



The Phases of Church Planting

By Mike Ruhl

One of our strategic partners in the training of church planters in the United States is *Dynamic Church Planting International* (DCPI) in Oceanside, California. This mission movement has a vision of seeing one million new Christian churches planted globally. Recently, our friends at DCPI recognized the *Center for United States Missions* and the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod for leading all Christian denominations in the United States in the training of congregations to “daughter” (sponsor, plant) new mission congregations.

While receiving training and certification in *Church Planting Essentials* - yet another excellent and emerging training track on “how to plant a new church” – a vision was cast regarding the *Four Phases of Church Planting*. Each phase has critical “landmarks”, which signal progress and transition.

Phase 1: GOD TO YOU

Here God communicates His vision for the new church plant to the church planter. This phase involves deep conviction, prayer, immersion in the Word, collaborative feedback, and confirmation from ministry peers.

Phase 2: YOU TO THE TEAM

Here the church planter is guided by the Holy Spirit in gathering a missionary planting team – much like the missionary planting team sent out from the church at Antioch in the book of Acts.

Phase 3: TEAM TO THE CHURCH

Here the missionary planting team prepares the missionary disciples of the new church for active engagement of people and culture in the mission field. This will involve strategic planning and training, all aimed at releasing the saints to effective networking and witnessing in the marketplace.

Phase 4: CHURCH TO THE WORLD

Here the new church plant identifies people groups, which are “culturally close” and “culturally distant” – and strategizes how to reach those people groups with the Good News of Jesus Christ in their Jerusalem (local), Judea (regional), Samaria (cross-cultural), and Ends of the Earth (global). This process often will include “daughter church planting”, the sending of missionary teams, and indigenous church planters.

These phases originally came out of the “organic” laboratory of North American church planting and are detailed in *The New Dynamic Church Planting Handbook* by

Paul Becker, Jim Carpenter, and Mark Williams (Dynamic Church Planting International, 2003).

This vision of church planting reminds us again that (1) lost people matter to God, (2) church planting is one of the most effective methods under heaven for reaching lost people, and (3) the Holy Spirit has called our church body (LCMS) to plant 2,000 new churches in the United States by 2017.

Pray for the multiplication and sending of church planters into all regions of the United States. Jesus declared, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Luke 10:2)."

While all baptized Christians and professional church workers have been called and sent by Christ into the mission field, surely church planters are among the most strategic.

Questions for Reflection

1. Who are the people groups that are "culturally close" to you?
2. What strategies does your congregation have for reaching the people groups "culturally close" to you?
3. Who are the people group that are "culturally distant" from you?
4. What strategies does your congregation have for reaching them?
5. Is your congregation more invested in far off missions or those right outside your door? How do you know?
6. What would it take for your church to plant a daughter church?
7. What will you do to help advance the outreach of your church leading to a church plant?

Links

Resource: [NEW Dynamic Church Planting Handbook](#) by Paul Becker, Jim Carpenter, and Mark Williams

This handbook is referenced in the article above. It is available from our strategic partner, [Dynamic Church Planting International](#).

Book: [Launch: Starting a New Church from Scratch](#) by Nelson Searcy & Kerrick Thomas

Searcy and Thomas help planters think through the launching of a new church and the important steps and issues that must be addressed.

Mission Moments is a biweekly electronic newsletter sent by the Center for U.S. Missions to bring information and encouragement to all who desire to share God's great love in Jesus Christ with others. Permission is given to copy this article for distribution within your congregation, or organization. Please credit the author and the Center for U.S. Missions www.centerforusmissions.org. For more information contact the Center at 949-854-8002 x1780; office@centerforusmissions.org