

Multiplying Relationships: How Every Church Can Multiply

Reaching North America for Christ is too big a task for one church to handle. New Church Multiplication is one of the best ways for us to work the North American fields to the edges. And every church can get involved in multiplication of new Churches. How? The sky is the limit. There is no right or wrong way to support church planting. The question is, what are you willing to do? How big of a commitment are you willing to make?

Here are three levels of relationship that excludes no church from involvement. I offer a few suggestions that are not meant to be an exhaustive list under each level.

Friending / Encouraging

Church Planting is a difficult, lonely task, filled with uncertainty and vulnerability. You and your church can strengthen and encourage a church plant, as well as demonstrate a kingdom mindset, by reaching out a hand of friendship. This can be done with little or no expense to you and your church. Here are a few ideas:

- Put a church planter on your weekly prayer list. The real battle against the kingdom of darkness is free through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. As your church prays for the lost to be saved, take the new church and planter to the throne of God as they reach out to the unchurched in your community.
- Buy a church planter a cup of coffee and ask him how it's going and offer him your insights about the community. Ask him about his family. Demonstrate a desire to see the church succeed. If you don't have a desire to see him succeed, then repent and get over the idea that your church can reach everybody in the community. Also, encourage the women's ministry to remember the church planter's spouse and support her when possible. Just simply treat them as you would want to be treated. Seems like I saw that principle written in red somewhere.
- Invite a church planter to share during your Wednesday night prayer meeting, to Sunday School classes, to promote special missions offerings, etc. Exposing your church to the story of God's work in your community will benefit the church by opening their eyes to needs in their Jerusalem and Judea.

Partnering / Sponsoring

Maybe your church is ready to be engaged in off-campus multiplication a little more directly. Investing financially & tangibly in a local church plant is one great way to help your church see their community as a mission field and multiply your impact on the Great Commission challenge. A few ideas for investing and sponsoring are:

- Become a financial co-sponsor. Put planting in the budget at whatever level you can. Most of the co-sponsors for the churches I've planted have been between \$50 and

\$200 per month. Some have given a one-time gift. It takes money to minister in North America and a financial contribution encourages the planter and communicates commitment to the Great Commission.

- Adopt a church plant for your VBS offering. The kids will love the story about a church that meets in a Fire Station or Rodeo Arena or Movie Theater and baptizes in a swimming pool. And it may plant seeds in their hearts that will lead them into a career on mission. One church in my region collected children's ministry supplies for a church plant and five years later they were still using the construction paper and supplies received that week.
- **Conduct a local or national mission trip to assist a church plant in outreach efforts.** You can travel to a neighboring city or state or to the other side of town to assist with block parties, door to door work, servant evangelism, etc. Recently, I heard of a church that put together a team to take care of an area church plants Sunday morning setup for one month, just to give the planting team a break and to be a blessing to the new church.
- Give your cold prospect list to a church planting team. One of our sponsors gave our church plant a list of over 250 names that had only attended occasional events at the church or had not attended in a great while. We were able to contact those folks again and invite them to the new church. Later this month we will baptize a couple that we met because their names were on that list. You never know if a new church may be the tool for harvesting people you've cultivated and watered for years.
- Invite a church planter to attend conferences with you and your staff. Most church planters have followed a call and are choosing to live paycheck to paycheck. Most do not have the funds for conferences. Invite them to go with you. Offer to pay part of the way or challenge your church to pay their way. Pay or not, invite them along to enjoy and learn from you and your team.
- Sponsor a date night for a church planter and his spouse. Research is showing that church planting families are under great duress. There's very little money and time for unwinding and recharging. In a difficult season of our first church plant, a church in another state invited my wife and I to spend three days in their area, put us up in a nice hotel, and left a gift basket full of gift cards to area restaurants and attractions. Priceless, simple gift that served to rescue us from a season of discouragement.
- **Offer your office equipment to a church plant.** Allow a church planter to make copies, send faxes, and cut post cards. A minimal expense that will meet a huge need for a guy that offices out of a spare bedroom, basement, or garage.
- Offer your facilities to a church plant. We've used facilities of other churches for core group meetings, leadership meetings, Thanksgiving Banquets, and housing for short-term mission teams. Extend the usefulness of your facility to expanding God's kingdom through church multiplication by simply saying yes or being inviting to a church plant.

Parenting / Reproducing

Is God calling your church to reproduce and send out from your membership to plant a new church or a new campus? To multiply at this level you should go about it with the same veracity

as you would with a new building project or capital campaign, utilizing all avenues of communication for a sustained period of time. During a building campaign, the last thing you want to hear from a member of the church is, "I'm not sure why we need a new building." You work hard to get everyone on the same page through sermon series, letters, special web pages, banquets, personal testimonies, visual displays throughout the building, commitment Sunday's, personal home visits, and more. If planting a new church in North America with momentum and a great potential for survivability is our goal, we should want every member to be on board and to do away with some anti-multiplication slogans – "I don't see why we need a new church" or "Those people can just come to church here" or "Sending out people will hurt our church." Here are a few ideas to prepare your church for off-campus multiplication:

- Answer the call from God to reproduce through off-campus multiplication. Ask, did we hear from God or from our local Associational or Denominational leader? This type of endeavor requires a vision from God that will be owned by your church and its leadership.
- **Bring a Minister of Missions and Multiplication or Church Planter on staff.** Part of this person's job description should be to cultivate congregation and community for a new church. Devise a strategy that will allow the congregation to see him as an insider and whereby he can build trust with the people. Allow him to have regular pulpit opportunities, write newsletter articles, attend staff meetings, etc. Buy in and trust is so important if you want this to move quickly, so maybe this person is already on your staff or has a relationship with your church that makes them insiders.
- Prepare a Message series on Multiplication and Church Planting. The Book of Acts may be a good place to start. Bring the series to a close with an invitation to be part of a planting team or to help with the new church in some tangible way. One church devised dozens of ways that every member could be involved starting with things like prayer and making cookies for a block party, ending with the invitation to join the Core Group for two years.
- Along with a message series, guide small groups and/or Sunday School classes through basic missiology and importance of church planting. Take everyone in the church through a sustained study on multiplication and lead them to consider weekly their part in God's Mission in general and specifically the need for a new church.
- Make a long-term commitment to the development of the new church. Parenting is the best description for this extensive role in expanding the kingdom. Parents nurture, train, discipline, encourage, and celebrate all the child does. Take that role with the church plant. If done in the right way and in God's time, I promise they want remain with you for 18 years. With quality cultivation and core building and great parenting, it won't be long before your church will be a GRANDPARENT! And then we are well on our way to a Multiplication movement.

In every community across our nation there are unreached population segments and people groups. **The fastest growing religious affiliation is the "unaffiliated."** Church planting is one solution to stemming the tide of spiritual darkness in North America. There is no right or wrong way to support church planting. You may even find that it has a positive impact on your church.

As a matter of fact, research shows that churches that sponsor new churches tend to grow themselves. Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird in their book *Viral Churches* point out a study of church-sponsoring churches showed that worship attendance increased 22 percent and giving increased 48% for the five years after sponsorship of a church plant. And whether your church grows or not, until everyone in our communities has an opportunity to hear the Gospel we must push forward. Reproduction and multiplication of new churches is the fastest and healthiest way to bring God's kingdom to all peoples. As each church does what she can do, we can together reach more people and make more disciples in fulfillment of God's Great Commission.

Read more from Lane [here](#).