averages, so I decided to pursue the metrics using a different method.

After many emails and phone conversations with Sherri Doty and Steve Pike I chose to have the Statistician's Office do research on several metrics. These metrics included Sunday morning attendance, number of salvations, Spirit baptisms, and water baptisms. Other than Sunday morning attendance, the Statistician's Office analyzed the metrics of salvations, Spirit baptisms, and water baptisms per one hundred attendees.

Counting spiritual metrics per one hundred attendees ensured several things. First, it ensured a level playing field for church plant data. Second, it meant the results did not favor any particular set of demographics such as ethnicity, size of congregations, geographical location, or wealth of congregations. The research simply measured the missional effectiveness of all ACMR reporting church plants in a fair and non-biased way. The research revealed some interesting and encouraging results concerning the missional effectiveness of church plants.

Part Two: Churches Planting Churches Metrics

Following the advice of the D.Min. project approval committee, I chose not to handpick six planting churches and six non-planting churches to compare their missional metrics. The committee felt that personally picking twelve churches would weaken the validity of my study. Instead, in order to facilitate a more random and greater sample of data collected, I chose to give many churches the opportunity to respond to a survey. To add further credibility to my research, I chose to compare the spiritual metrics of the responding churches planting churches to the national spiritual metrics that were readily available online through the AG's official website.

Subsequently, I formulated the National Survey of Churches that Plant Churches after many phone conversations and emails to Steve Pike and to Jacob Musselman, whom CMN assigned to this project. The online assessment tool was sent to churches that plant other churches and contained nine data driven questions, one question about the church's demographics, and one "describe your experience" question.

The survey aimed to demonstrate how church plants increase the missional effectiveness of a church that parents, or multiplies itself through, church plants. Responding churches demonstrated a wide variety of characteristics, including attendance, age of church, geography, ethnic makeup, and number of churches planted.

Unfortunately, the least effective method of generating a response came from the initial survey graciously sent out by the CMN office located in Springfield, MO. CMN sent the email containing a link to the survey to 235 pastors with the promise that they would enter the lead pastor of each responding church into a drawing for a free iPad. Eighty-four people opened the email, and CMN received five completed survey responses.

The second most effective method of generating a response came from asking personal friends, who served as district church planting directors, to send out a personal request to the churches that planted churches in their respective districts. Roger Stacy from the Minnesota District sent out a personal appeal to sixty-five churches, of which seven responded.

The most productive method of gathering data entailed a personal but labor-intensive approach. I sent a personal email containing the survey to the pastors of planting churches. The email asked them to participate and also promised that I would personally follow up with each one that responded with a personal phone call. I received a good response; of the fifteen pastors I personally contacted, twelve responded with a completed survey. However, three of the twelve could not be used.

I was grateful for the twenty-four pastors of churches who responded. The survey required valuable time for them, or their staff, to research their records to fill out the survey questions. One of the take-a-ways showed that even in a high-technology age with technology savvy church planters, a request based on relationship trumped the technology of impersonal email requests.

The following is the National Survey of Churches Planting Churches.

National Survey Demonstrating Missional Effectiveness of AG Churches Planting

Churches; Paul Drost, D.Min. Project, November 2013

Instructions: Thank you for helping in this important endeavor to demonstrate the missional effectiveness of churches planting churches!

For the statistics you may use your actual records, ACMR records, or your best guess estimate to be as accurate as possible. Your statistics will be combined with stats of other churches to measure missional effectiveness per 100 attendees. Feel free to contact me at 443-567-8867 or pastorpdrost@aol.com.

1. Contact Information:

Name of Lead Pastor-

Name and Street Address of Parent Church-

Email of Lead Pastor-

Best Tele# of Lead Pastor-

2. **2013 YTD or 2012 Sunday morning (Weekend Worship Services) Average**

Attendance of the Parent Church?

The Parent Church may also be considered the main or original campus.

3. **Sunday morning (Weekend Worship Services) Average Attendance of Parent**

church *before* planting churches?

4. **For the Parent Church, *for the year before you started planting*, please**

provide the following statistics:

If possible, please provide the statistics for the year before you planted your first

church.

- *Number of Salvations*
- *Number of Spirit Baptisms*
- *Number of Water Baptisms*

5. **How many churches have been planted by the Parent Church?**

This includes multi-site campuses and video venues. This may also include

churches that have been sent out from the Parent Church.

6. **What is the total *combined 2013 YTD* or 2012 Sunday morning (Weekend**

Worship services) average attendance of all *the churches your church has planted*?

*Please **exclude** the Parent Church. For example two churches planted from your*

church; one has an attendance of 100 and the other has an average attendance of 200,

the total aggregate attendance is 300.

7. **What is the *combined 2013YTD* or 2012 Sunday morning (Weekend Worship**

services) attendance of *your church plus all churches* you have planted?

*Please **include** the Parent Church. For example two churches planted from your*

church; one has an attendance of 100 and the other has an average attendance of 200.

In addition, the parent church has an attendance of 150. The total aggregate attendance

is 450.

8. **For 2012 or 2013 YTD, please provide the following statistics for the *Parent Church*:**

Please exclude your church plants, sites, video venues, etc.

- **Number of Salvations**
- **Number of Spirit Baptisms**
- **Number of Water Baptisms**
- **Amount of Missions Giving**

9. **For 2012 or 2013 YTD, please provide the following statistics for the *churches you have planted*:**

Please exclude the Parent Church.

- **Number of Salvations**
- **Number of Spirit Baptisms**
- **Number of Water Baptisms**
- **Amount of Missions Giving**

10. **Give a thumbnail description of your church; age of church, demographics of area (suburban, rural, city, inner city; etc.), and ethnicity of church**

11. **In a brief paragraph describe, or give 3-5 top reasons, how planting churches benefited your Church and God's Kingdom?**

I had hoped for more than twenty-four responses to the survey. However, I am convinced that the results are superior in many ways to those I would have gathered from just six parent churches. The churches represented a wide variety of demographics, including size of church, wealth of church, age of church, ethnicity, age of the senior pastor, and a variety of locations (urban, rural, inner city, and suburban). All respondents shared some common core values: they were passionate about the Great Commission, convinced that planting other churches was necessary, intentional about the necessity of oversight and investment in the churches they planted, chose to sacrificially grow God's Kingdom rather than only growing their local church, and often their planting efforts involved taking a personal risk in the face of congregational opposition and even opposition from other churches. Overall, their risks paid off, and many more people have come into God's Kingdom than if they did not plant churches.

Results of the Project

The survey results proved to demonstrate the invaluable contribution that church planting brings to the AG's missional effectiveness. Additionally the research revealed some positive results concerning the ongoing missional effectiveness of AG churches as a whole.

The Missional Metrics of Church Plants

The metrics for both church plants and all other AG churches came from the AG Statistician's Office.[6] The study compared the spiritual metrics of church plants in two

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[6] See Appendix C, "General Council and District Council Church Opens Spiritual Metrics, 2000-2012."

different subgroups to the overall spiritual metrics of all AG churches. Church plants were separated out as follows: 1) Churches planted from 2008-2012, or five years of age or less; and 2) All church plants from 2000-2012, or all church plants thirteen years of age or less. The "five years and under" churches were chosen to demonstrate the spiritual vitality of young churches, and the "thirteen years and under" churches were chosen to demonstrate the continuing spiritual vitality of young churches. The church planting metrics were then backed out of the spiritual metrics of the entire AG to show an accurate comparison of church plants and existing churches older than thirteen years. Table 2 shows the comparisons:

Table 2: Spiritual Metrics of ACMR Churches by Age Groups, 2008-2012, 2000-2012 and All Others

AG Church Opens Reporting Periods	Per 100 Attendees in 2012		
	Converts	Water Baptisms	Spirit Baptisms
2000-2012 (13 yrs)	26	8	5
2008-2012 (5 years)	21	8	5
Churches Over 13 Years	24	7	4

The research showed a bright picture concerning the spiritual vitality of church plants. In my experience, many AG constituents believe that church plants are more likely to downplay the personal demands of the gospel, dismiss discipleship, and diminish the need for a personal baptism in the Holy Spirit.

However, examining the table shows that church plants have slightly better overall spiritual metrics than existing churches. The results also reveal other salient facts concerning the contribution of church plants to the overall spiritual vitality of the AG. In 2012 church plants accounted for 18 percent of total Sunday morning attendance, 18 percent of all converts, 20 percent of all water baptisms, and 19 percent of all Holy Spirit

baptisms. Additionally, 13 percent of all AG churches in existence have been planted in the last five years.

Another important fact emerged from the research; without churches planted since 2000 the spiritual metrics of the AG would be at 1990 levels. Without church planting, the total number of AG churches would be 11,536, the same as in 1991, and missional effectiveness expressed in number of salvations, water baptisms, Holy Spirit baptisms, and attendees would be highly incapacitated.[7] In other words, the AG would go backward twenty-five years in its number of churches and more importantly in its missional effectiveness.

However, the research also revealed an important and major surprise concerning the continuing spiritual vitality of existing churches over the age of thirteen years. The research shows that missional vitality of these AG churches continues to be strong well past their youthful years. These AG figures contradict conventional church growth wisdom that churches begin to lose their spiritual vitality shortly after their one-year anniversary, and that increasing age causes an exponential decrease in spiritual vitality.

My research on AG churches over the age of thirteen corroborates other non-AG research concerning the vital importance of Pentecostal empowerment for missional effectiveness; churches Pentecostal/Charismatic in their piety contribute most of the growth to worldwide Christianity regardless of their denominational affiliation, size, or age.[8] I believe that the Pentecostal experience of being baptized in the Spirit resulting in

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[7] See Appendix B, "U.S. AG Churches Opened and Closed 1965-2013."

[8] David Householder, "10 Things You Didn't Know about Pentecostals," Charisma News, accessed June 28, 2014, http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/44242-10-things-you-didn-t-know-about-pentecostals.

power for witness enables Pentecostal churches to remain spiritually vital regardless of age.

<div align="center">The Missional Metrics of Churches Planting Churches</div>

The research undeniably shows the strategic importance of church plants to the AG's increased missional effectiveness. However, Christianity pursues God's mission in a world that is multiplying rapidly in its spiritual need; the Church must move from mere spiritual addition to spiritual multiplication. The most effective way to do that is when churches multiply themselves by planting other churches.

The results of the National Survey of Churches Planting Churches showed the before and after spiritual metrics of churches planting churches and their "daughter" churches.[9] The twenty-one responding churches represented a wide diversity of size (122 average attendance to 6,000 average attendance), location (rural, small town, large metropolitan, suburbs, small city), age of senior pastor, age of church, and ethnicity. The twenty-one responding parent churches answered before and after questions concerning attendance, salvations, water baptisms, and Spirit baptisms.

Average attendance of parent churches before starting one or more church plants was 496 and increased to 616 after planting, but combining the attendance of parent church with its church plants showed a remarkable average attendance of 1,329 on Sunday mornings/weekends.

Likewise the survey yielded good spiritual metrics per one hundred attendee results. Salvations per one hundred attendees averaged 22.3 before planting but averaged

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[9] See Appendix D, "Before and After Spiritual Metrics of Churches Planting Churches and Their "Daughter" Churches for a full statistical report and analysis of the survey by Dr. Fulks.

44.3 after planting. Water baptisms averaged 11.8 before planting but increased to 14.08 after planting. Spirit baptisms averaged 5.06 before planting but increased to 5.8 after planting.

Another critical missional factor surfaced as a result of the survey. All spiritual metrics per one hundred attendees for churches who plant churches is much higher, except for Spirit baptisms, than for churches that do not plant churches. Table 3 shows the national averages for non-planting churches compared to churches that plant churches:

Table 3. Spiritual Metrics of Churches Planting Churches and Churches That Do Not Plant Churches

Per One Hundred Attendees	*Salvations*	*Water Baptisms*	*Spirit Baptisms*
Churches Planting Churches	44	14	6
Non Church Planting Churches	24	8	5

The spiritual metrics show an exponential missional effect when a church intentionally multiplies by planting other churches. Also, every parent church, regardless of size, location, age of church, age of leadership, or ethnic makeup, increased in its missional effectiveness as a result of planting other churches.

On the whole, churches planting churches produce stronger church plants than church plants not parented by another church. Churches planted by another church have higher average attendance, reach critical mass in attendance and giving more quickly, have a greater chance of surviving and thriving, and correspondingly demonstrate a

stronger missional effectiveness than non-parented church plants.[10] CMN has partnered with over 275 parenting churches and reports many of these benefits.[11]

The Project's Contribution to Ministry

I believe the project's research-based approach adds an important component to why the AG should intentionally plant more churches. Church plants do more than maintain the status quo; they increase the AG's missional effectiveness.[12] If the AG had not planted any churches since 2000, it would be severely limited in both numbers of churches and its missional effectiveness. In fact, the AG would go backward twenty-five years to 1990 levels in missional metrics and 1991 levels in number of churches.

The project's research results also gave added impetus to why the AG needs more churches to multiply spiritually by planting other churches. When churches multiply through church planting they produce healthy, strong churches that are missionally effective. When the spiritual metrics of the parent church and its church plants were combined, per one hundred attendees, their combined missional effectiveness showed an exponential effect compared to churches that do not plant churches. In a world of rapidly increasing spiritual need, the research showed churches that multiply through church plants can reach more people with the gospel faster than what happens through churches not engaged in planting churches.

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[10] For an excellent review of this see Ed Stetzer, "Equipping Planters for Success," *Enrichment Journal*, accessed October 10, 2014, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200904/200904_036_equipping.cfm.

[11] See Appendix E, "CMN Handout to AG Trust Board of Directors, October 2013" for the Church Multiplication Report to the Executive Presbytery of the missional effects of strategically partnering with churches to plant healthy churches.

[12] See Appendix M, "Church Planting Theology of Mission, AGTS Presentation."

Finally, the research-based nature of the project adds a much-needed dimension to the AG church planting efforts. The AG, when compared to other denominations, leads the way in planting churches and innovative methods and processes to do so. However, while other denominations have devoted resources and energy for solid research to undergird the necessity of their church planting efforts, the AG has done little in the way of research. Good research aims to reveal and substantiate truth through non-subjective processes. Since this project's research results have utilized recognized processes, the results clearly and unquestionably corroborate the missional effectiveness of church planting efforts. The results unmistakably show the strategic importance of church planting to increase the AG's missional effectiveness.[13]

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[13] See Appendix R, "Church Planting as One of Three Core Values to Fulfill the Mission of the Assemblies of God."

CHAPTER 5: PROJECT SUMMARY

Evaluation of the Project

Solid evaluation of a project provides crucial answers necessary for ongoing effectiveness and growth in the particular focus of the project. Some crucial evaluation topics for this project include Keys to Project Effectiveness and Keys to Project Improvement. Exploring Project Effectiveness and Project Improvement then enables recommendations to be made for the larger field of study and to parties with a vested interest in applying the findings to their areas of responsibility.

Another key component of the project resulted in the uncovering of many missional implications for the Assemblies of God. The effectiveness of the research process undergirds and strengthens these implications and helps build the case for the strategic importance of these implications.

Keys to Project Effectiveness

After thorough evaluation, it became clear that this project's effectiveness and viability rested on four key elements: (1) a well-researched biblical theology for church planting provided a solid foundation for the entire project, (2) my personal passion for church planting that provided the energy and perseverance necessary to do more than the bare minimum required, (3) the project's research-based nature, which provided substantive facts to support its outcome, (4) the method of implementing the research, and (5) a statistics-

method approach to interpreting the research data that produced real facts or truth-based results.

First, a solid biblical theology for church planting provided a firm foundation for the entire project. Although there exists much writing regarding the praxis of church planting with references to the Great Commission and the Early Church, in extensive research for this project I did not come across a biblical theology for church planting that connected it to God's mission through His people. This common theme begins in the Garden, continues through the patriarchs, and runs like a connecting cord through the entirety of the Old Testament. Further, this cord of God's mission being accomplished through His people continues with the advent of Christ, His teachings on the kingdom of God, and His giving of the Great Commission to His followers. God's mission through His people continues on with the formation of the Church, the expansion of the Church, and culminates in the Revelation.

I gratefully tackled the laborious task of writing a church planting biblical theology so it could be added as a reliable underpinning of AG church planting in the United States. Further, the project can provide a much-needed biblical theology for a worldwide church planting movement in which the AG World Fellowship plays a strategic part. The current worldwide church planting movement must rest on a solid biblical theology so the churches it plants, and the reasons for which it plants them, will stand the test of time and survive the storms of this present world. The nature of Pentecost is missional action empowered by the Spirit; applying a solid biblical theology ensures that the work remains true to God's purposes and ways.

Second, a calling to and deep personal passion for church planting provided the energy, motivation, and perseverance required to go the proverbial second mile and to keep on when it seemed like I was against the huge, lonely mountain of the project. My approach was deeply personal and guided by a strong sense of call and a cause much bigger than I.

Planting new churches to fulfill God's mission and establishing His presence to form a new community of Jesus followers compelled me to go further, deeper, and more extensively in the project. This meant covering every detail and exploring every means possible to present a project worthy of the cause and call of church planting.

Third, the research-based nature of the project, rather than using an anecdotal approach, used substantive facts and raw data to come to its results. This non-subjective research-based approach led to many invaluable results and insights to support the project's main assertion that church planting is a strategic method to increase the AG's missional effectiveness. The project's assertion is grounded in solid research rather than simply stating something based on personal experience or observation.

Fourth, the scope of the research moved it from a case-study approach to a much wider approach. A case-study approach would have involved hand picking a few churches for a case study. The project's research included data from over 8,000 ACMR reporting churches, data from hundreds of churches planted from a partnership with the Church Multiplication Network (CMN), and twenty-five churches that responded to a survey sent to 315 churches. The results of a case study present a legitimate use for the small sample involved in the study. However, extrapolating the results of a case study to larger settings should only be used anecdotally and not as reliable indicators true for larger groups. However, because of the wide scope of this project's research, the AG can use the results and recommendations across the fellowship.

<center>Keys to Project Improvement</center>

Part one of the project, The Contribution of Church Plants to the Missional Effectiveness of the AG, proved strong. The strength of part one lay in several components: (1) the data used came from over 8,000 AG churches, (2) the data came

from the ACMR or Annual Church Ministries Report of the AG which is collected as an official function of the AG Statisticians office, (3) the Statistician's office comes under the purview of the General Secretary of the AG, (4) the organizational strength of the AG and its value on maintaining good records and using reliable research methods added great depth and credibility to part one of the project.

However, two elements would have improved the overall strength of part two, Churches Planting Churches Metrics: (1) more respondents to the National Survey of Churches that Plant Churches, and (2) the inclusion of more churches with remarkable testimonies concerning their church planting efforts.

Part two of the project intended to show the missional effect church planting has on an existing church that chooses to plant churches. I sent surveys to 315 pastors; twenty-four responded for an 8 percent response rate. Although other church planting organizations and denominations publish church planting findings based on a similar or less response rate, more participants in the national survey would have strengthened part two. However the results validated that churches that plant churches score much higher in the spiritual metrics than churches that choose not to plant other churches. The results validated personal observation and conventional wisdom among those involved in leading and or overseeing churches that plant other churches.

Including more of the outstanding AG churches that plant churches, would have bolstered the results and added another layer of strength to the project. For instance, of the 315 churches that received surveys, almost all have success stories concerning increasing their missional effectiveness because of planting churches. Adding their

results would have increased the overall strength of part two, Churches Planting

Churches Metrics.

I believe two very labor and time intensive things would increase the number of

participants in a national survey. It is likely that pastors of churches that plant churches

might respond with a higher response rate if relationship based interviews were

conducted, as compared to online surveys and email requests for participations. One way

to accomplish this would be to design a survey that would include all AG district church

planting directors personally interviewing their district pastors of churches that plant

churches. While including more interviewers doing personal interviews would face many

challenges, the results would further validate the exponential missional potential of

churches that plant other churches.

Implications of the Project

This project offers several important missional implications. These implications

cover a broad range of topics, but each carries significance for the ongoing missional

effectiveness of the AG.

The planting of new churches is essential to increasing the missional effectiveness

of the AG. There must be an increase in the number and rate of new churches planted.

The research clearly demonstrates that church planting not only helps maintain missional

effectiveness, new churches increase missional effectiveness. Church plants have

stronger missional metrics per one hundred attendees than do existing churches.

Consequently, planting more new churches will increase the missional effectiveness of

the AG.

Without the planting of new churches, the AG will go backward in its missional effectiveness. The research revealed that church planting prevents the erosion of missional effectiveness for the AG as a whole. In fact, if new churches had not been planted since 2,000, the AG would have declined in missional effectiveness to 1991 levels. The vitality of new churches more than makes up for the missing missional metrics of closed churches. However, closing churches and not planting new churches produces an exponential effect of rapidly decreasing missional effectiveness.

The AG must intentionally prepare to become a church planting movement. The research supports the well-known statement, "Church planting is the most effective form of evangelism under heaven." However, single church planting cannot keep up with the increasing pace of spiritual need in the world; the AG needs a church planting movement. David Garrison defines a church planting movement: "A Church Planting Movement is *a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment*."[1] A church planting movement comes about when many existing churches plant many churches that in turn plant rapidly multiplying churches. When churches multiply themselves by planting other churches it creates an exponential missional effect. This exponential effect applies to the planting church, the church plant, and the kingdom of God. Consequently, the AG should champion, resource, and encourage a church planting movement at all levels.

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[1] David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 21.

Churches multiplying themselves by planting new churches serves as the strategic key to a church planting movement.[2] The research discovered that the missional effectiveness of multiplying churches far out paces the missional effectiveness of churches that choose not to plant other churches. These churches, and their leaders, should be held up as the preferred model to increase missionality and further these churches should be as considered missional and innovative champions in the AG.

New churches more effectively attract certain categories of people than existing churches. For a variety of reasons, new churches more effectively attract the unchurched and de-churched than existing churches. The best way to influence these groups with the gospel is to plant more missional churches, which use a variety of methods of witness among these groups rather than simply relying on existing churches to reach them for Christ. Church plants as a whole innovate more easily than older churches; this happens because of necessity, motivation, and the inherent flexibility of new organizations. Because of the increased capacity of church plants to attract those not in a church, church plants should be championed for the missional strength they bring to the AG.

God uses church planting as an apostolic method to expand His Kingdom into new territory. Church planting attracts much-needed spiritual entrepreneurs and gives them a place to exercise their gifts and make a difference.[3] Church planting as an apostolic methods succeeds most when lead by men and women with an apostolic gifting. Because of its apostolic function, church planting operates best on the demographic edges

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[2] See Appendix F, "Every Church a Parent or Partner, *Evangel* Interview."

[3] See Appendix T, "The Value of Mavericks in Planting Churches."

of society. An apostolic function is crucial to the viability of the AG as a missonal organization.

Church planting attracts leaders to it that have an apostolic gifting, which manifests as spiritual entrepreneurship. As organizations mature they resist those with entrepreneurial gifts and value those leaders who can bring ongoing stability, harmony, and a sense of well-being to the organization. Relegating those with entrepreneurial gifts to second tier status signals the beginning of the end for an organization's missional effectiveness. The apostolic method of church planting requires that the AG value those men and women with an apostolic gifting.

The increasing movement of the U.S. population to urban areas coupled with the declining representation of AG churches in Urban areas necessitates a massive intentional urban church planting emphasis. The majority of the United States now lives in urban areas, and the movement of the population streams toward these population centers. Alarmingly, coupled with this migration toward urban areas is the overall declining number of AG churches per one thousand people in all areas of the United States. Additionally, the historic under-representation of AG churches in urban areas compounds this and should cause great alarm, serving as the impetus for a major urban church planting emphasis.

Championing church planting as a strategic component in increasing missional effectiveness will bring far more results than holding up mega attractional churches as the desired model of success. Too often denominations extol mega attractional churches because they have bigger buildings, more bodies, and larger budgets than most churches. However, American church history has demonstrated that the missional effectiveness of

mega attractional churches often suffers because of the ongoing need to pour resources and energy to sustain more buildings, larger attendance, and ever growing budgets. God calls and equips far more people to plant and lead missional churches than He equips people to lead mega attractional churches. An emphasis on mega attractional churches rather than on church planting compares to a church giving the Mother's Day award to the largest mother rather than to the mother with the most children.

One surprising result arose from the research of 8,000 plus churches: AG churches, as a whole and regardless of the age of the church, continue to be missionally effective when compared to churches of other denominations. All AG churches have value and are needed to accomplish the AG's mission. Therefore, it is important that the AG not view existing churches as second class or missionally inferior to church plants, but value existing churches for the strengths they have; these strengths often come only through longevity and credibility in a community. Every church that pursues God's mission has value in His Kingdom and should have value in the AG.

Finally, two distinctives stand out when considering the strong missional effectiveness of AG churches compared to the missional effectiveness of other organizations. One distinctive is the ongoing missional focus of AG churches for their own community but also for the nations. Most AG churches understand their primary mission is to preach and witness the gospel so people can come to Christ and experience life transformation. The other distinctive is the teaching and practice of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The emphasis of the AG on the presence of God to help individuals in their every day life and to empower individuals specifically for powerful witness creates expectancy for the Spirit of God in all areas of life. The AG needs to continue

emphasizing the two values of missional focus and baptism in the Holy Spirit for all existing churches and all church plants.

Recommendations for the Assemblies of God

Although the spiritual need in the United States continues to multiply exponentially, AG church plants demonstrate a remarkable capacity for missional effectiveness in the face of overwhelming opposition. Because of this, the following section presents nine recommendations for increasing the missional effectiveness of the Assemblies of God.

The first recommendation urges the AG to elevate and champion church planting as the primary strategic method to increase missional effectiveness.[4] Historically the strength of the AG came from valuing the apostolic expansion of God's kingdom at home and abroad. At home the primary method was through planting, or pioneering new works and the AG sent missionaries abroad to establish indigenous churches. Throughout its past the AG national leadership continuously presented new national initiatives to emphasize the value of and need for new churches; many of these initiatives are noted in Appendix A.[5] These national church planting initiatives kept church planting at the forefront of the consciousness of the AG and subsequently church planting was strong. Likewise today the AG, from the General Council to the sectional level, needs to

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[4] See Appendix G, "Church Planting By-Law Amendment General Council 2003."

[5] See Appendix A, "Assemblies of God Responses and Initiatives to Increase the Number of New Churches."

continuously champion church planting as a strategic, necessary, and most effective method to reap the harvest.[6]

The second recommendation endorses a major national AG urban church planting initiative. Major urban centers continue to outpace all other areas in population growth, growth in ethnic populations, and as cities are gentrified they continue to attract a disproportionate percentage of millennials. Additionally major urban areas have vast influence over the rest of the US. They are centers for education, science, finance, politics, media, medicine, and corporate headquarters. Urban areas represent a unique mix of complexity and opportunity. Because of the strategic importance of urban areas, the AG should formulate a major urban initiative of historic proportions.

The third recommendation calls for resisting the urge at all levels of the AG to treat church planting as just another ministry program that competes for dollars and resources. Surveys from regional AG leadership during the 2002-2003 Vision for Transformation process prioritized church planting as the number one need of the AG.[7] The AG faces the same challenges common to all maturing organizations. One of these challenges pits the wants and needs of the existing elements of the mature organization against the mission of the organization. This often manifests when members and leaders of an organization value the organization for what it provides for them personally or to their area of interest. This results in great amounts of resources dedicated to ministries and leadership positions that may or may not be missionally effective. Unfortunately in

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[6] See Appendix S, "Vision for Transformation General Council Talking Points Listing Church Planting Churches as Number One Priority" for an example of the 2003 General Council championing church planting.

[7] See Appendix H, "Prioritization of Needs from Regional Vision for Transformation Surveys."

almost all instances the mission of the organization, and the primary methods of realizing that mission are placed into weakened positions within the organization. Because of the Great Commission and the proven missional effectiveness of church planting, the AG must do everything within its power to ensure church planting remains front and center of the AG.[8]

The fourth recommendation makes resourcing and training of church planters a top priority for the AG. Resourcing a ministry demonstrates that the particular ministry is a real value and not just a good idea. Because of the strategic importance of church planting, resourcing and training of church planters must be seen as a strategic investment in the missionality of the AG.

The fifth recommendation seeks to expand the CMN program to encourage more churches to plant churches. In 2003 a major initiative, Every Church a Parent or a Partner— supporting churches planting churches, was approved by the Executive Presbytery. Likewise the Executive Presbytery approved the Church Multiplication initiative in 2007.[9] The CMN has had good success because of innovative leadership and because it has made seed funding available to church planters being planted out of a parent church. The church planter receiving the funds then commits their church plant to invest 10 per cent of its annual income to missions. The research shows that when a church multiplies by planting other churches the missional effectiveness of both parent church and church plant is much higher than missional effectiveness for other churches. The CMN funding benefits the planter, the new church plant, the parent church, and

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[8] See Appendix O, "Roadblocks to Church Planting and Solutions."

[9] See Appendix I, "Every Church A Parent or Partner Campaign Overview."

missions. CMN funding is a win-win for the kingdom of God and the AG; its expansion

will pay rich missional dividends.

The sixth recommendation enjoins the AG to initiate a large prayer movement for

church planting. Currently World Missions sends out frequent prayer communiqués to

local AG churches for the needs of missionaries and for urgent situations around the

world. This keeps the missionaries and their fields at the forefront of the local church,

and it enlists countless people to pray. Because church planters serve on the front lines,

initiating a prayer movement would enlist a large nationwide army of intercessors, would

signal the dependence of the AG upon Jesus as the Lord of the harvest, and invoke His

supernatural gifts and endowments for church planters, their churches and communities.

A prayer movement undergirding church planting efforts will ensure lasting fruit.

The seventh recommendation proposes the inclusion of the spiritual metrics of

Parent Affiliated Churches, or PAC churches, on the ACMR.[10] Currently PAC churches

are not included on the ACMR as they are considered extensions of their parent church,

consequently there is no consistent method to recognize and measure their missional

contribution to the AG. Including them as a separate category would give the same kinds

of valuable information as existing churches provide to the AG. The General Council

action has granted to PAC churches an official status; they should be included on the

ACMR for the same reasons existing churches are included on the ACMR.

The eighth recommendation advocates for organizationally elevating church

planting to top tier organizational status within the AG national headquarters. This would

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[10] See Appendix J, "George Wood- Charles Hackett-Paul Drost Discussion Regarding Need to Include Parent Churches on ACMR."

result in a national church planting office receiving the appropriate resources and organizational strength to effectively champion church planting from a national platform. Historically the General Council recognized planting new churches as an essential strategy to reach America, and the General Council in 1937 took action to properly place church planting within the national organization of the AG. It accomplished this by taking church planting and intercultural ministries out of Foreign Missions in order to create a separate Home Missions Department, now US Missions. The formation of Home Missions had two main reasons for being; one focused on church planting and the other focused on the growing ethnic population.

In the 2005 Denver General Council, the national Church Planting Director, along with the other five US Missions department heads, was granted General Presbyter status. Within two years of the 2005 General Council action, Church Planting, with exception of nationally appointed US Missionaries involved in church planting, was taken out of US Missions and began reporting directly to General Superintendent George O. Wood who initiated this action. This new office called CMN gave AG church planting unique and valuable status, access to resources, and most importantly direct access to the General Superintendent. However, because of recent organizational repositioning at the national office, CMN is no longer directly reporting to the Superintendent. Currently, CMN is repositioned to a third-tier organizational level where it is in the same department with ministries such as Men's and Women's Ministries, Music Ministries, etc. Repositioning Church Planting to top-tier organizational status because of its historical and present-day strategic missional value, will allow for a prominent national church planting voice and optimize the strength of the AG to plant as many churches as possible here at home.

The final recommendation proposes developing a code of ethics for church planters and churches planting other churches. The introduction of the PAC concept allowed churches to plant churches without going through the normal protocols established by districts and sections. This effectively deregulated AG church planting and allowed for more church plants. However, it also engendered, and continues to engender, bad will toward church plants because some of the PAC planters take advantage of the deregulation and have acted in unethical and un-Christ like ways toward District spiritual authority, existing churches, and other pastors. Developing a strong set of Christ-honoring church planting ethics would remove many existing objections to church plants and further serve to engender more good will toward new churches.

Recommendations for Future Study

This project recommends several areas for future study in church planting. The first area involves a fellowship-wide study of best church planting and church multiplying practices and then making them known to the AG. Other denominations view the AG as a premier leader in church planting; including urban, inner city, church multiplication, and developing best church planting practices. Compiling the best practices of AG church planting could create an outstanding document of church planting practices and provide an invaluable service as the AG moves strives to fulfill its mission.

I further recommend a study of worldwide church planting movements to determine universal principles that can be applied to bring about an AG church planting movement. The AG is rightfully seen as church planting leader in the US, however church planting alone cannot keep up with the growth in population. Only an AG church

planting movement will provide the AG with enough capacity to do what it was formed to do.

I recommend a study of best practices of other countries with strong church planting efforts to gather their code of ethics for planting and best ways church plants and existing churches can work side by side in a community. Some have abused the non-existence of church planting ethics for their own benefit resulting in unnecessarily hurting existing churches and engendering bad will towards church planting. A study of worldwide church planting ethics would create the groundwork for a biblically appropriate code of church planting ethics.

Finally, I recommend a fellowship-wide study discovering what motivates ethnics to plant so many churches—and then publishing those findings to the AG.[11] The ethnics currently plant the majority of new churches in the AG. A study would uncover the principles and motivations that form fertile planting soil among ethnic churches.[12] A study of ethnic church planting would also send a strong and needed signal that the AG needs ethnics, values and includes them as a necessary part of the AG and most importantly values ethnics for what they can teach the entire fellowship of the AG.

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[11] See Appendix K, "Vital Contribution of Ethnics, 1997."

[12] See Appendix L, "Vital Contribution of Ethnics, 2010."

APPENDIX A: ASSEMBLIES OF GOD RESPONSES AND INITIATIVES TO

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NEW CHURCHES

Church Planting History in the Assemblies of God[1]

1914—Hot Springs: T. K. Leonard, from Ohio, presented a document that was

incorporated almost verbatim as the preamble to the first constitution for the

Assemblies of God. " …refer to them by the general scriptural name, i.e.,

"Assembly of God," and adopt it as soon as possible for the purpose of

convenience, unity, fellowship, and to be more scriptural and legal in transacting

business, owning property, and executing missionary work at home and foreign

lands."[2]

1921—General Council adopted plan, placing church planting responsibility on AG

districts to evangelize neglected areas and formed funding plan.[3]

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[1] Paul Drost presentation, Church Planting History in the Assemblies of God, May 18, 2010-Gordon-Conwell Seminary, compiled by Paul Drost from Assemblies of God Archives and Home Missions Documents.

[2] Assemblies of God, *Minutes of the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States of America, Canada and Foreign Lands (Held at Hot Springs, Ark. April 2-12, 1914),* Findlay, OH: The Gospel Publishing House, 1914, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, accessed July 12, 2014, http://ifphc.org/DigitalPublications/USA/Assemblies%20of%20God%20USA/Minutes%20General%20Council/Unregistered/1914/FPHC/1914_04.pdf#search="executing missionary work", 5.

[3] Ruth A. Lyon, *A History of Home Missions of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Division of Home Missions, 1992), 10.

1937—Home Missions established as Educational and Home Missions Department[4]

General Council report, "and the strengthening of the work at home is the only

way we can enlarge our work abroad, and the urgency of the command of our

Lord and the crying need everywhere will not permit us to be indifferent or

inactive."[5] Home Missions had been part of Foreign Missions but it was separated

out to give emphasis to America. The two primary reasons were to plant churches

and to reach Native Americans [ethnic groups].

1955— Assistant General Superintendent and Executive Director of Home Missions -

Gayle F. Lewis "If we are to expand at home we must first expand at home."[6]

1955—"Pioneer Pastors to be Honored at General Council"[7]—400 pioneer church

planters honored at General Council and offering received for church planting

buildings and plans.

Home Missions Church Planting Emphases:

1940s—early 1950s The motto and accepted standard number of new church plants in
the 1940s—early 1950s was *"A Church a Day and Two on Sunday."*

1949—"Six-year Expansion Plan"—Goal: To plant 4000 churches to increase from

6,000-10,000 churches in 6 years.[8]

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[4] *General Council Minutes* 1937, 36.

[5] Ibid., 34.

[6] Ibid., 61.

[7] "Pioneer Pastors to be Honored at General Council," *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 21, 1955, 9.
Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, accessed July 13, 2014, http://ifphc.org/pdf/PentecostalEvangel/1950-1959/1955/1955_08_21.pdf#Page9.

[8] Lyon, 49-50.

1955—"Mission U.S.A"—Goal: 1,000 churches in 1955.[9]

1956—"Every Church Start Another Church."[10]

1960- National Goal – Plant enough churches to have one church for every 10,000 people[11]

1961—1970— "Break through 8000"—Goal: 8,000 new churches in the decade of the 60's.[12]

1961—General Council report—The churches ability to change is going to determine its ability to meet the challenge of the hour.[13]

1961—Pastor Leroy Sanders of 1st Christian Assembly of God in Cincinnati, Ohio borrowed $75,000 and gave 50 tithers to start Tri-County Assembly of God in Cincinnati, Ohio.[14]

1962—"Sites for Souls" land acquisition plan for church planters.[15]

1966—Melvin Hodges, noted missionary to South America at the National Home Missions conference in Springfield, MO, talked about the need for churches to start other churches. "Some programs may have a flash of success for awhile but God intends to work through His church and this is the way."[16]

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[9] Ibid., 61.

[10] Ibid., 63.

[11] Ibid., 73.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Lyon, 74.

[14] R. L. Brandt, "Shall a Church Be Born in a Day?" *Pentecostal Evangel*, May 21, 1961, 8. Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, accessed July 15, 2014, http://ifphc.org/pdf/PentecostalEvangel/1960-1969/1961/1961_05_21.pdf#Page4.

[15] Lyon, 76.

[16] Ibid., 96.

1967—General Council, "Branch out Emphasis" Churches starting branch works, preaching points and Sunday School.[17]

1971-1980—"Mission America" thrust resulting in 2,463 new church plants.

1991-2000—"Decade of Harvest" thrust resulting in 2,965 new church plants.

2000-2009—Planted about 2,750 churches.

- Implemented Bootcamps for Church Planting and Revitalization
- Systems of Coaching, Assessing, Training (also for Spanish language)
- Promotions to sound the call or cast vision—ex "Every Church a Parent or Partner."
- Resources—$50,000,000 Church Planting Loan Fund created
- Results—90% success rate for planted churches (offset by church closings)

2003 General Council—Historic Church Planting Resolution passed at General Council allowing the formation and governance of satellite churches by a parenting church.[18]

2003 General Council—Launch of Every Church a Parent or Partner Campaign. Churches committed to planting or helping to plant 966 churches in the next biennium, $1.2 million raised to give grants for buildings for church plants, and $475,000 pledged to Church Planting Department to promote and facilitate a movement wide church planting emphasis.

Presently—Church Multiplication Network

- $30,000 grant if matched by planter-paid back by 5%-missions, 5% to CMN and 1% to CMN in perpetuity
- $15,000,000 campaign to fund 500 new church plants

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[17] Ibid., 97.

[18] *General Council Minutes* 2003, 37.

APPENDIX B: U.S. AG CHURCHES OPEN AND CLOSED, 1965-2013

Year[1]	Opened[2]	Closed[2]	Total	Net Change
1965-66	222	231	8,443	-9
1966-67	202	139	8,506	63
1967-68	102	98	8,510	4
1968-69	210	150	8,570	60
1969-70	169	120	8,619	49
1970-71	230	115	8,734	115
1971-72	209	144	8,799	65
1972-73	247	175	8,871	72
1973-74	186	137	8,920	49
1974-75	214	115	9,019	99
1975-76	232	111	9,140	121
1976-77	197	129	9,208	68
1977-78	214	131	9,291	83
1978-79	263	144	9,410	119
1979-80	301	149	9,562	152
1980-81	338	127	9,773	211
1981	269	112	9,930	157
1982	400	157	10,173	243
1983	343	130	10,386	213
1984	355	159	10,582	196
1985	326	147	10,761	179
1986	291	166	10,886	125
1987	308	190	11,004	118
1988	311	192	11,123	119
1989	285	216	11,192	69
1990	340	179	11,353	161
1991	368	185	11,536	183
1992	334	181	11,689	153
1993	276	203	11,762	73
1994	263	261	11,764	2
1995	274	215	11,823	59
1996	244	183	11,884	61
1997	238	202	11,920	36
1998	288	271	11,937	17
1999	315	197	12,055	118
2000	255	226	12,084	29
2001	220	222	12,082	-2
2002	247	196	12,133	51
2003	327	238	12,222	89
2004	280	225	12,277	55
2005	258	237	12,298	21
2006	276	263	12,311	13
2007	309	258	12,362	51
2008	247	232	12,377	15

Year[1]	Opened[2]	Closed[2]	Total	Net Change
2009	266	272	12,371	-6
2010	325	239	12,457	86
2011	368	230	12,595	138
2012	391	264	12,722	127
2013	**324**	**254**	**12,792**	**70**

[1] Reporting periods have varied through the years. As of December 1981, reports are based on the calendar year ending December 31.

[2] May include occasional churches closed/opened in error, and subsequently re-opened/closed.
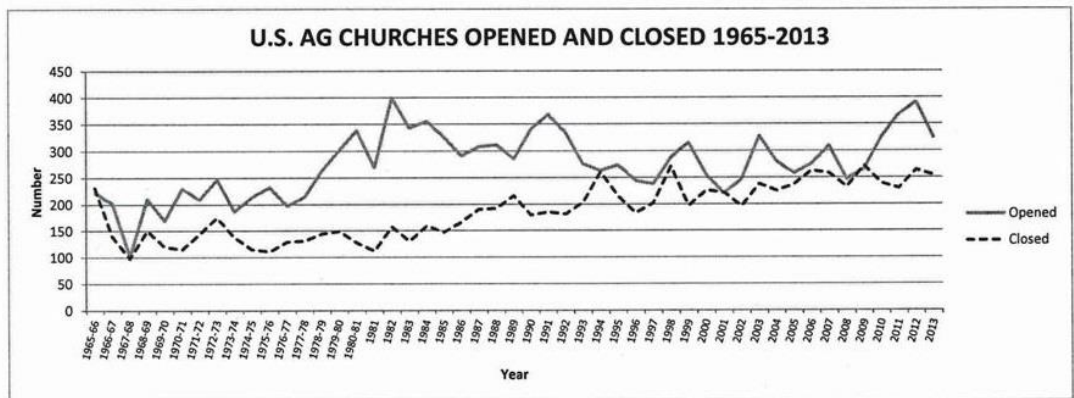
U.S. AG CHURCHES OPENED AND CLOSED 1965-2013

APPENDIX C: GENERAL COUNCIL AND DISTRICT COUNCIL

CHURCH OPENS SPIRITUAL METRICS, 2000-2012

GENERAL COUNCIL AND DISTRICT COUNCIL CHURCH OPENS, 2000-2012

General Council and District Council church opens data for 2000-2012 were analyzed. Following are the results of that analysis.

Chur Opens 2000-2012, General Council & District Council	2012 Worship Attendance	2012 Converts	2012 Water Baptisms	2012 Spirit Baptisms
Total	253,827	65,297	21,004	11,508
Per Capita by Attendance		0.26	0.08	0.05
Per 100 attendees		26	8	5
Chur Opens 2008-2012, General Council & District Council				
Total	76,572	16,121	6,152	3,770
Per Capita by Attendance		0.21	0.08	0.05
Per 100 attendees		21	8	5
Total Churches 2012:				
Total	1,880,269	453,496	131,713	81,345
Per Capita by Attendance		0.24	0.07	0.04
Per 100 attendees		24	7	4

	Per 100 Attendees in 2012		
General Council & District Council Church Opens Reporting Periods	Converts	Water Baptisms	Spirit Baptisms
2000-2012 (13 yrs)	26	8	5
2008-2012 (5 years)	21	8	5
All 2012 churches	24	7	4

Notes:

1. Only churches surviving until 12/31/12 were included in the calculations.
2. Neither converts nor baptism data are available for the third type of church opens, Parent Affiliated Churches (PACs).
3. Results are based on church opens data available as of September 2013.
4. Data do not include conversions, nor baptisms, occurring outside of local church ministries.

General Secretary's Office, Statistics   10/15/13   Church Opens 2000-2012 Vitals Comps.xlsx

APPENDIX D: BEFORE AND AFTER SPIRITUAL METRICS OF CHURCHES

PLANTING CHURCHES AND THEIR DAUGHTER CHURCHES

Results-Final Report and Tables from National Survey of

Churches that Plant Churches Sept. 19, 2014

Data was collected using a web-based survey from 22 Assemblies of God

churches that had planted churches. Thirteen of the churches responded to a general

appeal to church-planters and the other eight responded to personal contact from the

researcher. In the survey churches were asked basic demographic questions regarding

their community and the number of churches they had planted as well as items related to

attendance and missional effectiveness. Numerical data provided was requested from

either the 2012 Annual Church Ministries Report (ACMR) or their year-to-date numbers

for 2013. Prior to the analysis one church was eliminated from the study due to the

extremely high number of churches planted (70) and the inclusion of those planted

outside the United States.

In the analysis, descriptive statistics were derived for each of the survey items

prior to calculating inferential statistics. The descriptive statistical information is

provided in table 1 below for data prior to planting churches. Descriptive statistics are

provided for data after planting churches in table 2. In looking at the mean and median

values it is apparent that the distribution for many of the variables have a strong positive

skew based on the large differences between mean and median scores. Sample sizes vary

from one variable to another due to missing data on the items. All churches provided

Sunday morning average attendance numbers down to a low of 5 churches providing data

on Spirit baptisms.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Church-Planting Churches Prior to Plants*

Variable		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Sunday Morning Average Attendance	1	90	3500	615.86	420	765.704
Sunday Morning Average Attendance before planting	1	60	3000	496.14	300	638.422
Salvations Before Planting	7	3	229	66.88	48	67.997
Water Baptisms Before Planting	6	0	212	31.75	19	50.253
Spirit Baptisms Before Planting	5	5	80	22.13	12	21.135
Missions Giving Before Planting	1	6,000	250,000	58,868	35,000	70,998.853

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Church-Planting Churches after Planting*

Variable		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Number of Churches Planted	0	1	27	3.70	2	5.787
Combined Plant Average Attendance	0	12	4500	618.30	190	1065.453
Total Average Attendance for All Churches	9	122	6000	1328.53	640	1615.39
Total Salvations after	6	3	457	154.38	127.5	143.21
Total Spirit Baptisms after	6	2	125	30.50	18	34.78
Total Water Baptisms after	8	0	350	70.61	34	92.904
Total Missions Giving after	7	10,000	750,000	166,209	60,000	232,437
Plant Salvations	1	1	393	75.6	15	110.686
Plant Spirit Baptisms		2	17	9.2	11	5.85
Plant Water Baptisms		8	143	50.9	35	38.39
Plant Missions Giving	1	250	167,000	28,278	10,000	43,457

Inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses of the study involving the impact of planting on missional effectiveness. Missional effectiveness as defined by achieving changes in outcome variables which consisted of Sunday morning worship attendance, salvations, Spirit baptisms, and water baptisms. In order to standardize comparisons, a ratio was created to make the variable numbers in relationship to 100 attendees. The descriptive statistics for these calculated variables are provide in table 3. These before and after values were compared using paired-sample t-tests.

In reviewing the comparisons, the missional effectiveness ratings for each of the churches was greater after church planting than before except for missions giving. Of these differences, there was a statistically significant difference for the number of water baptisms with a mean increase of 3.9 water baptisms per church group. The difference was statistically significant with t (3) = 4.432, p = .021.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for Missional Effectiveness Before and After Church Planting per 100 Attendees*

Variable	Mean		Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Salvations after per 100	44.4		63.245	22.360
Salvations before per 100	23.3		16.189	5.724
Spirit Baptisms after per 100	5.8		4.788	2.394
Spirit Baptisms before per 100	5.06		2.201	1.101
Water baptisms after per 100	14.08		14.415	7.208
Water Baptisms beforeper100	11.8		13.934	6.967
Missions giving after per 100	16540.9		12922.710	5275.675
Missions giving before per 100	24300.5		20786.006	8485.852

Table 4. *Paired Samples t-tests for Before and After Comparisons on Missional Effectiveness*

Variable	Mean Difference	T	df	Significance
Salvations afterper100 – Salvations beforeper100	64.8	1.140	7	.292
Spirit baptisms afterper100 – Spirit Baptisms before per 100	6.2	.421	3	.702
Water baptisms after per100 – Water Baptisms before per 100	3.9	4.432	3	.021
Missions giving after per 100 – Missions giving before per 100	25956.0	-1.926	5	.112

Additional comparisons were done looking at the mean missional effectiveness scores for church plant groups compared to average churches with in the Assemblies of God based upon ACMR data for salvations, Spirit baptisms, and Water baptisms. The mean values for these variables is provided in table 5 for the church plant groups and the national norms from 2012.

Table 5. *Comparison of Mean Scores for Missional Effectiveness of Church Plant Groups to National Assemblies of God Church Norms per 100 Attendees*

Variable	Church Plant Mean	National Mean	Mean Difference
Salvations after per 100	44.4	24	20.4
Spirit Baptisms after per 100	5.8	4	1.8
Water baptisms after per 100	14.1	7	7.1

While the differences between these values can be quite large, there were no statistically significant differences between the church plant means and the national means.

APPENDIX E: CMN HANDOUT TO AG TRUST

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, OCTOBER 2013

In September 2013, twenty churches that received Matching Funds launched in their community; as a result, *over 3,700 people attended and 161 people found life in Christ*. One church planter shared the story of watching his dad respond to the altar call, making the day even more special. None of this would have been possible without AG Trust and CMN working together to provide Matching Funds to maximize the launch of a new church.

Matching Fund Statistics:
275 churches received Matching Funds.
19,254 people have made a decision to follow Christ.
4,509 people have been baptized in water.
2,519 people have been baptized in the Spirit.

AG Trust has distributed $8,232,752.84 to Matching Fund Churches. Thos churches have replenished $2,664,098.70 back into the Matching Fund. Those funds were immediately paid forward to the next church plants and are included in the amount distributed by AG Trust. This has allowed us to fund 89 churches from replenishments.

Matching Fund Church Giving
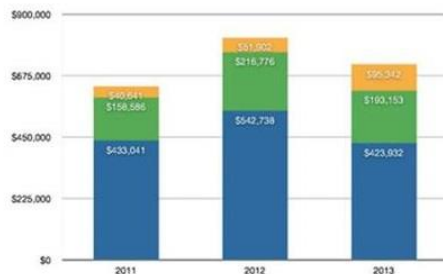
2011 Total $632,268.21
  AGWM - $433,041.24
  AGUSM - $158,585.83
  Other - $40,641.14
2012 Total $811,414.84
  AGWM - $542,737.79
  AGUSM - $216,775.55
  Other - $51,901.50
2013 Total - $712,426.75
  AGWM - $423,931.89
  AGUSM - $193,153.10
  Other - $95,341.76

APPENDIX F: EVERY CHURCH A PARENT OR PARTNER

EVANGEL INTERVIEW

Every church a parent or partner[1]

Paul Drost, *director of church planting for the Assemblies of God, recently spoke with Associate Editor Kirk Noonan about an innovative campaign that might possibly change the course of the Assemblies of God. This campaign was authorized by General Superintendent, Thomas Trask, and the A/G Executive Presbytery during their last session in March, 2003.*

PE: You're calling every church to get involved with church planting. Tell us about that.

DROST: The "Every Church a Parent or Partner" campaign aims to have every Assemblies of God church plant a church or help an existing church that needs assistance to get back on its feet. The bottom line is that we want churches to help other churches so that we can reach many more people with the gospel. In many ways this strategy is a paradigm shift for us.

PE: How so?

DROST: The Assemblies of God has always been marked by growth and evangelism, but with that has come a mentality of being rugged individualists. Our new focus will ask local church leaders and their congregations to expand their ministry horizons and help a budding congregation.

Historically what has happened is that a church would be planted and then it would be grown as large as possible. But the DNA that was lacking was a philosophy of multiplication, which would have forced thriving church plants to plant new churches themselves.

PE: That makes sense because a church that was planted is filled with people who know all about church planting.

DROST: Exactly. I believe it's God's will for our churches to be multiplying. The Fellowship's preamble talks about the reasons the Assemblies of God came into existence. Part of that document says we exist to do missionary work at home and abroad. The 'at home' part means planting new churches. In effect, we are going back to our roots with this campaign.

PE: How can laypeople be involved?

DROST: They can pray, give finances, volunteer at a church plant or encourage their pastor to support a new church plant in their district.

PE: Can any size church plant a church?

DROST: Smaller churches might not be able to plant another church on their own, but they could partner with a church plant and provide prayer and finances. The point is, no matter how big or small a church is, it can have a part in planting another church.

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[1] Kirk Noonan, "Every Church a Parent or Partner" (Interview with Paul Drost), July 13, 2003, *Pentecostal Evangel*, accessed December 9, 2014, http://www.pe.ag.org/conversations2003/4653_drost.cfm.

PE: What are the ingredients for a strong and healthy church plant?

DROST: The healthiest church plants have been mothered by a good strong church. It's similar to a person being born into a loving, nurturing family versus a family where the person's basic needs are provided but there is no love or nurturing.

PE: Might every church that is planted wind up being an exact replica of the church that planted it?

DROST: A replica isn't necessarily a bad thing if the church that did the planting is a healthy church. But church plants naturally take on a personality of their own and find their own niche, worship style and way of doing things. This opens the door for much diversity in our Fellowship. Recently, we had a traditional church help plant a contemporary church and now both churches are thriving.

PE: What are some other benefits of churches planting other churches?

DROST: The harvest is greater. A friend of mine who has a church of 8,000 worshipers and has planted more than 20 churches told me that it's very simple: "We plant more so we can reap more." The more points of preaching and receptors you have, the more likely people are going to accept Christ as Savior. And that is the best reason to plant churches.

APPENDIX G: CHURCH PLANTING BY-LAW AMENDMENT

GENERAL COUNCIL 2003

EP ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS
FROM
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
VISION FOR TRANSFORMATION

EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERY
RETREAT

MARCH 17 - 18, 2003

UNIVERSITY PLAZA HOTEL

EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM

The Executive Presbytery met on March 17-18, 2003 to review the reports and

recommendations from the Vision for Transformation Committee and subcommittees.

The following actions were taken by the Executive Presbytery on the

recommendations and resolutions.

Recommendation #1: **Church Planting**

Whereas,   The Constitutional Declaration of the General Council of the Assemblies of God

                states that a priority reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God is to be an agency

                of God for evangelizing the world, to be a corporate body in which people may

worship God, and to be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son; and

Whereas,   The 10th Statement of Fundamental Truths reaffirms the above constitutional declaration (Constitution, Article V, 10); and

Whereas,   Biblically, the local church is central to the multiplication and reproduction of followers of Christ; and

Whereas,   The Assemblies of God has historically affirmed the centrality of the local church; and

Whereas,   The local church must be reaffirmed as central to any Assemblies of God church planting effort; and

Whereas,   The Vision for Transformation Committee is asking the General Council to adopt the concept of "Every Church a Parent or a Partner"; and

Whereas,   A culture of release and blessing is necessary for the Assemblies of God to reaffirm itself as a church planting/church multiplying movement; and

Whereas,   The establishment of new churches is one of the most effective ways to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and to accomplish our constitutional declaration; and

Whereas,   There is no present policy regarding the encouragement of church planting within the General Council Bylaws; and

Whereas,   Every effort needs to be expended in encouraging the planting of new churches and the elimination of roadblocks to church planting sometimes created by existing churches protecting a self-defined territory into which new churches are not welcome; and

Whereas,   A policy regarding church planting within the General Council Bylaws provides direction to districts and entities within a district (General Council Constitution Article X, Section 6); therefore, be it

Resolved,   That General Council Bylaw Article VI, Section 6 and 7 be renumbered as Sections 7 and 8 respectively; and that a new Section 6 be added as follows:

Section 6. New Assemblies.

The planting of new churches shall be a priority goal for the General Council of the Assemblies of God. Resources at all levels shall be aligned to accomplish this. Initiative for establishing new churches may emanate from local assemblies, sections and district councils. District presbyteries, sectional committees, or the authorities within a district tasked with the responsibility of approving new churches shall not prohibit the planting of new churches unless a compelling reason exists. If it is determined that a compelling reason exists, a minister or local church desiring to plant the church shall have the right to appeal the

decision of a sectional committee to their District Presbytery or

authorities within a district tasked with the responsibility of approving

new churches, and the decision of the district to the General Council

Executive Presbytery shall be final.

>> *A motion prevailed to accept the proposed, edited resolution with the edited alternative appeal.*

APPENDIX H: PRIORITIZATION OF NEEDS FROM REGIONAL

VISION FOR TRANSFORMATION SURVEYS

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL MEETING

OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 1, 2002

Compilation of Prioritized Themes from Survey Questions

Theme 1—Church Planting

1. Remove territorialism that prevents local church planting.
2. Develop a culture of church planting at the district level.
3. Provide someone from each district who can clearly articulate the importance of church planting, and the district's vision and strategy for church planting.
4. Develop in the Assemblies of God a culture whereby each church takes upon itself the responsibility for church planting in their community.
5. Adopt a model whereby small churches can mother churches.
6. Adopt a model whereby several churches cooperate in a single church plant.
7. Change the mindset in Assemblies of God circles that a church must start small.
8. Provide an assessment program that identifies people with a passion for church planting and the appropriate skills for the task.
9. Adopt a team approach to church planting.
10. Provide a coaching and accountability structure for church planters.
11. Use the national and district networking structure to provide the resources of finances, facilities and personnel.
12. Provide adequate training and tools to make church planters successful.
13. The future leaders of the Assemblies of God are today in our local churches. Use the mentor/coach influence of the local pastor to help these individuals discover their call.
14. Develop a clearly understood and widely accepted definition of success and failure for church planting.

<div align="center">THEME 2—CHURCH REVITALIZATION</div>

1. Establish a culture in the Assemblies of God that welcomes and embraces an independent evaluation of local church health and vitality. Recognize that evaluation is an important part of church health.
2. Establish a culture in the Assemblies of God that rewards and celebrates those churches that embrace change.
3. Establish a culture in the Assemblies of God that encourages relationships among church leaders and discourages isolation.
4. Establish a standard to evaluate church health and identify those churches in need.
5. Provide revitalization teams at the district level to assess and assist those churches in need.
6. Provide a coaching, mentoring, accountability structure for pastors and local church leaders.
7. Provide a model whereby local churches can network for accountability and shared resources.
8. Establish a culture in the Assemblies of God that supports and embraces the amalgamation of struggling churches into one healthy church.
9. Provide leadership training and evaluation resources for pastors such as Foundations of Leadership and Boot Camps.
10. Make available such tools as those from *Church Smart* in Chicago, Illinois.
11. When appropriate, adopt a fresh-start strategy that closes one church and then opens a new church in a given community.
12. Use times of pastoral transition in a local church to conduct church health evaluations and offer coaching from the district leadership.
13. Provide training opportunities at a sectional, district and national level for all leaders in the local church, not just the clergy.
14. Recognize that church revitalization is both a church planting and leadership development issue.

<div align="center">THEME 3—CHURCH AFFILIATION</div>

1. Establish a culture in the Assemblies of God that welcomes and embraces affiliation with church outside the Assemblies of God for the purpose of advancing God's Kingdom.
2. Provide opportunity for non-Assemblies of God churches to participate in our camps and district/sectional events.
3. Provide opportunity for non-Assemblies of God churches to participate in the Fine Arts Festive, Youth Convention and Bible Quiz programs.
4. Encourage local Assemblies of God churches to participate in events conducted by non-Assemblies of God organizations for the purpose of networking and relationship building.
5. Model the concept of networking and relationship building with non-Assemblies of God organization at the national and district levels.

6. Provide new categories of affiliation between Assemblies of God and non-Assemblies of God churches.
7. Provide a category of affiliation that makes possible church affiliation with local Assemblies of God churches.
8. Provide opportunities for affiliation with the Assemblies of God through non-governance relationships such as prayer ministry.
9. Examine the affiliation process with the Assemblies of God to identify barriers that have been built that prevent rather than make possible mutually beneficial relationships.
10. Provide a category of associating partnerships with the Assemblies of God that encourages a process that moves churches into full affiliation. This would be for those organizations that initially do not qualify for affiliation with the Assemblies of God.

THEME 4—CREDENTIALING FACILITATION

1. Establish a culture in the Assemblies of God that encourages the local pastor to play a key role in the credentialing process.
2. Provide a credentialing process whereby the person seeking credentials must have a relationship with a local pastor. The local pastor would mentor and coach the candidate in lifestyle and character issues.
3. Provide for a local church Certificate of Ministry that serves as an introductory level, provisional credential. This introductory certificate must be held for two years prior to applying for the next level of credentialing.
4. Provide for a mandatory mentoring/coaching relationship between each credential candidate and a local pastor.
5. Provide an appropriate CLEP System for the education requirement for credentials.
6. Remove the academic barriers for ordination that affect the ethnic groups.
7. Make a provision for an oral examination at each level of credential.
8. Provide a process that makes it easier for those who hold a specialized license with the Assemblies of God to move to ordination.
9. Make formal education more affordable.
10. Consider service in a Master's Commission ministry as fulfillment of some credentialing requirements.
11. Maintain a culture in the Assemblies of God that encourages credential candidates to aspire to the highest level of academic and experiential excellence in their preparation for ministry.
12. Exercise caution in lowering the academic and experiential standards for credentialing in the Assemblies of God.
13. Provide a clearly defined process that allows for life experience in the credentialing process.
14. Provide for alignment between the courses required by our Assemblies of God endorsed higher education institutions, and the requirements of the credentialing process. Integrate colleges into the credentialing process.
15. Make credentials more relevant to younger ministers.

THEME 5—RECIPROCITY

1. Provide a system whereby those ministers coming to the United States from other countries would have reference checks conducted on their organization and their personal standing with that organization. Require letters of recommendation from leaders in that organization.
2. Provide a process that allows recognition of ministers from those organizations working with and recognized by Assemblies of God World Missions.
3. Recognize those ministers with a proven ministry in other countries who have the appropriate endorsement from their home country church organization.
4. Provide a dual credential with those organizations outside of the United States who are recognized by Assemblies of God World Missions.
5. Provide an Assemblies of God polity and history course for international and ethnic students.
6. Empower the General Council to remove credentials in situations that merit such action. Provide global uniformity and standards for removal of credentials.

THEME 6—LEADERSHIP DEVELOP

1. Provide a strategy for relational leadership development that includes mentoring, discussion, deliberately making contact, retired pastors, and feeling free to openly share thoughts and problems.
2. Provide a strategy for the assessment of gifts and calling that includes activity at the local church level; empower of the learner; appropriate training tools and opportunities; and identification of future leaders.
3. Provide a process that will release and train mentors at the local church level.
4. Encourage large churches to include small churches in their training endeavors.
5. Provide a means of encouraging larger churches to fund leadership-training opportunities from smaller churches on a local basis.
6. Provide a continuing education process that focuses on character development.

THEME 7—ELECTED LEADERS

1. District leaders share responsibilities of serving local churches among the leaders of the district.
2. Define the differences in responsibility between the district office and the national office.
3. Provide for a relationship between the district office and the local church that is less traditional, less structured and has less paperwork.
4. District officials need to have relationships with local leaders.
5. District officials need to have accountability relationships in their personal lives.

6. Develop a clearly understood and widely accepted definition of success and failure for district officials.
7. Provide training to district officials on ways to handle business.
8. Provide training to district officials on how to develop relationships.
9. Remove those efforts that attempt to build relationships by legislation or governance structures.
10. Elect individuals to the office of district superintendent who has the skills and competency to lead at that level. Recognize some successful pastors do not make successful superintendents.
11. Make provision for a leader to serve as superintendent while remaining as pastor of a local congregation.
12. Add more districts that are not bound by geographic area.
13. Keep leaders in their areas of ministry gifting.

THEME 8—ROLE OF NATIONAL AND DISTRICT OFFICES

1. Clearly define the relationship between the district and national offices.
2. National and District offices engage the appropriate feedback methodology to accurately discover the needs of the local church.
3. Position the resources of the national and district offices to hold life-giving relationships with others as a top priority over materials such as books and tapes.
4. The value-added services of the district and national office, such as camps, youth ministry, men's ministry, women's ministry and such, are valuable enough to be funded from the general fund if necessary.
5. Resources for helping pastors and spiritual enrichment for leaders should be provided by the overhead of the district and national office.
6. A resource for dealing with stress management for pastors should be provided by the national and district office. This should deal with the balance of relationships and responsibility.

THEME 9—ORGANIZATIONAL REALIGNMENT

1. Develop a culture in the Assemblies of God that holds pastoral leadership as top priority in its organizational structure and practices.
2. Develop a culture in the Assemblies of God that embraces relationship building as a top priority.
3. Firmly fix the mission and values in the local churches to provide consistency and continuity between pastoral changes. Resist developing a new mission with each pastoral change. Teach pastors to develop new vision around the mission of the church.
4. Budgeting priorities should reflect the mission of the church.
5. The local church body knows and lives the mission and vision of the church.
6. The local church penetrating their community.

7. Provide a smaller organizational structure at the district and national level. Corporate downsizing.
8. Change district presbytery structure to provide mentoring and relationship building.
9. Conduct fewer sectional meetings such as quarterly rather than monthly meetings.
10. Develop a culture of learning whereby Districts are consistently learning from each other.
11. Provide better communication between the Assemblies of God World Missions and the district offices.
12. Reduce the pressure from Assemblies of God World Missions to give money.
13. Provide a means whereby district superintendents appoint presbyters.
14. Appoint individuals to serve on committees based on their personal gifts and skills rather than name recognition or relationships.

THEME 10—ETHNIC OPPORTUNITY

1. Takes steps to build bridges of relationship between leaders.
2. Identify and train persons with leadership and influence potential.
3. Identify the unique characteristics and needs of the 1st generation ethnic groups.
4. Recognize the multi-ethnic environment that the 2nd generation of ethnics, and subsequent generations, is moving into.
5. Recognize diversity in culture.
6. Target groups within cultural groups to provide "fellowships" opportunities.
7. Provide an atmosphere in our churches that welcomes subculture groups and provide ministry opportunity for them. This would include specialized staffing where appropriate.
8. Intentionally grow and empower persons within congregations to reach cultural groups.

APPENDIX I: EVERY CHURCH A PARENT OR PARTNER

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Assemblies of God U.S.A.

"Every Church a Parent or Partner"

Church Planting Campaign

Campaign Overview[1]

History

Church Planting is one of two great purposes for which the Assemblies of God was formed, thus executing missionary work at home and abroad. Home Missions was established in 1937. At that time the General Council report stated that, "We must strengthen the work at home to enlarge the work abroad."

In 1945 General Superintendent Ralph Riggs stated, "The best way to gird ourselves for victorious service in the foreign field is to strengthen the home base…the A/G can multiply ourselves faster, can perpetuate ourselves longer,…and intensify our impact upon the forces of darkness and upon the age in which we live by opening new churches all the time in every District." In 1966 Melvin Hodges stated, "The only method that will work in the long run is churches planting churches. Some programs may have a flash of success for a while, but God intends to work through His church and this is the way."

Throughout many generations, God has used this movement as an instrument to reach, teach and nurture disciples of Jesus Christ. We have learned through the years that sheep reproduce sheep, pastors reproduce pastors, and churches reproduce churches. America, our Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, is a great mission field and we must act accordingly. God has given us the resources to reach those calling America home. The line of unsaved Americans grows 15 miles longer each month and in the last decade has grown an additional 1,200 miles – the distance from Denver, Colorado to Washington, D.C.

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[1] Reproduced with permission. "MasterPlan Stewardship Services," Church Planting Department Campaign Overview (Springfield, MO: General Council of the Assemblies of God, March 2003), 1-7.

For this reason we are mounting an effort to increase our effectiveness as the Church of Jesus Christ; a living organism, committed to working effectively until the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Church Planting Department of the Assemblies of God is heavily invested in and committed to the revitalization / rebooting of declined and plateaued churches. While some may feel that church planting and revitalizing churches have very little in common, we are firmly committed to the belief that both are the fruit of the overall health of our fellowship. Further we have found the same principles used in planting successful, reproducing Kingdom churches are also used in restoring health and effectiveness to churches plateaued or in decline.

With this in mind, the National Church Planting Department added a Revitalization/Reboot tract to our Church Planting BootCamp. The response has been far greater than anyone could have imagined. We believe our Assemblies of God pastors are called of God and deeply desire God's best for their churches, yet so many of them can have greater success if given the right training and support. We believe we can help them fulfill God's preferred future for their congregations.

At the BootCamps they sit under top notch presenters who have successfully turned around churches and who are passionate about helping pastors revitalize their ministries and churches. The pastors are instructed in the life cycle of the church and what to do to restore it to health.

Additionally, they are placed with a coach who helps them discern who God has called them to be, how to reach those God has called them to reach, and how to bring about change in their situation.

After Boot Camp we encourage the overseeing bodies of these churches, whether it is Districts, sections, or another church, to form an ongoing partnership of support and encouragement. This empowers the pastors and their churches to undergo the difficult but worthwhile process of revitalization. We are hearing many outstanding reports of what happens when there is intentionality and partnership between a congregation, pastor, and overseeing body.

Mission and Vision

Church planting is biblical and the most effective form of evangelism. Wherever Christianity is growing rapidly, it is because local churches are multiplying and reproducing through church planting. The local church at home, just as the church abroad, must be at the heart of a church planting movement. The Church, as God's creation, has been created for multiplication and reproduction. This should be normal and desired. When the local church is released to reproduce, the blessings of God will follow.

Our mission is to encourage every pastor and church to take seriously the mandate to raise up pastors and churches from within their congregations. Pastors must help parent other churches from within their own churches to multiply our efforts to fulfill the Great Commission.

Our vision is to see the Assemblies of God become a church planting and church multiplication movement.

Opportunities

The General Council of the Assemblies of God is saying "yes" to church planting. Through 2003, forty (40) Church Planting Department *boot camps* have trained 3,100 attendees with 31 District Superintendents in attendance. In 2002, 12,000+ Assemblies of God churches planted 247 churches.

Presently we are planting by **addition** with most Assemblies of God church plants being the initiative of a District or section. We must move to planting by **multiplication** - local churches planting churches.

Objectives

Church *Parents* take the responsibility for a new church start up by supporting the church planter with resources and human capital for the new start.

Church *Parent Partners* take responsibility to join a church plant effort or to come alongside a sister church to help revitalize that church.

Our two year objectives include the following:

1. Enlisting 1000 new Church Parents

2. Enlisting 1500 Church Parent Partners

3. Raising $600,000 in funding to step up and expand support resources to Church Parents, Partners, and Planters.

This plan will need continued emphasis from the General Council, Districts and Sections. There must also be new emphasis from the General Council on the *Every Church a Parent or Partner* and Project 52 concept. There must be alignment of resources from all levels, and a corresponding increase in the Church Planting Department services to meet the need.

Benefits

The benefits from the *Every Church a Parent or Partner* effort will be enormous and include:

1. Planting more to reap more;
2. Empowering the church, rather than the institution, to determine the harvest;
3. Attracting and keeping young spiritual entrepreneurs;
4. Enlarging the home base to expand missionary efforts;
5. Enabling a wide diversity of churches to meet the diversity of America; and
6. Increasing our effectiveness.

Needs

Increased services and start-up costs for the *Church Planting Agency* for two years are:

Project	Estimated Cost
◆ Large, visible, ongoing promotional campaign	$100,000
◆ Expanded Boot Camp events to train churches and pastors	$100,000
◆ Creation, writing, production of new training materials	$ 40,000
◆ Hiring, training, and related expenses for field based and on-site Coaches / Consultants for church planting / staff	$ 75,000
◆ Establishment of web-based enlistment and support services	$ 75,000
◆ National board of leading pastors (travel, meetings, etc.)	$ 18,000
◆ Additional staff, office space, related expenses	$100,000
◆ *Parent or Partner* capital campaign promotions, mailings, special events, meetings, video creations, publications, etc.	$ 75,000
◆ Video production for training and promotion	$ 17,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECTED COSTS	**$600,000**

Campaign Components

Leadership Team

Executive Team (Steering Committee) (10)
Regional Steering Committee (9)
National Steering Committee (348)
District Leadership Teams (58)
Board of Reference

"Every Church a Parent or Partner"
Campaign Organizational Chart

"Every Church a Parent or Partner"
Campaign Organizational Chart
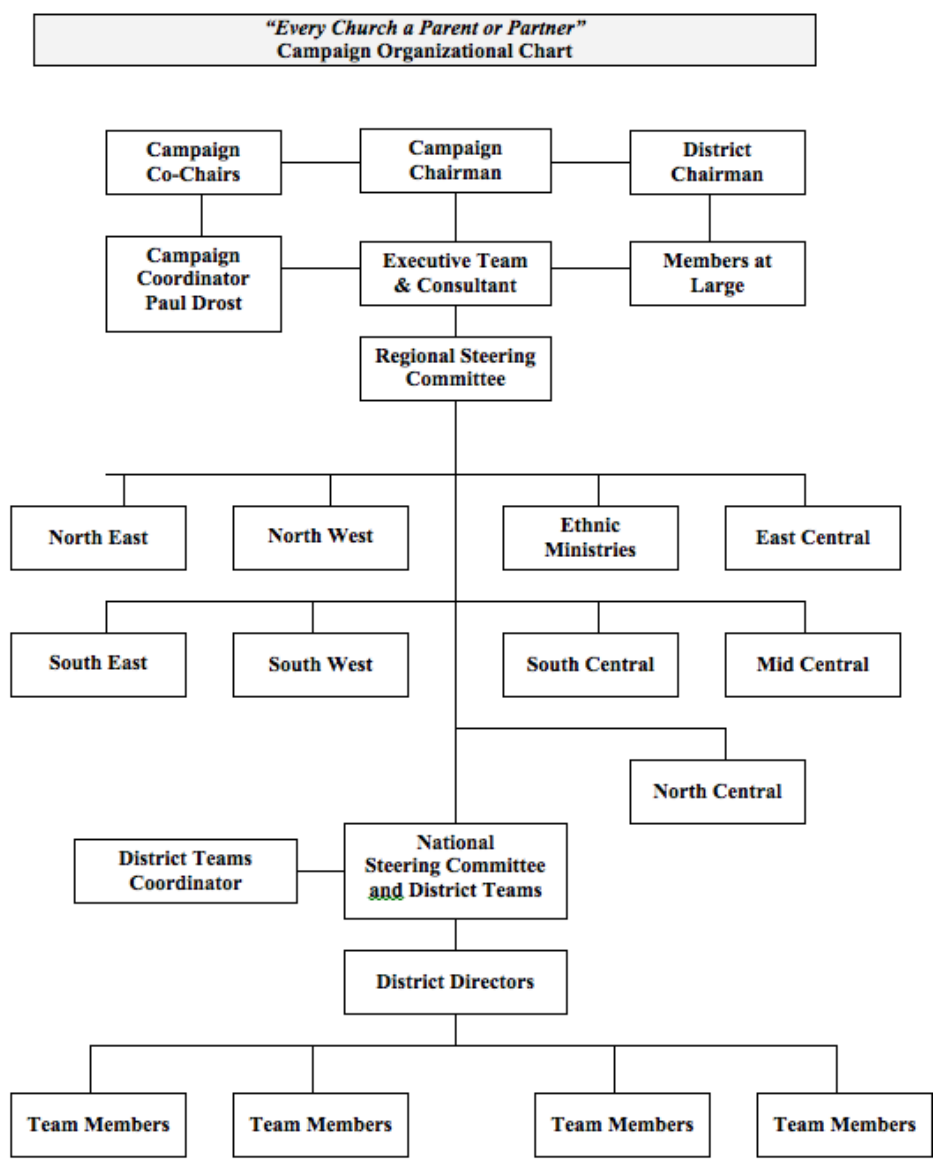
Promotions

District Council 3 minute Video
"Did You Know"

Pastor/Board 7-10 minute Video
"Did You Know"

General Council Luncheon
"Do You Hear The Call?"
Presentation will provide opportunity to enlist Parents, Partners, and Donors

General Council Saturday Evening Service
"Will You Answer the Call?"
Presentation will provide opportunity to enlist Parents, Partners, and Donors
as well as asking for a cash offering for Church Planting.

Funding Objectives

To fund our program for increased services to the pastors, planters, and partners, we anticipate a two-year budget for staffing District BootCamps, Regional Conferences, and Training Materials for leaders. We anticipate raising the funding with two year pledges and a cash offering received at General Council.

24-month giving period			
# of Gifts	**Amount**	**Cumulative total**	**Monthly Amount**
20 @	$ 10,000	$200,000	$416 monthly for 24 months
20 @	$ 5,000	$100,000	$208 monthly for 24 months
40 @	$ 2,500	$100,000	$104 monthly for 24 months
100 @	$ 1,000	$100,000	$41.66 monthly for 24 months
200 @	$ 500	$100,000	$20.83 monthly for 24 months

380 Total Church Planting Supporters (Churches / Individuals)

Timeline

March 2003	Campaign Planning
April 2003	Publications Created / Pentecostal Evangel Ads
	District Council Video Mailed
	Executive Team Enlisted and Trained
May 2003	National Steering Committee Enlisted and Trained
	Pastor/Board Video Mailed/Pentecostal Evangel Ad
June 2003	District Leadership Enlisted/Pentecostal Evangel Ad
August 2003	General Council Presentation for enlistments

Promotions and Enlistment Procedures

Every Church a Parent
or Partner
Enlistment Campaign
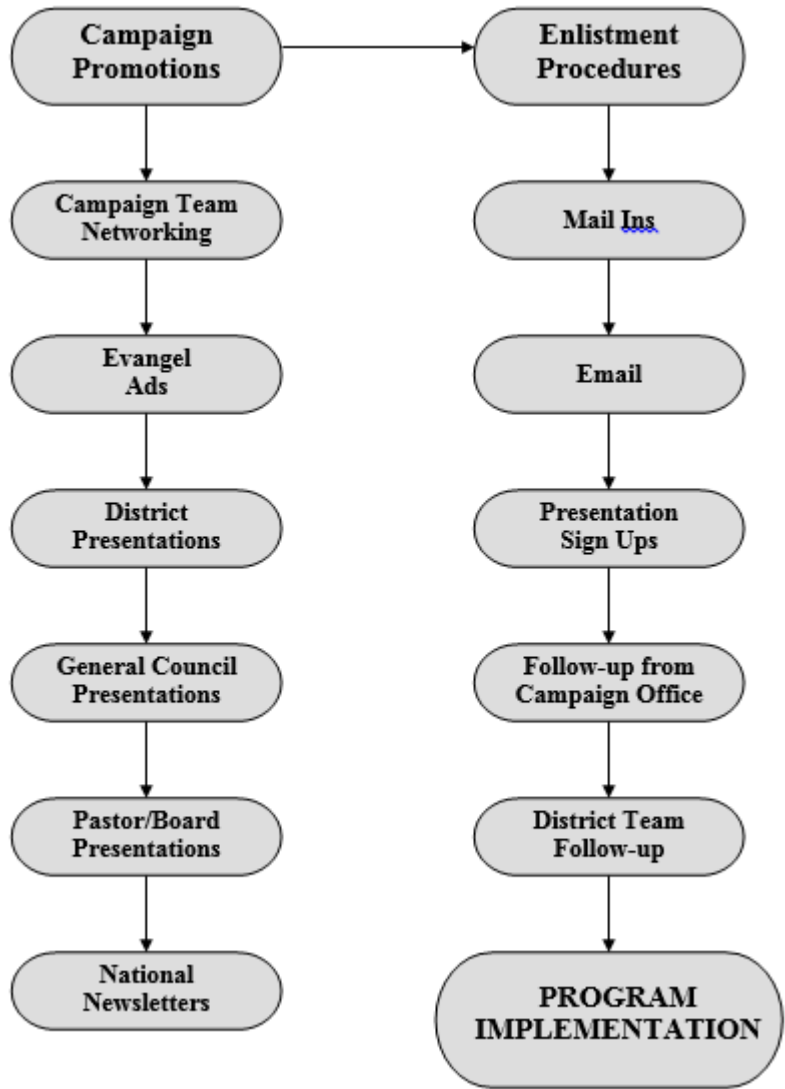
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  Campaign              ───────►      Enlistment
  Promotions                          Procedures
      │                                    │
      ▼                                    ▼
 Campaign Team                          Mail Ins
 Networking
      │                                    │
      ▼                                    ▼
   Evangel                               Email
    Ads
      │                                    │
      ▼                                    ▼
   District                           Presentation
 Presentations                         Sign Ups
      │                                    │
      ▼                                    ▼
 General Council                     Follow-up from
 Presentations                       Campaign Office
      │                                    │
      ▼                                    ▼
  Pastor/Board                        District Team
 Presentations                         Follow-up
      │                                    │
      ▼                                    ▼
   National                             PROGRAM
 Newsletters                        IMPLEMENTATION
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APPENDIX J: GEORGE WOOD-CHARLES HACKETT-PAUL DROST

DISCUSSION REGARDING NEED TO INCLUDE

PARENT CHURCHES ON ACMR

From: Drost, Paul E.

Sent: Wednesday, September 05, 2001 5:07 PM

To: Wood, George

Regarding our conversation concerning a third designation on the New Churches Opened form:

*Suggest an additional category such as "associate status" or "mothered status" for new churches.
*Requested by the Southern New England District and has also come up in conversations with other districts.

Benefits:
*It will "legitimize" and count the existing churches mothered by large congregations who for one reason or another choose to start a church plant but want to be the overseeing body rather than the sectional committee. When this happens there is no category for the church plant even though they are a church in every sense of the word. Additionally many of our sections do not have viable structures to enable church plants but still insist on everything coming through them. (*in effect practicing population control rather than encouraging those best equipped to multiply themselves).*

*Creates a category to help counteract some of the obstacles large churches face that want to plant new congregations...often the territorialism of an entrenched structure will not permit new churches to be legitimately mothered by large congregations unless the existing structure directs the resources and is the official board.

*The additional flexibility this provides encourages mothering churches to be part of the system rather than operate apart from it... churches like people, do what they want to do and they will either choose not to plant and we all lose, or they choose to plant anyway and we lose again because of the walls erected between the system and those not fitting into it. I prefer to have them with us and blessing our movement and our blessing them. It is a win-win situation for the Kingdom and our fellowship.

*If we are to become a church planting movement we must do those things that encourage our strongest churches to add their spiritual "DNA" to the mix. If not the gulf between large churches and the others will only get wider with time.

*The effects of this would be consistent with our doing away with the old three mile rule and other barriers to church planting. Our object is to plant as many healthy, Kingdom,

reproducing churches as possible.

       *It would move us more in the direction of a "free market" where entrepreneurial churches are encouraged to multiply themselves and the Kingdom through investing in new churches.

       *It sends a signal to our fellowship that this is what we must be about if we are serious about turning our fellowship around.

       I've spoken with Charles Hackett and he has given his blessing to the above content.

       Many Blessings.

Paul Drost
DHM Administrator/Church Planting Director
Assemblies of God Home Missions
pedrost@ag.org
www.churchplanting.ag.org

APPENDIX K: VITAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF ETHNICS, 1997

Church Growth Apparent as Ethnic Churches Thrive

October 31, 1997

The Rev. David Moore, director of Intercultural Ministries for the Assemblies of God Division of Home Missions, reports that ethnically diverse churches are thriving within the Fellowship.

For example, the net gain of ethnic (non-white majority) congregations (+111) from 1995 to 1996 offset a net loss of predominantly white congregations (-50). Moore also reports that since 1993, the Assemblies of God in the United States has experienced a net growth of 122 churches that resulted from an increase of 267 ethnic churches and a decrease of 145 predominantly white churches. Today, 23.8 percent of all Assemblies of God churches are non-white majorities, with Hispanic churches making the greatest gains with 126 churches in the past 3 years.

"God has truly been doing a miraculous work among ethnic groups throughout our nation," Moore said. "It is time this segment of our Fellowship receive their just due for the significant contribution they're making to the growth of the Assemblies of God."

ETHNIC/LANGUAGE FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

African AG Fellowship, USA
President Samuel Asiedu—samasiedu@optimum.net

Arabic AG Fellowship, USA
President George Rafidi—araboutreach1@juno.com

National Black Fellowship of the AG
President Malcolm Burleigh—mburleigh@ag.org

National Chinese Fellowship of the AG
President Robert Chai - Yanfhl05@yahoo.com

National Deaf Culture Fellowship of the AG
President Jimmy Schwyhart—jschwyhart@gmail.com

National Fijian Fellowship of the AG
President Inosi Batibasaga—inosibatibasaga@yahoo.com

Filipino-American Christian Fellowship of the AG
President Jaren Lapasaran—jarenlapasaran@gmail.com

Haitian American Fellowship of the AG
President Michel Beaudouin—HRVEST4God@gmail.com

Hmong National Fellowship of the AG
President Sai S. Lee—saishonglee@hotmail.com

AG India Fellowship of America
President K. P. Titus—revkptitus@yahoo.com

Indonesian Fellowship of the AG
President Rudy Lolowang—rudylolowang@yahoo.com

National Jewish Fellowship of the AG
President Felix Halpern—info@chofesh.org

Native American Fellowship of the AG
President John Maracle—agnaf@agnaf.org

Romanian Fellowship of the AG
President Nicky Pop—nickypop@comcast.net

Samoan Fellowship of the AG
President Etuati Lafaele—seixas148@aol.com

Southern Asia Fellowship of the AG
President Victor Joseph—victorjoseph@verizon.net

U.S. Tongan AG Fellowship
President Filimone Mau—jjmau@hotmail.com

Vietnamese Fellowship of the AG
President Moses Cao—mosescao@gmail.com

3 Million people attend AG churches in the USA ~ 38% are ethnic minorities!
AG CURRENT FACTS—2009

WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF ETHNIC RELATIONS (OER)?

➢ The OER seeks to discover, develop and distribute strategies and best practices that build partnerships with churches, districts, U.S. Missions and the national office to effectively reach souls, train workers and build churches among ethnic people groups.

➢ The OER purposes to providing assistance and resources to districts, churches and ministers who contact the national office for information pertaining to ethnic ministries.

➢ The OER serves as a liaison between the national office and ethnic minority and immigrant ministers, churches and Ethnic/Language Fellowships in the United States.

Office of Ethnic Relations, Scott Temple, Director

1445 N Boonville Ave
Springfield, MO 65802
Website: www.ethnicrelations.ag.org

Phone: 417.862.2781 ext 3070
Fax: 417.862.3439
E-mail: ethnicrelations@ag.org

For information on Hispanic Ministries contact the Office of Hispanic Relations at hispanicrelations@ag.org

**Please contact the OER or one of our 18 Ethnic/Language Fellowship groups
to discover if together we can make a difference.**

APPENDIX M: CHURCH PLANTING THEOLOGY OF MISSION,

AGTS PRESENTATION

Theology of Mission-Church Planting

AGTS-Paul Drost, 3-14-01

Vision: To see the A/G become a Church Planting/Church Multiplication Movement

Values: The Church, Multiplication, Equipping, Empowering, Spiritual Conception, Fruitfulness, Obedience

Mission: The Church Planting Department exists to facilitate the AG and its constituents in planting a greater quantity and greater quality of healthy, reproducing Kingdom churches.

Why?: Biblical. Great Commission …*takes churches to make a disciple*

Acts1:8 Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Uttermost parts of the world….*Strategy*

Acts 11:19-26 Diaspora and Paul's Missionary Journeys. *Diversity & Church Plants*

Historical	Lyle Schaller "Two reasons church movements have started are to plant churches here at home and take the Gospel overseas. DNA of the AG Statistical Study of Church Planting 1965-1999
Biological	Living things grow, reproduce and die…life cycle must reproduce
Evidential	Multitudes in the Valley of Decision Joel 3:14
	AG is at 1/6 production capacity of just 15-20 years ago.
	Churches' effectiveness in engaging the world is declining: 1990s.
	27-28 million Americans left the church and population grew by 42 million-potential gap of 70 mil unreached in the 1990s.

AG grew by 20% by adding 500,000 but is one of few evangelical churches to grow.

North America is only continent where Christianity is not growing 200 million US citizens not in church each week.

No county has a larger % of its citizens in church than 10 years ago.

Beneficial   God's Blessings are poured out when we say yes to His heart of birthing churches

CPs multiply our effectiveness
CPs bring a fresh vitality to those involved and to the parents
CPs establish a fresh presence for God
CPs are very effective….note Nazarene's Study of Church Plants
Diverse Churches are needed to reach America's diversity
Foreign Missions efforts are increased
Good soil- provides a good return for investment
Avoids becoming spiritual detritus
Reinforces a Gospel Saturation mentality rather than a competition mentality

Plan in Planting

Assess Potential Church Planters
Train them through Boot Camps
Coach Them
Multiply through Parenting Churches

APPENDIX N: REASONS WHY WE PLANT NEW CHURCHES

Reasons Why the Church Plants New Churches
1-4-02
Paul Drost, Director Church Planting
To
Superintendent Doug Fulenwider

1. All of God's living creation grows by reproducing and multiplying "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" Gen1:28

2. Fish reproduce fish, people reproduce people, believers reproduce believers and churches should reproduce churches.

3. It's God's pattern to expand His Kingdom as found in the Book of Acts….Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. We have emphasized the home (Jerusalem) church and the uttermost parts of the world (foreign missions) but have skipped over Judea (those around us who are like us but unreached) and Samaria (those around us who are unreached and unlike us). How can we say we have a burden for souls and validate it, as we should, by giving to foreign missions yet neglect those around us at home?

4. Church Planting is the most effective form of evangelism under heaven.

5. It's our spiritual DNA…..why God raised us up.

   "The leading indicator of the health of a church organization is the number of healthy churches planted each year" and "The two primary purposes for which evangelical churches were raised up was first to plant churches here at home and second to send out foreign missionaries" Lyle Schaller, One of America's foremost authorities on church history ad church growth

6. It is crucial to the health and future of our fellowship

7. God's blessings are on His people when they desire spiritual conception, spiritual pregnancy and spiritual birth. To distance ourselves from His heart is to have His glory leave. Hosea 9:11

8. Embracing church planting as a fellowship is the best antidote to the noose of territorialism around our neck.

9. It's what God is doing around the world and He desires to do it here.

10. When we embrace church planting it creates an atmosphere that attracts and holds entrepreneurial ministers. (I have story after story of outstanding men who have left the A/G because they were prevented from planting because of jealousy or territorialism.)

11. God has placed into our hands ... assets (more than ever before), people (more open to spiritual things than ever) and more opportunities than has been given to any generation in history.

12. Church Planting leaves a wake of blessing to those who embrace it, those touched by it and to those who come behind us.

13. Like every family the family of God needs a healthy mix of established churches and a flourishing group of new churches

APPENDIX O: ROADBLOCKS TO CHURCH

PLANTING AND SOLUTIONS

From: Drost, Paul E.
Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2002 8:41 AM
To: 'Klaus, Byron'
Cc: Drost, Paul E.
Subject: RE: Info

Hi Byron,
Thanks for including me by way of an invitation to participate and /or input.

1. Yes. Charles Hackett gave me an FYI after an EP meeting. Prior to the EP meeting I talked with G Woods about adding a new classification on the New Church Opened form (official A/G birth certificate!) as an end-around some of our structure that can veto new church plants for non-kingdom reasons. He responded "we need to do this but it is an EP matter and I would like to take this to the EP's". Consequently I went to Bro. Trask to get his blessing to make sure it wouldn't be DOA because he had not been in the loop and had been caught by surprise. Consequently we talked about his right on message at GC on the biblical way to bring reform and how we needed to tear down/confront territorialism in our fellowship. He reacted very passionately said he was 100% in agreement and indeed would take the concerns to the EP's for action.

2. Unfortunately Jan 24 & 25 is not available.

3. Roadblocks and solutions. This is a many splendored thing but I believe there are a few crucial issues that must be addressed.
A. Church Planting has been a Low Value
　　　　Values are determined by how we　　spend our time and resources$
　　　　Many used the church growth movement for the wrong reasons, consequently we put the emphasis on gathering and Sunday am growth rather than on mission, sending and reproduction. You can always tell what an organization values by what it rewards.
　　　　Begin to reward (model, desire, upfront time, etc) kingdom behavior: reproduction (church planting), churches and pastors that multiply.
　　　　A/G leadership must show they value church planting by being the main voice for it (transformational leadership) I was in a small group this week with Dr. Paul Risser Pres.of the 4 Square....they have almost doubled churches in the last decade by church planting from @1,100 to close to 2,000 and want to get t0 10,000 in another decade. He told me they did almost nothing in CP as long as top leadership was unintentional and didn't care enough to do a whole lot, but it turned around once they took ownership to be

the main voice and embrace it as a true value. Additionally their leadership is now given 2 years to show their area is growing through CP or they are removed.

B.Territorialism....get the church politics out of church planting. It begins with leaders willing to take the heat and hold all credential holders to high expectations of kingdom behavior.
Confront and don't reward people who throw their weight around for their own purposes when millions are on their way to a Christless eternity. What business are we in anyway?

C.Lack of intentionality and proven structure. There are some really good changes in spots across the A/G.
In areas where there is an intentional and proven structure to select planters, to empower them through coaching relationships, to train them and place high value on them we and others are having a good success.

Implement a proven structure that produces good planters. What you fertilize is what grows!

One other observation....we need to embrace multiplication and encourage good churches to multiply. It's not going to happen unless the local church is brought into the action and the proven multipliers are seen as the real heroes. Dr. D.James Kennedy said "The church is practicing addition while the world is practicing multiplication" Where does that put us when we had a net loss last year? Some things are pretty obvious.......let's get on with it!

I will be praying for you and the men who serve may your voice be heard.
Blessings

Paul Drost
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-----Original Message-----
From: Klaus, Byron [mailto:BKLAUS@AGSeminary.Edu]
Sent: Wednesday, January 16, 2002 2:57 PM
To: 'Paul Drost'
Subject: Info

Paul, Greetings from AGTS. I called your office; they said you were on the road but could be reached via e-mail. I am chairing a task force appointed by the EPs for Identifying and Addressing Roadblocks to New Church Openings. I am somewhat at a loss as to how I qualify to chair this task force, but I'm not about to turn down Brother Trask's request.

The committee is Warren Bullock, Jesse Miranda, Carl Colletti, Paul Grabill, John Lindell and Ken Squires (pastor First A/G Marysville, WA.). We meet next week Jan24-25 here at the seminary.

First question is did you know anything about this task force?

Secondly I had called to invite you to come on those days and give your input but your office said you would be gone,

Lastly, I was wondering if you had any input you could give me on what you observe as the major roadblocks to New Church Openings and how we can remove them. I don't want to bother you for major input that will take you a lot of time. I simply want to include your input as the G/C person closest to the action on this matter. If asked the question, what are the three major roadblocks to new church openings what would you say? In addition, what steps must be taken to remove those three major roadblocks?

Paul thanks for listening and I look forward to your observations.

Byron D. Klaus

APPENDIX P: EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERS' RESPONSE

TO CHURCH PLANTING REPORT

From: Klaus, Byron [BKLAUS@AGSeminary.Edu]
Sent: Thursday, March 14, 2002 4:00 PM
To: 'Paul Drost'
Subject: EPs

Paul the EP report went very well. TET wants this to be part of the overall strategy on the Blue Ribbon revitalization effort. The EPs resolved that the church planting issue had to be the central issue around which the whole revitalization effort occurred. Bob Rhoden and Warren Bullock were quite vocal on that issue. With yourself, Warren, Bob and myself on that BLUE RIBBON effort I think we can keep this thing on the fire to really organize the BLUE RIBBON efforts. TET also mentioned that the Saturday night General Council in DC was focused on church planting.

All in all we have a green light to push this issue to the max in the BLUE RIBBON.

I also have a fax from Ken Squires, pastor in Washington who was on the taskforce. He met this last week with a bunch of pastors and Chuck Breewster out in So. Cal. I have the his notes from that meeting Would you like to see them. I'll route a copy over to you if you'd like. BDK

APPENDIX Q: VFT NORTHEAST REGIONAL PRIORITIZED THEMES

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD TRANSFORMATION PROCESS
NORTHEAST REGIONAL MEETING
OCTOBER 22 & 23, 2002

Small Group Reporting

This document contains the statements developed in small group discussions during the Northeast Regional Meeting of the Assemblies of God Transformation Process. The small groups developed ideas on their assigned theme and in response to questions associated with that theme. The material below represents an oral report from each small group given to the whole assembly following their discussion session.

The whole assembly, following the presentation, rated some of the ideas. The following scale was used in the rating process:

> **Moderate Change**: Within the normal way we change in the Assemblies of God.
> **Deep Change**: A substantial change.
> **Radical Change**: Something that threatens the way we have traditionally conducted business.

A complete survey of each idea is available on the Internet at www.survey.ag.org using the same rating scale. The <u>underlined heading</u> in each section below represents the text that is on the Internet survey website.

THEME 1—CHURCH PLANTING

Question 1: What impediments to church planting need to be removed?

<u>Elimination Of Territorialism (Deep Change)</u>
> Change in the attitude of Senior Pastors toward territorialism. Mother church pastors protective toward loss of income from Daughter church. Mother church pastors overwhelmed with their own concerns.

Small Church Recognition (Radical Change)
>   Large churches are recognized in various settings where smaller churches tend not to be recognized. As a whole, our Fellowship holds up the model of the mega-church as the one we are striving for. This inhibits the smaller churches.

Emphasis On Finding The Right Leader To Plant A Church
>   Money is not the chief problem with church planting today. Finding the right person to plant a church is a chief problem.

Leaders With The Right Vision To Plant The Church
>   Having the right vision to plant the church is another key component.

Church Planters Itinerating To Raise Funds (Radical Change)
>   Church planters itinerating to raise funds within their district and across districts. Finding a way for church planters to raise money like foreign missionaries from Assemblies of God churches.

Unified Church Planting Plan Between The Section And The District (Moderate Change)
>   Develop a unified church planting plan between the section and the district. Unified vision for church planting within the section or district. Within a district, some sections are proactive, and some are not. Every leadership unit within the district, at every level, should employee the same approach.

Church Planting As A Defining Priority (Deep Change)
>   Church planting as a defining priority. Church planting should be elevated in priority within the Assemblies of God. Church planting should not be just another program.

Church Planting As A Priority For Our Higher Education Institutions (Radical Change)
>   Church planting should become a priority for our higher education institutions. Currently other ministry focuses are taking priority.

Team Church Planting As A Preferred Approach (Deep Change)
>   The concept of team church planting should become the preferred approach. The day of the *"parachute drop…lone range…go at it alone"* model is gone. The team model of church planting attracts the young leader. Resources such as assessment coaching, boot camp training, and ongoing support are a must. Create a team concept for Assemblies of God Church planting.

Willingness Of Pastors To "Seed" Church Plants With Staff And People
>   Many pastors are not willing to "seed" church planting with staff and people.

Question 2: What are some strategies to make church planting a higher priority at the local church, sectional, district and national levels?

Make Church Planters More Visible (Radical Change)

Find ways to make church planters more visible in district meetings. Church planters could be taken around to sectional councils and given higher visibility. Emphasize church planting at district events such as district council and minister's institutes.

Itineration for Church Planters

Find ways to allow church planters to itinerate. Freedom for the church planter to raise funds through the district.

Primary Focus And Energy Behind Church Planting - Local Church Multiplying Itself (Radical Change)

The primary focus and energy behind church planting needs to be the local church multiplying itself. The sectional, district, and national offices need to facilitate this local church focus. De-emphasis of the role of the sectional, district, and national offices in favor of the focus on the local church.

Develop Strategies For Local Church Reproduction

Develop strategies to facilitate and help the local church learn how to reproduce rather than pushing the job to the sectional, district and national level. Push the job down to the local church and help them understand the concepts of reproduction.

District Offices Functioning As A Resource Agent For Church Planting (Moderate Change)

The district should be a resource agent for church planting. Resource meaning training, support, financial. Not necessarily the driving force or the ones who are planting churches.

Training On Church Planting As An Emphasis In The Local Church (Radical Change)

Training on church planting as an emphasis in the local church (Radical). Putting out the concept in local churches that *"our church is going to plant a church, we are going to raise money to plant a church, we are going to have a line item in our church budget for church planting, there is going to be training available for you who want to be a part of a church plant."*

Local Churches Hiring Staff Designated As A Future Church Planter (Radical Change)

Hiring staff with the focus that they will leave the church and be a future church planter.

Develop A Philosophy Of Church Planting As An Extension Of The Local Church (Deep Change)

Church planting as an extension of the local church.

Create Financial Incentives For Church Planting (Deep Change)

Create incentives for church planting. One district has established a matching funds program. Special rates on loans. A strategy that would cause the resources to be commensurate with church planting efforts.

Constitutional Provisions Prohibiting Sections Or Districts From Blocking Church Plants (Radical Change)

> Develop constitutional provisions that would prohibit sections or districts from not allowing people to plant churches if they are qualified. If someone is called to plant a church, there cannot be legislation that would prohibit him or her from doing it either through a section or a district.

> *Question 3: What resources are needed to effectively plant at least 3% (360) churches a year?*

Pray New Churches Into Reality (Moderate Change)

> Pray new churches into reality. (moderate)

Visionary Leadership At The Sectional And District Level

> Visionary leadership at the sectional and district level. If it does happen at this level, then church planting will not happen in the Assemblies of God.

Grants For Buildings

> Provide grants for buildings.

The Right Leader to Plant a Church

> Behind all these ideas on resources is an understanding that just having the money does not mean it is going to be successful. Find the right person to do the church plant.

THEME 2—CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Question 1: How can churches lacking spiritual vitality and effective evangelism be revitalized?

Culturally Relevant Churches (Radical Change)

> Churches need to be culturally relevant as well as be spiritually vital and have effective evangelism.

Change Leadership (Moderate Change)

> Change leaders. This includes pastors, boards and lay-leaders.

Reinvent The Church (Deep Change)

> Re-invent the church. This includes renaming, closing the church and reopening it.

Heal Wounds – Build Relationships (Deep Change)

> Healing wounds. Build relationships within the congregation. Change the DNA of the church.

Restore Vision

> Restore vision. Some churches never had a vision.

Question 2: What resources, programs, and strategic plans exist or need to be developed to effectuate church revitalization?

Onsite Training From District Church Ministry Experts (Deep Change)
> District involvement by providing a team of church ministry experts who go onsite and assist in the development of plans and strategies. These district teams provide training and resources.

Networking With Local Churches In The Area To Revitalize A Given Church
> Networking with local churches in the area to revitalize a given church. Form a church revitalization taskforce team at the local level. Teams could include worship teams, board members, and other such church leaders. (radical)

Coaches and Mentors For Pastors (Deep Change)
> Coaches and mentors. Individuals who come along side to help pastors, boards and lay leaders.

Restore Vision
> Restore vision. Some churches never had a vision.
>
> A Kingdom mindset. Involving and empowering people. Growing leaders in the churches in need of revitalization. Develop teams. (radical)

Assessing Why The Church Has Become Stagnant (Radical Change)
> Assessing why the church has become stagnant. Determine what kind of help a church needs to become revitalized.

Interim Pastor With "Change Agent" Skills (Deep Change)
> District placing an interim pastor who has "change agent" skills to turn the church and get it on the right track. This is followed by the district offering the church a leader who is a match with the church and has the skills to lead it long-term. This offer of long-term help comes with financial support from the district. If the church refuses the leader, then the financial help is not available.

Church Adoption
> Strong local churches adopting churches in need of revitalization. They become a mother church for the purpose of revitalization.

A Balanced Focus on Evangelism and Compassion Ministry
> When you ask church people what the purpose of the church is, they answer, "fulfilling the great commission." When you ask un-churched people what the purpose of the church is, they answer, "to help the poor, the hungry the widow and the orphans." It should be both.

Close Some Churches

Question 3: Is church revitalization a "church planting" issue or more of a leadership issue?

<u>Revitalization Is Both A Church Planting And A Leadership Issue</u>

THEME 3—CHURCH AFFILIATION

Question 1: How can non-traditional church affiliation be encouraged at the district and national levels?

<u>Restore The Cooperating Assembly Status With Checks And Balances</u>

<u>Deliberate And Multi-Levels Of Contact Or Relationship (Radical Change)</u>
There are many doors to enter into affiliation relationship with the Assemblies of God. At a surface level there are opportunities with Camps, Royal Rangers, Minister's Institute and sectional gatherings (inviting guest).

At a deeper level there is affiliation at the sectional level. Relationships among churches and local leaders. Relationships with non-Assemblies of God churches exist mostly at the local level with neighboring pastors and churches.

Affiliation does not necessarily have to be governance, legal, or constitutional relationship. It could be that the local Assemblies of God leaders resource the non-Assemblies of God church in other ways.

Question 2: How can church affiliation be accomplished in a manner that accommodates diverse church governance and ministry models?

<u>Flexibility In Governance Structures (Deep Change)</u>
Allow flexibility in governance structure. There is a danger that this could help or hurt the Assemblies of God.

<u>Sensitivity To Cultural And Ethnic Issues (Radical Change)</u>
Being sensitive to the cultural and ethnic issues.

What are those issues that would prevent us from wanting to affiliate with a group? Differences in Doctrine, Ownership (church governance), and differences in Culture

Question 3: How could our affiliation process be defined to allow us to be more inclusive while maintaining a level of financial accountability and doctrinal integrity?

Maintenance Of The Assemblies Of God Core Values

Accountability And Responsibility In Financial, Governance And Doctrine Matters

Accountability In Legal Liability Issues (Deep Change)

Annual Renewal Process For Affiliated Churches
    Have an annual renewal processes for affiliation much like the annual minister's
    renewal.

Allow Non-Assemblies Of God Leaders To Pastor Our Churches (Radical Change)
    Credentialing affects affiliation. Non-Assemblies of God leaders.

<div align="center">THEME 4—CREDENTIALING FACILITATION</div>

*Question 1: What credentialing process and structure at the local, district and national
levels will release more men and women to obey the Spirit's call to ministry?*

Involve The Local Church In An Entry-Level Credential
    Churches should be responsible for an entry-level credential. Create a four level
    (entry level) that would be administered at the local church level.

Reduce The Steps In The Credentialing Process
    Reduce the "red tape" in the process and make the process more relational.

District Administers Credentialing Process Rather Than The National Office
    Move the credentialing process to the district level rather than the national level. Set
    standards at national level; administer credentialing process at district and local level.

Establish A More Relational Process
    The process should be more relational. Involve those who are mentors and influencers
    in the credential candidate's life.

*Question 2: How can the credentialing process be improved to more easily facilitate the
acceptance and mentoring of worthy applicants?*

Have Local Pastors Serve As Mentors To The Candidate
    If the process moves to the local level, then the local pastor becomes a mentor to the
    candidate to move them up the ladder. The current process separates the local pastor
    from the process of mentoring the candidate through the process.

Substantially Reducing The Requirements For Credentials

Healthy Tension Between Educational And Formal Requirements, And Providing Competent Ministers

> Maintain a healthy tension between the level of educational and formal requirements that make it difficult for some candidates who have a proven ministry and providing quality, competent ministers who are educated and know the basics of church leadership.

Survey Laity About What Should Be Required To Train Ministers

Question 3: How can we better screen credentials applicants so as to ensure (1) that those we credential will remain loyal to the beliefs and practices of this Fellowship, and (2) that our churches will have spiritually, doctrinally, and emotionally healthy leaders?

Ask Candidates How Many People They Have Led To Christ

THEME 5—RECIPROCITY

Question 1: In response to globalization, how will the credentials of ministers who come to the United States from other countries be recognized?

Have A Reciprocity Agreement For Leaders From Other Countries

> Develop a reciprocity agreement with those leaders who come from other country. Keep in mind that each case is different. One size does not fit all.

Fast Track The Process For Sister Organizations

> Fast track the process for sister organizations from around the world. Talk with people who are having the problems and ask, "How can we help you?"

Provide A List Of Worldwide Sister Fellowships

Provide A Provisional Credential For Leaders Coming From Other Countries

Question 2: Should we consider reciprocity agreements with our denominations and fellowships for transfer of credentials?

Work With Minimal Requirements

Have Local Mentor To Assess The Case

Provide Cultural And Ethnic Relevant Credentialing Materials

Question 3: Should we consider dual credentialing?
> Not enough information to address this issue.

THEME 6—LEADERSHIP DEVELOP

Question 1: What multi-faceted strategy will be implemented to encourage ongoing education and training at all levels of leadership?

Adopt A Philosophy That Everybody Develop Leaders

Cultivate An Atmosphere For Coaching And Mentoring

Cross-Pollinate Our Leadership. Build On Our Strength Of Diversity

Provide Quality Leadership Training

Maximize Grassroots Leaders. Localize The Stories Told In District Meetings
Maximize grassroots leaders. Tell stories of local grassroots leaders in and around the district. Localize the stories told in district meetings.

Stop Serving Programs First And Serve Leaders First

Early Identification Of Leaders

Fund Leadership Training

Question 2: Should ministerial continuing education become a prerequisite of maintaining credentialing?

Professionalism Requires Continuing Education

Embrace Peer To Peer Groups For Enrichment And Relationship
Peer to peer groups. Embrace groups that form within the sections and districts for enrichment and relationship.

Make Sectional Meetings A Value Added Training Experience

Create Invitational Training Events
Create invitational training events. Identify potential leaders and invest in them.

Develop Leadership Cohorts For Training And Accountability

Provide Training And Accountability Opportunities
Training opportunities such as Booth camps, ongoing training with accountability and Internet training

Training Partnerships With Non-Assemblies Of God Groups
Attend national events held in our local areas.

Districts As A Resource Center
Districts as a resource center that adds value to leader's life.

Question 3: How can leadership development models of mentoring and coaching be resourced?
> No response

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THEME 7—ELECTED LEADERS

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Question 1: What will enable district leaders to be increasingly effective in their relationships with local churches and pastors?

Districts Officials Get Out Of The Office And Build Relationships

Someone In The District Office Provide Pastoral Services To The Pastors

Districts Serve As A Resource Center That Adds Value To Leader's Life

Help The Minister's Of The District Understand The Role Of The Superintendent And Other Officers
> Communicating to the district what the officers do. Help the minister's of the district understand the role of the superintendent and other officers.

Provide Training For District Presbyters

Give Presbyters More Responsibility

District Officers Release Responsibilities And Utilize Other People

Question 2: What provisions will give fresh voices an opportunity to be heard…and have greater influence in the Fellowship?

Bring In People From The Outside

Decentralize Events And Decision-Making From The National Level
> Decentralize things from the national level. Have more regional events like this transitional regional meeting.

Conduct More Regional Councils

Use More Young Men In Preaching And Story-Telling

Move Headquarters From Springfield

Springfield Is Disconnected Culturally From Other Parts Of The Country

Bring Fresh Voice Into The Process

Involve More Young Leaders in Significant Leadership Roles
> Our top leadership is old. How well can the Assemblies of God be cultural relevant when the top leadership is old.

Question 3: Should term limits be encouraged?
        No response

Question 4: Should elected leaders be encouraged in appropriate circumstances to retain existing ministry positions?

Look At Other Groups Such As Southern Baptist For Examples

National Leaders As Full-Time Pastor

THEME 8—ROLE OF NATIONAL AND DISTRICT OFFICES

Question 1: How can district and national offices be more responsive to the needs of local churches?

Become Less Event Directed

Keep The Model Focused On The Local Pastor

Develop A Resource Person From The District Office And Localize Training

Change Should Be From Bottom Up

Survey To Discover What Are The Real Needs From The Grassroots Level

Question 2: What will be done to reposition these offices as resource centers for local churches, thereby earning the loyalty and participation of these congregations?

Re-Write The Job Descriptions For The District Officers

Become A More Laity Friendly Organization

Fewer Solicitations From The National And District Office

Focus More On Pentecostal Distinctive

Question 3: What is the relationship between the "overhead" of an office and actual value-added services?
        No response

THEME 9—ORGANIZATIONAL REALIGNMENT

Question 1: If we organize around ministry and mission rather than programs and personalities, what would we look like?

Develop Ministries Around The Mission, The Gifts And The Needs
    Define the mission and goals of the organization. Identify gifts and needs. Develop
    ministries around the mission, the gifts and the needs.

Every Church Would Look Different—Every District Would Look Different

Every Church And District Would Be Culturally Relevant
    Relate more to the culture. Every church and district would be culturally relevant.

General Council Would Be The Resource, Not The Dictator Of Programs
    General Council would be the resource-er, not the dictator of programs. The district
    would be the facilitator of the resource. Each church is free to develop programs they
    feel is necessary based on their needs. The church is the laboratory, the district is the
    facilitator, and the general council is the resource-er.

Each Ministry Must Be Allowed To Be Flexible For Local Level Application
    Each ministry must be allowed to be flexible for local level application. There can no
    longer be an Assembly of God in a box that is recreated all over the place.

Each Church, Section, And District Is Encouraged To Be Creative In Ministry Expression
    Each church, section, and district is encouraged to be creative and have their own
    personality with no stigma expectations from national or district headquarters.
    Creative is encouraged in service schedule, programs and other ministry expressions.
    Doctrine and accountability are the threads that keep us together, not style.

Question 2: How can we realign structures to eliminate the proliferation of committees?

Realign Offices At General Council To Be Resources To The Local Church
    Realign offices at general council to be resources to the local church. Local church
    level should drive the activity. General council should do what the local church
    cannot do.

Networking Should Be From The Bottom Up, Not Top Down
    Networking should be from the bottom up, not top down. Realign structures to
    facilitate this form of networking.

Decentralize The Corporate Structure
    Decentralize the corporate structure. Return to the 1914 model of cooperative
    fellowship.

Core Doctrine And Values Integrated Into A Clearly Stated Mission Statement
    Mission statement must be clear. Core doctrine and values integrated into the mission
    statement.

Implementation Of The Mission Will Be Determined At The Local Level
    The implementation of the mission will be determined at the local level. National
    office doesn't let local church how to do it.

Question 3: How will laity within the Fellowship be fully engaged and fully empowered to further the kingdom of God?

Define The Role Of Deacon And Elder, And Train The Laity To Understand Those Roles

Empower The Laity To Fulfill Leadership Roles In The Church

Leadership Training In Local Churches Emphasize
> Leadership training in local churches is emphasized. Train the boards in local churches on how to fulfill their jobs. There is a great deal of role confusion in our local churches.

Empower Ministry Leaders
Empower ministry leaders, not boards or dictator pastors.

District Should Be The Trainers With The General Council Providing Resources

Networking And Training With Other Lay Leaders

More Opportunity And Recognition For The Laity

Listen To The Laity To Understand Their Needs

We Need A Structure To Support Life, Not Try To Put Life Into Our Structure

THEME 10—ETHNIC OPPORTUNITY

Question 1: What steps will be taken to create opportunities for ethnic leaders and respond to the needs of a growing ethnic constituency?

Building Bridges To Ethnic Leaders

Become More Sensitive To Those With Disabilities

Promote Ethnic Diversity In Our Literature

Become Sensitive In Communications Such As "God Gives Hope"

Promote Ethnic Awareness Among Our Pastors

Address Racism

Encourage Churches To Be More Diverse In Hiring Staff And In Other Ways

Be Intentional In Providing Resources And Training To Ethnic And Language Leaders

Invite Ethnic Leaders To Speak At District And Sectional Fellowships

<u>Diversity Training For Pastors</u>

<u>Appoint Ethnic Subcommittees To Report And Speak To Sectional Groups</u>

<u>Move Headquarters To The East Or West Coast</u>

<u>Utilize Graphic Designers From Urban And Coastal Regions</u>
Utilize graphic designers from urban and coastal regions who are culturally and ethnically sensitive. Put design to literature that will identify with diverse groups.

<u>More Ethnic Representation In Home Missions</u>

<u>Appointment Of More Ethnic Leaders By District And National Leaders</u>
Give authority to national and district leaders to appoint ethnic leaders to various posts.

Question 2: What role should "fellowships" play in developing and strengthening ethnic constituencies?
No response

Question 3: How can non-traditional culture groups be reached with new models of participation?
No response

APPENDIX R: CHURCH PLANTING AS ONE OF THREE CORE VALUES

TO FULFILL THE MISSION OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

Reshaping the Assemblies of God to
Fulfill Our Mission
in the Context of Biblical Theology

The Vision for Transformation must be driven by the purpose of fulfilling the three-fold mission of the Assemblies of God.

While our mission and doctrine have not changed and should not change, our focus on our core values and the methods, tactics, and strategies that translate doctrine into practice are at the heart of change.

Unfortunately, no matter how good your theology, if your systems and practices don't give life to that theology, it is nothing more than empty legalism. To put it another way, proclaiming biblical truth without the ability to put it into practice has little impact on a culture.

Emerging from the Vision for Transformation process is a clear call from our Fellowship to emphasize three core values that should become the driving force behind the practical implementation of our biblical theology.

CORE VALUE #1: Return to our Grassroots as a "Fellowship"

Over the last several decades, the Assemblies of God has become more of a denomination and less of a Fellowship. This can be seen in almost everything that is done, including: centralizing the credentialing process, mandating restrictive bylaw provisions, centralizing ministry activity in Springfield, entrenched programs that sometimes are not reflective of what is happening at the local church level, a reduced pool of qualified candidates for ministry, a plateau in the planting of churches, disconnectedness from our changing culture (both age and ethnic), a lack of involvement of women in leadership, and an absence of laity with a voice and vote in the governance and direction of the Assemblies of God.

Legislative provisions coming out of the Vision for Transformation process express a reaffirmation of a rediscovered core value of our founders that we are to *be* a fellowship, *organized* like a fellowship, *governed* as a fellowship, and *networked* as a fellowship.

CORE VALUE #2: The local church as the primary focus of new church planting

The challenge of the Decade of Harvest was not a lack of vision, but rather a lack of biblical understanding of how churches should be planted and a lack of strategically "counting the cost." The Vision for Transformation process is adopting as a core value that every church in the next biennium should strive to be a "parent or a partner" and that church planting should be a primary function of the local church, with districts and the General Council providing assistance and resources for the church planting process.

Legislation is being proposed to remove obstacles while at the same time encourage a spiritual strategic journey for our Fellowship to collectively shift its perspective on the core value of church planting by the local church and truly count the cost through strategic resource development plans integrated at local, district, and national levels.

CORE VALUE #3: Credentialing Facilitation

Another core value emerging in the Vision for Transformation process is to transform the credentialing process from an obstacle course into a facilitation process. The credentialing process should take those who are called through a journey of mentoring and responding to the call of God. The call of God occurs at different times and places in people's lives, and our system must be designed to be reflective of the diversity of what God is doing.

We need to decentralize the credentialing process while improving the quality of credentialed ministers. We must focus on making the local church as a partner in the credentialing process.

A number of other critical pieces of legislation are reflective of this shift in how we view credentialing, including: reciprocity provisions for those coming from different countries and cultures, a simplified credentialing application, mandatory mentoring requirements, remanding licensing to the district councils, and revisiting the academic requirements. Finally, we are proposing a new entry-level credential at the local church based on a mentoring program.

SUMMARY

This summarizes what we are hearing from our Fellowship in terms of the core values underlying the Vision for Transformation. Again, it is not about changing our mission or doctrine—it is about reshaping the *way* we carry out our mission in a culture that has radically changed. Deep change cannot be limited to theology. It must embrace pragmatic implementation strategies. Models that are rooted in deep biblical truths of servanthood and stewardship are entirely appropriate. Servanthood requires us to focus everything we do on serving the church. Stewardship requires us to be fully accountable for our activities and multiply that which God has placed in our hands.

APPENDIX S: VISION FOR TRANSFORMATION GENERAL COUNCIL

TALKING POINTS LISTING CHURCH PLANTING CHURCHES

AS NUMBER ONE PRIORITY

TALKING POINTS

ON VISION FOR TRANSFORMATION
In Preparation For
2003 General Council in Washington, D.C.

THEME #1
The Assemblies of God should be a network of fully empowered Pentecostal churches that multiply themselves through church planting.

PROVIDING FOR FLEXIBLE LOCAL CHURCH GOVERNANCE MODELS FOR GENERAL COUNCIL-AFFILIATED CHURCHES

Currently, a General Council-affiliated assembly must adopt bylaws recommended by a district. Recognizing the need for more flexibility in governance structure, this resolution provides that a General Council affiliated church would have flexibility in choosing different governance models. This would not affect district-affiliated churches.

REINFORCING THE SOVEREIGN RIGHTS OF GENERAL COUNCIL-AFFILIATED CHURCHES

To reinforce the constitutional provision of the right of self-governance, this resolution provides that a General Council affiliated church cannot be disaffiliated from the Assemblies of God if it chooses to adopt a governance model that is unique or distinctive from that recommended by a particular district.

RESTORING "COOPERATING ASSEMBLY" STATUS

Historically, the General Council of the Assemblies of God recognized a "cooperating assembly" status to allow interested congregations to participate in the ministries of the Fellowship without officially affiliating. Many strong churches have entered the Fellowship in previous years through this opportunity, while some churches still exist in this category with no official status.

This resolution restores the cooperating assembly status to allow a congregation to cooperate on a transitional basis with either the district council or the General Council if they subscribe to the Statement of Fundamental Truths.

CHURCH PLANTING EMPHASIS

The Constitutional Declaration of the General Council of the Assemblies of God states that a priority reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God is to be an agency of God for evangelizing the world, to be a corporate body in which people may worship God, and to be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son.

Biblically, the local church is central to the multiplication and reproduction of followers of Christ. The local church must be reaffirmed as central to any Assemblies of God church planting effort. The establishment of new churches is one of the most effective ways to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and to accomplish our constitutional declaration.

There is no present policy regarding the encouragement of church planting within the General Council Bylaws. This new resolution to the General Council Bylaws will provide direction to districts and entities within a district to facilitate, encourage, and remove obstacles to the planting of new churches by local churches.

Theme #2

The Fellowship should give emphasis and priority to the call of God and effective ministry in the credentialing process.

PROVIDING LICENSED MINISTERS THE RIGHT TO VOTE AT GENERAL COUNCIL

In order to encourage loyalty and participation by the diverse group of ministers credentialed as "licensed," this resolution would provide a voice and vote at General Council business sessions.

RECIPROCITY WITH OTHER ASSEMBLIES OF GOD INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIPS FOR CREDENTIALING

The globalization of America has created a pressing need for language/ethnic ministers coming from our Assemblies of God Fellowships overseas to be given an opportunity to minister in the United States as a credential holder. This provision would give appropriate deference to their ministry experience and existing credential while assuming an acceptable level of equivalency.

ESTABLISHING A LOCAL CHURCH CREDENTIAL

There is a growing concern that local churches are disconnected from the credentialing process. This resolution would create, for the first time, a local church credential so that the mentoring and ministry development process could begin for an applicant at his/her local church. The credential would be deemed temporary for 2 years (renewable up to 4 years total) while the applicant is completing course work and a mentoring process. The credential is non-transferable. Only churches that are General Council affiliated with a prescribed program under guidelines established by a district can offer a local church credential.

MOVING LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION OF MINISTERS BACK TO THE DISTRICT COUNCILS WHILE RETAINING DISCIPLINE AT THE GENERAL COUNCIL

This resolution would move credentialing of certified and licensed ministers closer to the grass roots of our Fellowship. At the same time, we would retain ministerial discipline at the General Council level to assure consistency of ministerial standards of conduct. It will also allow certified ministers to progress in their credentialing process by designating "certified minister" as a temporary credential.

TECHNICAL CHANGES TO FACILITATE A LOCAL CHURCH CREDENTIAL AND REMANDING LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION BACK TO THE DISTRICT COUNCILS

In order to provide for the establishment of a local church credential and remanding licensing and certification back to the district council, a number of technical changes are necessary to bring all the constitution and bylaw provisions into conformity.

MANDATORY SCREENING FOR ALL CREDENTIAL HOLDERS

Increased litigation risks and liability insurance mandates now require that all ministers receiving credentials be screened.

THEME #3

The Fellowship's organizational structure should be aligned around mission and ministry to serve our ministers and empower the local church.

FLEXIBILITY FOR DISTRICT LEADERSHIP MODELS

Many districts in our Fellowship have been exploring new leadership models. This resolution clearly states that districts have the discretion to allow any officer to serve other than full-time.

ENCOURAGING NEW DISTRICT GOVERNANCE MODELS THROUGH PRESBYTERS

Currently, bylaws do not provide a definition of a presbyter. Existing models almost always provide for presbyters to be elected on a geographic basis. With the growing interest to explore alternate models of district governance structures (e.g., the Indiana District Council), this resolution encourages districts to consider organizing themselves in such a way that the presbyters can focus on ministering to ministers; providing ministers encouragement, prayer, and coaching in leadership development; and modeling spiritual strategic maturity and leadership to the pastors, ministers, and churches assigned to the responsible presbyter. District bylaws could allow the Presbyter selection to be by appointment or election or both and provide for non-geographic sections. Term limits for elected presbyters and an emphasis on women presbyters have been recommended, but not mandated.

DISTRICT PRESBYTERY REPRESENTATIVES FROM ETHNIC/LANGUAGE FELLOWSHIPS

Our bylaws refer to ethnic fellowships, but not language fellowships. This has been clarified by replacing "ethnic" with "ethnic/language." This resolution requires a district to appoint a presbyter to represent each language/ethnic group from a recognized fellowship within their district when that language or ethnic group reaches an adequate number of churches. The number of ethnic/language churches required to appoint a presbyter has not been stated, since current district models vary substantially.

STRENGTHENING THE COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNIC/LANGUAGE AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICTS

This bylaw would strongly recommend that language/ethnic districts and geographic districts appoint representatives to serve with their respective presbyteries to provide and encourage cooperative strategies and relationships.

ELECTING EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERS BY REGION RATHER THAN AT-LARGE VOTING

It has been recommended that the nonresident executive presbyters be elected from their areas and not by the entire General Council. The General Council may choose to express its desire for its legislation to be drafted for consideration at the 2005 General Council, which would provide for the election of nonresident executive presbyters by caucus at General Council for voting members belonging to the specific region represented by the nonresident executive presbyter.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE AT THE GENERAL PRESBYTERY LEVEL

Currently, the General Presbytery composition has been designed to include representative stakeholders, such as missionaries, evangelists, and educators. This provision would add "women in ministry" representatives to the General Presbytery to encourage the participation of women in governance and leadership in the Assemblies of God.

INTERNAL REALIGNMENT TO AVOID DUPLICATION AND PROLIFERATION BETWEEN DIVISIONS, DEPARTMENTS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

The Executive Presbytery, with consultation from the Vision For Transformation Committee, is working on a detailed internal realignment proposal. An example of that realignment is contained in resolutions offered bringing the executive directors of Assemblies of God World Missions and Home Missions into the Board of Administration.

Therefore, it is recommended that the General Council go on record authorizing the Executive Presbytery to make such internal changes as may be deemed advisable between now and the 2005 General Council, and offer proposed bylaw revisions detailing any needed changes in Bylaw Article XI through XXII at the 2005 General Council, and bring an interim progress report to the General Presbytery in 2004.

Further, the Executive Presbytery recommends that the title Assemblies of God Home Missions, wherever used in the Constitution and Bylaws be changed to Assemblies of God U.S. Missions.

The seven major ministry areas identified with the General Council include:

⇨ World Mission
⇨ U.S. Missions (Formerly Home Missions)
⇨ Church Ministries
⇨ Leadership Development
⇨ Communications
⇨ Gospel Publishing House
⇨ General Council Corporate Services

VOICE AND ADVISORY VOTE FOR CREDENTIAL HOLDERS AND DELEGATES NOT ATTENDING GENERAL COUNCIL

In order to provide a voice from credential holders and church delegates unable to attend the General Council in session, this resolution would provide for advisory votes that would be announced prior to the consideration of a resolution.

EXPANSION OF THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION TO INCLUDE ALL ELECTED EXECUTIVES

The Board of Administration is charged with the responsibility to provide oversight to the operations of the General Council and implement the decisions of the Executive Presbytery. Two of the largest ministry areas, Assemblies of God World Missions and Assemblies of God Home Missions, are not represented in many of the decisions that affect their areas. It is strategically important for the executives over the two largest ministry areas to serve on the Board of Administration. This resolution defines World Missions and Home Missions executive directors as members of the Board of Administration.

EXPANSION OF COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Currently, there is minimal coordination between ministerial training functions or opportunities represented by accredited colleges and universities, church-based Bible institutes, Master's Commissions, and non-traditional educational systems. This resolution would expand the charter of Commission on Christian Higher Education to provide coordination and resources for all ministerial training institutions.

NATIONAL PLACEMENT SERVICE TO SERVE CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Churches struggle with a pastoral selection process that can match their unique needs and culture with that of a qualified minister. Small churches are finding it increasingly difficult to locate qualified ministerial candidates. Senior pastors often find it difficult to find qualified staff to fill ministry positions. In order to serve local churches in the ministerial selection process, a national placement service is proposed.

TALKING POINTS 5,7,03.doc

APPENDIX T: THE VALUE OF MAVERICKS

IN PLANTING CHURCHES

ANOINTED MAVERICKS
by
H. Robert Rhoden

Mavericks have punctuated the landscape of the Assemblies of God from its inception. The three hundred people who assembled in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914 were considered mavericks by the great majority of the church world.

We have made room in the Assemblies of God for people who color outside the lines. The classic story that surfaces among ministers is about one of our well known preachers who made some less than complimentary remarks about his spiritual leaders. When confronted by the cadre of leaders he replied, "It's amazing what you say under the anointing." We laugh nervously wishing our minds had been clever enough to create such an answer. This person who was considered a maverick had a profound impact on this church and the extended evangelical world. Mavericks are accepted when they have an effective ministry and there is an obvious anointing upon their life. We seem to be less tolerant with lower impact ministries and ministers.

Mavericks are not the same as rebels. Rebels defy the system and have no regard for spiritual authority. Mavericks challenge the system by pushing the boundaries of change but they respect those in spiritual leadership.

I applaud the long overdue effort to assess and train church planters. The statistics on church openings and closings are like a revolving door. We expect the results to be more like an ascending staircase. As we take these important steps to use a filtering system to choose the right kind of leader, i.e. a person with the appropriate gift mix, passionate spirituality, emotional stability, people skills and adequate preparation, it is critical to always leave room for the mavericks.

MAVERICKS FOCUS MORE ON VISION AND EXPERIENCES THAN ON POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

"You work your side of the street and I'll work mine"…tough words for a young visionary church planter to hear from a veteran pastor. That's how I was greeted at the first sectional fellowship meeting I attended as a church planter in 1969. Perhaps the fellow pastor was reacting to the longer hair or the untested confidence of a twenty six year old. On the other hand maybe my seasoned colleague was reflecting some frustration in his own life.

The District had approved the church plant in Richmond, VA, but I was not tuned in to all the policies, methods and general culture of the District. My attitude was not rebellious, but I was thinking outside the box of the traditional Pentecostal church. Our vision was to plant a church to reach people in the western suburbs. We wanted to be a Pentecostal church with a worship experience and teaching format that made sense to the community. Our intention was to be a bridge church. A place where people who were curious, searching, or seekers hungry for spiritual truth could feel welcome and accepted. While some colleagues may have questioned our methods they were affirming of the growth and outreach of the church.

Several times when I met with the Presbytery to respond to their questions I began to understand the importance of denominational structure. Now that I am sitting on the other side of the table as District Superintendent I am trying to make room for those who focus more on vision and experience than on policy and procedures. The reality is it can be both/and rather than either/or.

MAVERICKS WALK ON A SLIPPERY SLOPE.

We approved a church plant several years ago in the Potomac District knowing the pastor was one of our mavericks. The Presbyter of his section strongly supported him and asked us to work with him. The church had a fast start and gathered about one hundred people. The pastor reached out to hurting people including a couple of pastors of small churches who needed some attention. In the process, however the pastor became more aloof and even critical of the District leadership. Without permission he merged his congregation with another church and then moved to another part of the country. In less than two years I began receiving E-mails from this brother indicating he wanted to come and make things right with the District leadership.

It was a beautiful day when he and his wife met with the Presbytery and in model humility asked for forgiveness and pledged his support and loyalty to us. With our blessing he became interim pastor of a very dysfunctional church and has led the church through a time of repentance and a seminar entitled "Setting your church free". Now vision and hope has been restored. There is every evidence the church will make him the permanent pastor this year.

What happened when he slipped? He was going through a season in his life where he had challenges with his children; he was bitter about a District leadership

decision in the past; he was struggling with a theological issue; and he was experimenting with a new model of pastoral leadership. God has graciously brought him through that season and now he is reaching a new level of leadership.

If we believe in the Lord of the Harvest we can know He will lead us in working with mavericks who slip on the slippery slope.

MAVERICKS HAVE A PROTOTYPE IN BIBLICAL MODELS OF LEADERSHIP.

I like George Barna's definition of leadership: "A leader is someone who effectively motivates, mobilizes, resources and directs people toward the fulfillment of a jointly embraced vision". [1] Leaders are complex multifaceted beings who possess a unique blend of three special elements:

1.   Calling or anointing

2.   Godly character; and

3.   Leadership competencies [2]

Some biblical leaders are compulsive like Moses, narcissistic like Solomon, paranoid like Saul, codependent like Sampson or passive – aggressive like Jonah. [3]

The scriptures are replete with prophetic mavericks that took a risk. It may be surprising to think of David, Peter and Jesus as anointed mavericks. Let's take a closer look at them.

David, the youngest son of Jesse was anointed King by Samuel. When David volunteered to take on Goliath he made an effort to try on Saul's armor. He wisely said, " I cannot go in these, because I am not used to them" (I Sam. 17:39 NIV). "Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of

his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine" (I Sam. 17:40 NIV). The rest is familiar history.

David also protected Saul refusing to lay his hand upon him because he was the Lord's anointed (I Sam. 26:9 NIV). Mavericks may not always use the company armor but they do kill giants and respect God's anointed leaders.

Peter was constantly in trouble. To be sure he was an impetuous maverick. Jesus predicted Peter's denial and was not surprised by his return to fishing after the crucifixion. It was the experience at Caesarea Philippi, however, that galvanized his place in the kingdom.

I'm not sure how to make room for people like Peter at the church planting assessment meeting. It does make me pause to think that Peter could have been overlooked for the day of Pentecost. This tension between the impetuous maverick profile and the model leader profile may be one dilemma that keeps us on the cutting edge.

Jesus challenged the system and associated with publicans and sinners. He threw his critics a curve when He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt. 22: 37-40, NIV).

He always submitted to the will of His father no matter what the cost. Some might resist calling Jesus a model maverick. But for the point I'm making I think it is appropriate.

Thinking of mavericks as a category may give a negative connotation. Seeing them as individuals can help us to appreciate their value. We need people who will challenge us when we merely rearrange our prejudices and call it thinking.

May there always be room for God's anointed mavericks in our movement.

Notes

1. George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 106.

2. Ibid. , 107.

3. For further reading on these descriptions see Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, Sr., *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 85-137.

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