

PREPARING A CONGREGATION TO PLANT A NEW CHURCH

Sometimes pastors experience difficulty in attempting to lead their church to consider planting another congregation. In many cases the pastor has not led the congregation through a process of preparation or discovery. The pastor has done little more than pitching the idea to the congregation. For the majority of churches in North America, there is a very necessary initial stage of preparation or cultivation through which the church must be led before they are really ready and motivated to plant a new church.

Here are five proven steps for leading a congregation through this preparation stage:

1. Establish a Prayer & Research Team – How this team is actually established will vary from church to church, depending on church size, polity, and structure. The purpose of this team is to discover the unreached/unchurched population segments in the area which established churches have been unable to reach. This is accomplished through intentional prayer and research. Often there are unreached population segments within blocks of the church. They are the people whom the church has invited repeatedly to attend special services, to come to Vacation Bible School, or to take part in a social event; and month after month, year after year, they still do not come. Pastor, resist the temptation to tell the team who these unreached people are – let them work through the discovery process.

2. Experience the Need – Once the unreached population segment(s) is identified, the team needs to “experience the need.” This can be done by conducting prayer walks, doing door-to-door surveys, or through any ministry activity that requires church people being in direct face-to-face contact with the persons in the community. Today, more and more people are kinesthetic learners. To really “get something” they must “experience it.”

3. Extended Prayer Strategy – Once the need has been experienced by a handful of church members, the prayer strategy can be passionately extended to other areas within the church. Those who experienced the need should communicate specific prayer requests in their Bible study classes, small groups, with prayer ministry coordinators, and others. An organized and intentional effort is necessary to make this happen.

4. Testimonies Communicating Need – Enlist a few persons who have experienced the need and who have an obvious passion for these unreached people to share brief testimonies in a worship service. This is often effective by having one 3 to 5 minute testimony per service for three weeks. Testimonies can also be written and published in the church newsletter or bulletin.

5. Congregational Experience of Need – Finally, after the congregation has been asked to pray for these people and has heard passionate testimonies from fellow church members regarding the need, they need to experience the need for themselves. This can be done by hosting an evangelistic block

party, conducting more prayer walks, or doing any number of ministry evangelism activities among the people needing to be reached.

Once the congregational preparation has been done, a pastor will not have to “convince” a congregation to do something. They will be motivated by the need, and through the leading of the Holy Spirit will desire to invest time, energy and financial resources to start a church specifically designed to reach those for whom they have developed a deep compassion.

~Eric Ramsey, Awareness Manager, Church Planting Group, NAMB