

SOME GUIDELINES IN RELATION TO CHURCH PLANTING

In this teaching I will be looking at some things to consider in relation to planting a new church. No two churches are ever the same, so the following guidelines in this teaching are just some suggested keys and principles to establishing a healthy church plant based on our own church plants both in Melbourne and Sydney.



As Church of Hope (NSW) looks at planting another church in Sydney, I have also reflected on what we have learned from our previous church plants and how we can do things better as we plan for our latest church plant.

As the church is not the building but the people who gather together - living stones – (1 Peter 2:5) how and where we plant a new church can vary greatly depending upon who we are looking at reaching out to in our church plants. In Blacktown we have a church without walls that meets near the railway station. This street church has now been running weekly for six years with our main focus being on reaching out to those in the market place, including the many taxi drivers and marginalized who would call this fellowship meeting their church home. We have now also established a new street church in Hornsby as part of a new church plant in that city later this year. I will now look at a few things that we consider are important at Church of Hope (NSW) when we look at establishing a new church plant.

1) The new church plant needs to be a God idea.

It is crucial that God has put on the heart of the leader of the church plant a desire to plant a church in a particular area

The Psalmist wrote, “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.” **(Psalm 127:1)**

It is so important that God is directing us to plant a new church and that it is a God idea, because planting a new church involves much energy and planning. I believe that we need to always plan for permanence when looking at starting a new church and that when we plant a church we have the view that it will continue to be a light in the community indefinitely.

Jesus emphasised the importance of having this type of commitment when He said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” **(Luke 9:62)**

God will only bless the church plants that *He has planned in mind for us to establish*. (Matthew 15:13) So for this reason it is important that we first have a clear knowing that God is calling us to plant a new church in a certain area before commencing a new church plant.

When God has put on our heart to pioneer a new church, He will give us the ability to overcome every obstacle that will try and come in the way of the church plant succeeding and give us as leaders the unction to function.

The Psalmist wrote,

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.”
(Psalm 37:23-24)

The Apostle Peter wrote,

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen”
(1 Peter 4:11)

2) We need to birth the new church plant in prayer.

Focused ongoing prayer is the key to seeing a church making a great difference in its community

WE NEED TO PRAY FOR:

- i. God to have His way in all that we do
- ii. God to bring transformation to our community
- iii. God to bring together the right team members and leaders to plant the church
- iv. God's timing (date) to commence the new church plant
- v. For God's strategies to reach out into the community. Every church is different. God knows the best way for us to reach our community with the love of Christ and the gospel message
- vi. Where the church premises should be located. Being located in the right place is a great key to seeing our church grow, and
- vii. For divine appointments as we reach out to those in our community. That God will connect us with key people who will become part of the life of the church in the future

3) We need to have the right church planting team.

Having the right team members when starting a new church plant is crucial as how we begin the church plant will greatly determine its success and health.

It is important that ALL those in our church planting team;

- i. Are team players
- ii. Have a genuine love for God and for others (This is a great key to seeing a new church plant succeed)
- iii. Have a genuine sense of being called to be a part of the new church plant and are enthusiastic and excited about what God will do through the new church plant
- iv. Have a servant heart and are prepared to sacrificially give of themselves

- v. Are people who do not have wounds and offences from the past, especially in relation to past church experiences
- vi. Are humble and TEACHABLE (Proverbs 9:9) (1 Peter 5:5)
- vii. Do not have a religious or control spirit. These spirits will greatly oppose a move of the Holy Spirit in our worship meetings
- viii. Are people of commitment, and
 - ix. Are loyal to the vision of the new church plant and not just seeking ministry doors for themselves (self seeking – James 3:16)

Having the right team from the outset is crucial, as like a chain, a team is only as strong as its weakest link.

The enemy will always try and oppose ground being taken for the Kingdom of God. So for this reason we do not want to make our lives harder by having members in our team who have wrong attitudes and motivations, or who are still carrying hurts and disappointments from the past, causing us additional problems as we seek to pioneer a new church plant.

It only takes one person to bring strife and division into a church planting team, so who is part of our pioneering church planting team is crucial.

4) The role of the Church planting leader is crucial

First and foremost the leader of a new church plant must have a genuine call to plant the new church. It is this calling that will give the church planting leader the ability to remain strong and focused during those times when challenges come their way in life, especially during the pioneering stage of the church plant

AS LEADERS WE NEED TO INSPIRE OTHERS TO BECOME PART OF THE CHURCH PLANTING VISION

People will not buy into what we do, but they will buy into WHY we do things

People need to see the potential for their lives and the new church plant to help bring transformation to the community and to the world.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery was quoted as saying;

“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up men to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.”

It is by sharing the WHY behind the church plant and what significance their role will play in the new church plant that will cause people to connect to the VISION of the new church plant

AS LEADERS WE NEED TO ALSO CLEARLY DEFINE THE CULTURE OF THE NEW CHURCH PLANT

Right from the outset it is important to clearly define what values are important in the new church plant so that it can be a healthy and community changing church in the future. That we have values such as generosity, love for the Lord, encouraging others, faith and enthusiasm, passion for worship and God’s presence, a heart to serve others, acceptance of people of all cultures, promoting healthy relationships between all people and creating community as part of the DNA of our church culture

AS LEADERS WE NEED TO STAY CLOSE TO THE LORD

We need to consistently spend quality time with the LORD to hear from Him so that we know what we are meant to do in each stage of the church plant and in the development of the new church

In the book of Jeremiah we read, “For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD, And has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it?” (**Jeremiah 23:18**)

The bible makes it clear that God's ways are higher than our ways. (Isaiah 55:8-9) For this reason we need to continually seek the Lord for His unfolding strategy for our church plants and to know His will for our own lives and the church that is being planted.

There is a saying, God's will, God's bill, our will, our bill. God will bless the work of our hands and our church plant when we are doing things His way.

The Apostle Paul emphasised the importance of knowing God's will when he wrote, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (**Ephesians 5:15-17**)

The bible makes it clear that the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD. (Psalm 37:23) How we need to continually spend time with the LORD and involve Him in all of our church planting plans so that His blessing and favour and best plan for the church plant can continue to unfold so that it bears much fruit. God's heart is that our lives and churches would be fruitful. (John 15:16)

In the book of Proverbs we read, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." (**Proverbs 3:5-6**)

AS LEADERS WE MUST ALWAYS LEAD WITH FAITH AND ENTHUSIASM. WHAT IS IN THE HEART OF THE LEADER WILL GREATLY IMPACT THE CULTURE AND ATMOSPHERE IN THE CHURCH.

As leaders of new church plants we need to be grounded in the promises of God (2 Corinthians 1:20) and simply believe what the word of God says, "For with God nothing will be impossible." (Luke 1:37)

King David, Israel's greatest king wrote,

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. **Delight yourself also in the Lord**, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.” **(Psalm 37:3-5)**

AS LEADERS WE NEED TO BE GOOD ENCOURAGERS THAT APPRECIATE THE EFFORTS AND SACRIFICES THAT OTHERS MAKE

Nothing will kill or undermine the success of a church plant more quickly than having negativity in our core leadership team. For this reason the leader of the church plant needs to be continually encouraging those in the team what God can do through the new church plant.

What God starts in our life He promises to complete if we simply remain faithful in doing what He has called us to do in life

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” **(Philippians 1:6)**

As leaders we need to be always encouraging those in our core church planting team of their potential in Christ and what God can do in and through their lives. This helps to keep good morale in our core group of leaders.

As the enemy will always try and oppose any work of God, we need to be continually looking for opportunities to encourage those in our team who may be going through tests and trials in their life. It is important that we do not allow their struggles to begin to impact the morale of the entire leadership team. Encouragement helps to give strength to others so that they can keep persevering in their walk with the Lord and fulfil God's destiny for their lives.

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!” (**Proverbs 15:23**)

In the following passage of Scripture in the book of Acts, we see an example of an encouraging leader named Barnabas who made a great impact on the lives of those in the early church

“The news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.” (**Acts 11:22-24**)

As most people sacrificially give of themselves to serve in the church, it is crucial that as leaders we openly appreciate all of their efforts. This helps to create a healthy atmosphere in our churches where people feel appreciated.

5) Pioneering new church plants from scratch

Sometimes we may have to start a new church plant from scratch with no church planting team. This would be the case when God calls a pastor or couple to go to another region or country to pioneer a new work. David Wilkinson, who pioneered Teen Challenge, is an example of this.

After reading an article of young people being charged for murder and seeing their broken faces, David Wilkinson was moved with compassion and went to New York to reach out to the troubled youth there and started a new work from scratch. In 1986, while walking down 42nd Street at midnight, Pastor David Wilkerson’s heart broke over what he saw.

At that time, the Times Square was populated mainly by prostitutes, pimps, runaways, drug addicts and hustlers. In response to this Pastor David obeyed God and opened the Times Square church in October of 1987.

In 2006 God called my wife and I to move from Melbourne to Sydney to pioneer a new work in Kings Cross and to start a new church from scratch.

When starting new church plants from scratch, it is important to spend much time in the community engaging with the people there so that you can get to know those in the community that God has called you to plant a church in

With these types of church plants we need to pray for and seek to gather together an initial core group of potential leaders to invest our lives in as we look at establishing the new church plant.

For church plants started from scratch seeking to gather together an initial core group of potential leaders from those that we meet in our outreaches is the most crucial first step.

As starting a church from scratch can at times be challenging, our own personal walk with the Lord needs to be very strong so that we can overcome any discouragement that may try and come when there seems to be little initial fruit from our endeavours

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” **(Ephesians 6:10)**

The Psalmist wrote,

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.”
(Psalm 46:1)

6) Having a clear GOD GIVEN vision for the new church plant helps to draw people to become part of the life of the new church plant.

The Lord said to the prophet Habakkuk,

“Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.” **(Habakkuk 2:2-3)**

Having a clear vision for the new church plant also helps us to remain focused during the challenging times and when we are not seeing much initial fruit from our efforts.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” **(Galatians 6:9)**

7) It is essential that we commence every proposed new church plant with a time of evangelism and outreaching into the community where we are looking at establishing (planting) the new church.

It is crucial that we begin to develop relationships with those in the community where we are planting the new church. That we begin to get a heart for those people who will become part of the life of the new church plant

As a church planting team we can begin to reach out through fortnightly outreaches where we connect with those in the community. These fortnightly church planting outreaches will also help to develop unity within the church planting team

The bible clearly emphasises the importance of “GOING” into the world and into our communities to reach out to the lost (Mark 16:15) (Luke 14:16-24)

In the book of Acts we read,

“Now while Paul waited for them in Athens (that was for Silas and Timothy), his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.” (Acts 17:16-17)

There are many ways in which God may direct us to reach out into our community. It is also good to encourage all those in our church planting team to personally reach out to others in their network of friends, in their schools or workplaces and to those in their neighbourhood

At Church of Hope we believe in building our churches through conversion growth and not transfer growth. Unless God specifically directs other Christians to join our new church plants we always encourage other believers to stay planted in the churches where they have been fellowshiping at. There are many lost people in our community who need to be saved and to become part of a local church fellowship

People who are saved under our own ministries will invariably be loyal to the house, whereas people who go from church to church will generally bring their grievances from their previous church experiences to our own church. They are also more likely to be more focused on just looking for ministry opportunities, rather than becoming part of the life of the new church plant and helping to serve the vision of the new church being planted.

8) The importance of the leader of the church planting team spending quality time investing in the lives of the key members of the church planting team. This is a great key to maintaining unity in a church planting team. Unity is a great key to seeing our new church plants being blessed (Psalm 133)

The Apostle Paul planted many churches. What characterized his life was his willingness to sow into the lives of others who would become pastors and church planters themselves

Especially during the pioneering stages of a new plant we need to spend quality time as leaders with those in our church planting team to develop strong relationships with the team members. This is a great key to seeing unity in our new church plants

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.”

(1 Corinthians 4:15-16)

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. (1 Thessalonians 2:7-9)

The Apostle Paul also wrote to the young pastor Timothy,

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

9) A suggested five step process to planting a new church

- i. The importance of having a season of prayer for the new church plant to seek God's direction and guidance for the new church plant and to know who we are to include in the initial core group (key leaders) in the church planting team. (All church plants need to be birthed in prayer)
- ii. We need to then prayerfully gather together the core group of leaders who will help to pioneer the church plant and spend time with them as a leader building good relationships with them as we share with them the vision for the new church plant
- iii. "We need to then GO" We need to then set a date to commence outreaches into the community to begin connecting with people in the community. Being committed and consistent is vitally important to building bridges into the community. Being committed to fortnightly outreaches is a great way to begin building relationships with those in the community. Commencing a fortnightly street worship meeting (or other type of regular outreach meeting) helps us to engage with those in the community and to express God's love for them

There are many ways in which we can build bridges into our community. These include reaching out into our local schools, hospital visitations, door to door evangelism and having a tea and coffee table with food parcels where we practically serve those in the community. (This is a great way to open up opportunities to engage with people) Flier drops that promote our church meetings and any special events designed to help us to connect with the community, can also help to connect people to our new church plant.

At church of Hope we have always had a heart to take the church to the streets as part of our church planting outreach initiatives through;

- Worship music
- Preaching the gospel message and sharing bible based practical teachings with those in the community
- Pastorally relating to the people drawn to our street outreaches, and
- Serving Tea and Coffee to create healthy and loving community in our outreaches

iv. Then gather together people that we connect with during our outreaches to become part of a fortnightly small group fellowship.

This small group can be held on the alternate fortnight to when the street or other community outreaches are held. This small group would also include our church planting team members as we seek to establish the new church plant

This group will eventually become the leadership small group which the pastor continues to invest in. Those in this group will be trained up and equipped to be future leaders in the church.

A key FOCUS of this small group should be to train up those in the group to eventually look at running small groups themselves. Establishing a multiplying small group model for the new church plant right from the outset will help to see the new church plant grow strong and healthy. Given the lawless times that we are now living in, being connected to a small group is crucial for all believers, and

- v. Then as God directs commence a Sunday (or Saturday) worship meeting for those that have become part of the life of the new church plant

10) Some other things to consider in relation to planting a new church

- i) The importance of all Church planting pastors continually investing in the lives of the key leaders of the church plant. Having a leadership fellowship group is important so that potential leaders can be encouraged and trained up and released into their ministry gifts and callings. As leaders we need to continually vision share with those in our church what God can do in and through their lives for His Kingdom
- ii) We need to regularly communicate to those in our fellowship the church's vision, so that those in our church can be encouraged to become participants in the life of the church and not just spectators
- iii) The importance of all of those in the core leadership group of the new church plant being given the opportunity of inputting into the strategies for the new church plant. When people have the opportunity to express their ideas and suggestions they will more readily buy into the vision for the church plant. The simple fact is that there is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors.

In the book of Proverbs we read, “Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” (Proverbs 15:22)

- iv) We need to encourage all Christians to connect to the life of a small group. The ACC church statistic is that for every 100 people that come to a church, only 10 will stay if they are not connected to a small group.

On the other hand 70 of those 100 will stay in the church if they become connected to the life of a small group.

Christians also grow most when they are connected to the life of a healthy small group within the church. Establishing multiplying small groups is a great way of growing the church and helping to see people coming to Christ as each new small group has both a discipleship and evangelism focus

- v) The importance of having ongoing outreaches into the community. New believers add life to the church and through their changed lives encourage other seekers among their friends to also come to our church.

It is important that right from the outset that we create a DNA in our church of having a heart to share the gospel with those outside the church. As a church we must never lose our passion for evangelism.

As evangelism is more caught than taught, it is important that pastors planting new churches both have a heart for reaching out to the lost themselves as well as actively encouraging those in their church to become soul winners as well. (Proverbs 11:30)

Providing some basic and practical training in evangelism, as well as resourcing those in our church with tracts, are two keys that can help to mobilise those in our church to evangelize to others.

- vi) The importance of encouraging all those in our church to find and follow God's plan for their lives and to serve others with their gifts
- vii) That we as leaders actively encourage all believers to use their spiritual gifts by creating ministry opportunities for people to use their gifts
- viii) That we encourage all believers to develop a dynamic private devotional life (study of the word and prayer) where they get to know Jesus Christ as their best friend
- ix) That we seek God's tangible presence in all of our meetings as we make prayer a continual focus in our church meetings. Praying people are powerful people
- x) That we continually seek as leaders God guidance and direction for our churches, so that all that He has planned for our church plants comes to pass in due time (Proverbs 16:3)
- xi) That continually creating an atmosphere of genuine love and acceptance needs to be a great priority in what we do and that we are quick to deal with any division that may try and creep into our church
- xii) The importance of creating healthy Christian community in all of our church meetings, and

xiii) That as the church begins to grow in size, that we begin to pray for and train up suitable leaders for the new ministries that are needed as the church begins to grow in size.

That we establish ministries to cater for the children and youth, that we have both a healthy woman's and men's ministry and for an expanded pastoral care ministry as the church begins to grow in size. The pastoral care side of the ministry can be best done through the formation of multiplying small groups that are connected to the life of the church.

SO IN CONCLUSION:

Church planting is a great way to evangelise communities. When we outreach into new communities to establish new church plants, people are not only saved but also given the opportunity of being immediately connected to the life of a church so that they can become disciples and not just converts. Church planting helps us to fulfil the great commission of making disciples of all the nations.

Jesus Himself said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen." (**Matthew 28:19-20**)

No two churches will ever be the same. We must simply be continually led by the Holy Spirit so that God's blueprint, (the best plan) for our church plant continues to unfold over time (**John 16:13**)
(**Isaiah 55:8-9**)

