

Session 1 – A Gospel Vision for Church Planting.

I. Introduction

A. Planting is (probably) the most effective way of reaching people for Christ

“Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven.”

Peter Wagner

“The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for 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.”

Tim Keller, *Why Plant Churches*

B. Many churches are yet to be persuaded of that fact!

There are a lot of churches that are deeply committed to evangelism have never considered church-planting.

- Why might that be so?
- What can we do to help our churches consider the idea that church-planting might be a key strategy in reaching our communities?

II. Why is church planting so strategic?

A. Nurturing a missional mind-set in our churches

Only churches that have mission at the heart of their life and culture will consider planting. Midlands Gospel Partnership can work with partnership churches to promote a healthy missional culture across the churches.

1. Keeping the great commission the focus of our mission as gospel churches

There is a primacy of some ministries over others because the very life and mission of Jesus teaches us that there is a primacy of some ministries over others.

Mark 1:38 *Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: ‘Everyone is looking for you!’ Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’*

The primacy of mission in our ministry is established by the priorities of mission in Jesus’ ministry.

2. *Recapturing* the heart of God for the lost – Andrew Heard, EV Church

In our leadership of a church (and particularly in our preaching and teaching) we must minister in such a way as to keep eternal realities at the forefront of the minds of the congregation.

5 things to get and keep clarity

- I. The reality of heaven & hell – it colours everything
- II. The fact of the cross. The fact that the father is willing to give his Son's life shows me this is THE issue.
- III. A biblical vision for one new humanity – the glory of the church
- IV. The brevity of life. Let's give ourselves to something of eternal value
- V. The fact of love. Do I care about the fate of the lost as Jesus cared?

All these things focus our attention on the great commission.

Part of the work of a church leader is to make the most of opportunities to reinforce – members meeting, prayer meeting, staff meeting, etc.

3. Measuring the health of the church

Andrew Heard – EV Church¹

1 Cor. 9:22, *'I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.'*

Do the members of our congregations think of church as more a Life-boat or a cruise-liner?

- I. *Do we care about the lost? How is that evident in my life? How is that evident in our church life?*
- II. *Are we prepared to do whatever it takes that you might be able to make a better impact than we do at present?*
- III. *Do we accept the need to change?*

B. New churches are best equipped to reach people

1. New churches are usually best equipped to meet new needs and most effectively reach:

- New generations
- New ethnic communities
- Different people groups
- Different geographical areas

2. New churches are often led by (younger) people with new ideas.

3. New churches have no traditions and are free to try new more creative ideas whereas older congregations have a 'steadiness' that the congregation need.

¹ <https://fiēc.org.uk/resources/article/g-l-g-g-1>

4. New churches are likely to be more outward focused.

'In general, they are forced to focus on the needs of its non-members, simply in order to get off the ground.' Tim Keller

5. New churches are more likely to become church-planting churches themselves.

Most church-plants want to be a church-planting church.

C. New churches are necessary to reach our fast-growing population

The population of the UK is set to rise by almost 10 million over the next 25 years², according to official estimates and 126,000 new homes were built in the UK last year. We need an extensive church planting programme to meet the challenge of taking the gospel to this growing population.

D. New churches renew existing churches

It is a great mistake to think that we have to choose between church planting and church renewal. Strange as it may seem, the planting of new churches in a city is one of the very best ways to revitalize many older churches in the vicinity and renew the whole body of Christ. – Tim Keller

E. New churches should be born intentionally rather than accidentally

Accidental church-plants are not driven by theology but by circumstance. They are occasional and may well start with no clear outreach aim.

Intentional church-planting is a ministry of the church. It's *'just one of the things we do along with the rest – we do teaching, evangelism, discipling, worship, ..., and we do church planting.'* Graham Beynon.

What would it look like for church-planting to be a natural ministry of the church?

F. New Churches come in all shapes and sizes

There is no *one* model for planting. New churches can come in all shapes and sizes as opportunities present and as needs require.

How many different models of church-planting are you personally familiar with?

What other models of church planting do you know of?

How might different types of new church meet differing needs and opportunities?

² <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/29/uk-population-expected-to-rise-by-almost-10-million-in-25-years>

II. New church models.

Model of planting	Situation most likely to be used	Advantages	Disadvantages

III. Thinking strategically in church planting

A. How do you decide between the models of church-plants?

Providential circumstances may dictate or at least strongly influence

1. If you were to plot where everyone in your church lives and you also plotted other evangelical churches that were reaching out into the community would an area identify itself?
2. Does someone, or group, have a particular vision for, and perhaps the necessary gifting, to reach a community your church isn't reaching effectively?
3. Is there a current ministry of the church e.g. a kids club or youth work in an area that could develop into a new congregation?

4. Is there someone who might be willing to partner with you in some way e.g. an existing church that is open to the idea of a revitalisation or re-plant or a mission-agency?
5. Financial considerations - given that some models are more costly than others to undertake – what model can we fund?

B. What impact does planting have on existing congregation(s)

As a congregation ages, powerful internal institutional pressures lead it to allocate most of its resources and energy toward the concerns of its members and constituents rather than toward those outside its walls. This is natural – and to a great degree desirable. Older congregations have a stability and steadiness that many people thrive on and need. These dynamics explain why most congregations thirty to forty years old or older are experiencing numerical decline. Older congregations of necessity must focus on the needs and sensibilities of the churched and the long-term residents, even at the expense of any appeal to the unchurched or newer people groups.

*New congregations, by contrast, have no organisational traditions they must honour or oppose. In general they are forced to focus the needs of their **non**-members simply to get off the ground.*

Thus, the only way to significantly increase the number of Christians in a city is by significantly increasing the number of new churches. Tim Keller, Center Church, 359-60.

1. Innovation in new churches often has a positive influence on established churches
 - *New churches bring new ideas to the wider church.*
 - *New churches raise up new, creative leaders who bring blessing to the wider church.*
 - *New churches challenge other churches to self-examination. Sometimes it is only in contrast with a new church that older churches can finally define their own vision, specialities, and identity.*
 - *New churches can be an evangelistic feeder system for a whole community.³*
2. Planting creates opportunities for new leadership to be raised up in both a sending church and a new church
3. Planting gives courage to existing churches to be bold and to renew an outward focus
4. As some churches come to the end of their natural lives unless new churches are planted the total number of churches will decrease in an area.

³³ Ibid. 360-361.

Session 2 - Gospel Courage. Helping your church take the next steps

I. Beginning the conversation

A. Help your church to understand that church-planting is a *natural* extension of an evangelistic church ministry

“Church planting should not be like building a building - one big traumatic event followed by a deep collective sigh of relief that it’s done. Paul was continually engaged in evangelism, discipleship, and church planting... church planting should be as much an ongoing, natural part of your ministry as worship, evangelism, fellowship, education, and service.” Tim Keller, *Center Church* (356-7).

Three mind-set shifts⁴

- I. *You must be willing to give away resources and lose control of your money, members, and leaders.*
- II. *You must be willing to give up some control of the shape of the ministry itself*
- III. *You must be willing to care for the kingdom even more than for your tribe.*

B. Help your church over-come barriers to planting such as fear of the unknown, inertia, or the ‘it won’t work here’ mindset

I. Promote a partnership scheme. Such a scheme invites non-church-planting churches to partner with church-planting churches: sharing resources, best-practise, information, people and prayer.

II. Invite a local church planter to a meeting of the leadership team or congregation to share their experience.

C. Help your church to both ask and answer the question ‘is it time for us to plant?’

The key question for any church to consider is simply this: how can we best grow both in quality of discipleship and spread of the gospel? The answer might mean staying as one church. It might mean planting another. It might mean planting many.

Graham Beynon – *Planting for the gospel*

What questions do you think a church leadership team should be thinking through to help answer this question?

D. Help your church answer the question ‘can we afford to plant a new church?’

It depends on the model and depends upon your commitment to mission and reaching outside the church.

The easiest models to resource are a new congregation in the same building and the multi-site model where existing church leaders provide the leadership at little or no extra cost to the church.

⁴ Tim Keller, *Center Church*, 357-8.

Many networks are now seeking to resource church-plants financially so it may not all depend on the resources of one congregation.

E. Help your church answer the question ‘can we partner with others in planting churches?’

Many partnership churches may not be in a position to plant but can have an important role to play partnering with a planting church.

II. The strategic importance of partner churches

A. Why does it take more than one church to plant a church?

- 1) Church-planting is lonely
- 2) Church-planting is risky
- 3) Church planting is resource intensive
- 4) Church-planting can be divisive
- 5) Church-planting is expensive

B. What does it look like to partner with a plant?

Option 1 – Supporting from a distance

Pray and adopt a church plant

Mentor planters

Supply members

Finance

Provide local knowledge

Validation in the community

Exposure to church family

Provide administrative assistance

Option 2 – Support for a limited period

Prayer and finance (as above) etc.

Provide a team leader/elder/ministry leader for a specific period of time

Supply a kids team

Help run a holiday club

Supply music leaders

Provide additional resources through the launch phase

Option 3 – Planting together

As above...

Sending some of the core team

Sharing responsibility

Develop a core vision together

C) Partnering with Midlands Gospel Partnership

Pray for more plants and become an advocate for church planting

Envision your church

Identify key leaders and prospective church planters

Promote the work of MGP church-planting within your church

D) How does partnership bless a church?

Philippians 4:15-20

- 1) Sharing in mission brings joy
- 2) Partnering in planting helps keep your church outward focused
- 3) It holds out a bigger vision for Midlands and the needs that exist
- 4) Partnering may be a spur for you to plant in the future as well as an education
- 5) Partnership helps break down barriers and suspicions regarding working with others who may be a little different from ourselves.
- 6) Partnership gives us a vision for developing leaders

III. Working together to plant more churches

A. Invite potential planters & missional leaders to work in the region

A Church-planting apprenticeship scheme may draw people into the region with a view to planting.

B. Researching and identifying the needs

Have we sought to identify in our region where the obvious needs are?

Where would MGP love to see new churches started?

Are we willing to make that list public?

C. Prayer

How are we partnering in prayer for church-planting. Could more be done?

D. Intentional goals

Do we highlight specific goals in planting as a partnership?

IV. Conclusion

A. Keep casting vision for the urgent need to plant churches.

“Church planting is not only for frontier regions or pagan societies that we are trying to help to become Christian. Churched societies will have to maintain vigorous, extensive church planting simply to stay Christian. One church, no matter how big, will never be able to serve the needs of such a diverse city.” Tim Keller, *Center Church*, 362.

B. Commit your plans to the Lord

We weren't especially thought through. We've learnt as we've gone along. We simply knew that we had a small crowd, a place to meet, some musicians, a Bible and a great God. And so we were prepared to give it a go.

A London-based church-planter

Further resources

Planting for the gospel – Graham Beynon (Best introduction & British)

Church Planting Is for Wimps: How God Uses Messed-up People to Plant Ordinary Churches That Do Extraordinary Things - Mike McKinley

Viral Churches, helping church planters become movement makers – Ed Stetzer & Warren Bird

Why plant churches, Tim Keller, Redeemer City to City -

http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Why_Plant_Churches-Keller.pdf

Center Church, Tim Keller

Some church planting groups and networks

City Networks:

www.2020birmingham.org

www.co-mission.org.uk

National Church-planting initiatives:

www.acts29network.org

www.citytocityuk.com