

# WHY PLANT A NEW CHURCH?

By James P. Allen

The time has come for ministerial jealousy to cease. There should be no spirit of competition between denominations and certainly not between churches of similar doctrinal persuasions. In 1900 there were 27 churches for every 10,000 people in America, but today there are less than 11 churches for every 10,000 people. The only hope for America is for us to plant new churches within every neighborhood and every sub culture.

Let's consider some of the other reasons why we need to plant new churches.

## NEW CONGREGATIONS ARE MORE EVANGELISTIC

Bruce McNicol of Interest Ministries is quoted in the magazine "Christianity Today" as saying, "Among evangelical churches, those under three years old will win ten people to Christ per year for every hundred church members; those 3 to 15 years old will win five people per year. After age 15, the number drops to three per year."

Lyle Schaller, in his book 44 Questions For Church Planters, writes, "...new churches are more likely to reach more people and to grow in size than are long-established parishes. Perhaps the simplest explanation of this pattern is that new congregations are organized around evangelism and reaching people not actively involved in the life of any worshipping community. By contrast, powerful internal institutional pressures tend to encourage long-established churches to allocate most of their resources to the care of members. One result is that the vast majority of new congregations in the United States reach their peak in size during the first two or three decades of their existence and then remain on a plateau in size or begin to shrink in numbers."

New congregations have a higher level of commitment toward evangelism. They realize that their survival as a church depends on constantly reaching new people.

## NEW CONGREGATIONS ARE A BLESSING TO ESTABLISHED CHURCHES

One fallacy that Satan would instill in the minds of established churches is that a new church starting in their area will hurt their attendance and income. Fear is one of the first tactics the enemy will use against Christians to keep them from doing what God wants them to do. Losing church members to new congregations is a common fear expressed, but one that should quickly be dispelled.

No church is going to be effective in reaching the entire community. Just as a radio station will not reach all people and must target a particular group to gain an audience; churches will always be more effective reaching one target group. The exciting thing about starting new churches is that they are often able to reach people that have been unreached by all other existing efforts of established churches.

Another fact that should expel fear of loss is a testimony of a church that has started neighboring churches. Dan Betzer, a pastor in Fort Myers, Florida related at a minister's retreat in Monroe, Louisiana, the story of how his church mothered its first church. With a growing desire to see an Assemblies of God church across the river from Fort Myers, Dan prayed for God to send someone to pastor this new church. After months of prayer, a young man walked into his office who said the Lord had called him to pastor a new church across the river. Dan hired this young preacher and placed him on his staff for a short period, so the people of the church could get to know him and develop confidence in him.

On his last day with them, Dan allowed him to preach the morning service. The planned altar call was for everyone who was being led of the Lord to become a part of the new church to rise from his or her seat and walk out the door with the new pastor. Dan had thought that maybe 35 people would become a part of the new church, but to his amazement, 135 people followed the new pastor out of the building. Half of the choir left, one deacon left and many other tithers. As they were walking out Dan said he was calculating the tithes that were leaving and realized that

\$5,000.00 a week was walking out the door. He was devastated and walked around the rest of the day in shock.

All fear left him by the next Sunday. He looked around the church and it seemed just as full as the week before, the choir was full again and within a couple of months the income was back to where it was before the new church started. Dan went on to explain how God will bless those churches that will follow His leading and give as He directs them to give.

Peter Wagner said, "Some are reluctant to start new churches for fear of harming those churches that are currently located in the target community. They feel that doing so could create undesirable competition between brothers and sisters in Christ. I mention here that in more cases than not, a new church in the community tends to raise the religious interest of the people in general and if handled properly can be a benefit to existing churches. That which blesses the kingdom of God as a whole also blesses the churches that truly are a part of the Kingdom." He went on to site that in the town of Ewa, Hawaii a Southern Baptist church was planted. This church plant raised the spiritual level so high that the Roman Catholic Church witnessed a 100% attendance growth and the local Congregational church saw an attendance increase of 155%. Lyle Schaller has made a similar observation about planting a new congregation in the midst of existing congregations of the same denomination. He said, "Contrary to conventional wisdom, congregations usually benefit from intradenominational competition. While it is impossible to isolate one factor as being decisive, the presence of two or more congregations with the same denominational affiliation usually results in a higher level of congregational health and vitality than if one congregation has a denominational monopoly in that community."

Brad Boydston, a church planter with the Covenant Church said, "As strange as it might sound, one of the best places to start a Covenant church is where one or more already exists. A new Covenant church will raise the visibility of the existing church and will in turn receive the support and encouragement of the established congregation."

After interviewing various church planters, we have determined that the new church is able to keep one in ten they are able to reach. The other nine out of that ten often start going to, or return to, other congregations.

### **NEW CONGREGATIONS RAISE UP NEW LEADERS**

Many established congregations have a lack of room for more leaders. Although most pastors struggle with finding adequate leadership to minister to their local congregations, there are often many people who feel their ministry gifts are not needed in their church.

Planting new churches spurs opportunities of ministry to people who want to be better used of the Lord in ministering. How often do we witness churches with several people called to preach sitting quietly on the pews of established churches, because they have not been given opportunity to use their gift? Perhaps one of the reasons this problem exists is because God has not called many of our present preachers to pastor established churches, but to go out and plant new churches.

### **NEW CHURCHES REACH OTHER CULTURES**

It has been said many times that the United States is the melting pot of the world. Today over 60% of our nation is composed of other cultures than white Anglo-Saxon. If we are going to be effective in reaching America, we should realize that establishing new church plants is the only way we will reach all types of people.

Many speculate that the unchurched population of the United States is exceeding the 70% mark. No longer can we be referred to as a Christian nation. Every major cultic group has targeted the United States as their mission field. The largest Muslim mosque is not in the Middle East somewhere, but in California. Brazil is the only country in the world that receives more missionaries than the United States. Now countries we have reached through our missionary efforts are sending Christian missionaries back to reach us. Without doubt, we should continue sending missionaries to the unreached people groups in the world, but America now needs our attention. It is time we start sending missionaries to the unreached cultures in our own cities.