

## Basic ingredients of Church planting

By Peter Veysie

### Introduction

We come from a tradition of church planting which seems to have slowed down and almost stopped in spite of the fact that our population has grown exponentially.

The early church had 3000 new members that they had to facilitate and it was messy but it survived and became a movement. Acts 2

John and Charles Wesley along with the community called "methodists" had a call to take the church to the people and so developed class meetings, then societies, then circuits and districts and they encouraged the local community to plant churches. This movement expanded throughout the globe and has become an influential part of most towns, villages, rural areas, cities and nations. We have sadly become a church maintenance structure with a very top heavy institution rather than a movement guided and directed by the mission of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 (you should know this scripture by now!!!) John Wesley's journal online.

The question arises as to whether we need to begin to explore new ways of church planting with our ever increasing population and the methodology to enable this to happen? My answer would definitely be absolutely yes and so I have set out some guidelines as to how to do this.

My own personal experience has been to be involved in church planting both inside and outside the Methodist Church. Some have been highly successful and others have failed, which is part of the process by the way, however, the joy and excitement of seeing a new community of people gathering together to worship, transform an area and proclaim Jesus in Word and deed is awesome.

I have learned the hard way too that you need to have mentors who will guide you and a strong motivation and call from the Lord otherwise it will be a complete waste of time. You have to also examine your own desire to plant a church so that you don't do it for the wrong reasons.

I have therefore outlined some key ingredients in planting a church. Remember that it is God's church and not yours and it is about the ekklesia ( you should know what that means by now) and not about a building.

You can plant a very effective church under a tree or next to an abandoned building or in a coffee shop or even a shabbeen. That might shock a few of you, but it might be the very place that God has called you to do His work.

### Ingredients :

#### - 1. Research your area

I remember as a young minister being given to task to explore the area around our church and to visit various communities including the mosque, synagogue, hindu temple and other denominations as well as businesses, schools and community forums. I had to compile a report on this with proof of my visits and encounters. ( I always remember the Moslem folk being the most friendly and embracing of my visits and even invited me to pray and fast with them.) The most unfriendly were the local churches who were very suspicious of my visit. Isn't that funny how this is still the case today !!! This is really the first step in understanding the needs of your community and you may find that it is oversaturated with churches and that there is a need for mission work in the schools or businesses that can also become about the ekklesia at some point.

#### - 2. Motivate the need with your leaders and share teaching on this.

We always work within a community of people and the local church and so it is no good doing this on your own as a loose canon so to speak as you will blow the whole thing out before you even get started. Take others along once you have done a full investigation of the area. Grab a taxi and drive around or walk and show them what you have seen. Allow them to identify some of the needs of the community. I can remember a small group of people meeting in the streets of Rivonia because we started a soup kitchen out of the boots of our cars and we had bible study and prayer times with these folk. We also started a small church on Sunday's after our service with folk in Alex (JHB) sitting on beer crates under a tree next to an industrial neglected building which had become the home of many people who came to church. One of those woman who joined the group and accepted Christ became a society steward and leader in our church. As you join hands with leaders and members of the church, a discernment process will begin and you will start to see the potential places where the needs of people need to be met. Another effective way of reaching the community is through self-help schemes like food gardens and skills training. You have people in your churches with enormous skills and you need to use them. What do you have in your hand and start simply.

#### - 3. Pray,

- Get a team together to pray and do a prayer walk, look for potential places (community hall, house or even a shady tree!! I was training for Comrades one year and I ran past a building in Rivonia which had a To Let sign outside and I then

got a team together to come and pray on the property. After a long period of faithfully going back to the building and praying we had a call from an anonymous donor who bought the building for the church. Funds then came flowing in as we started to share the vision and we restored a very run down building in 52 days !!! It sometimes takes time and it doesn't always happen at once. We started in a garage of somebodies home and then rented school halls and finally had our own building after 10 years of waiting. You have to be patient and wait sometimes but it's worth it.

- 4. Identify the needs (team, finances, accountability structure) It's no good putting a church in place without really doing a careful study of the needs. You will need a team of strong people around you as well as a plan to raise funds. You will need to have servant hearted members who will be willing to do a little extra work. You also need to make sure that you are aware of the needs of the community and ask if they really do need another church ??? Maybe it's a missional project of a food kitchen or a self help group that ultimately will rise up to be a church group. Call on others who have been on this journey to keep you accountable. Which really leads into the next step.
  
- 5. Look for a mentor to walk with you,
  - When the wheels are falling off and it seems like nothing is coming together . The long nights of the soul when you are losing patience and it seems like nothing will ever come together, the lack of support and finances and a feeling like you are going backwards, you need a mentor who you can phone and just let some steam off with. This is not always your superintendent minister or pastor but a trusted friend who you can pretty much tell all your problems to and she/he will be able to listen and care. I have found my own mentors of which I have 4 that I regularly go to who are invaluable to me and my journey. My own father Rev. Dr Donald Veysie, is one of them and he often says to me that it's time to "sit on the bench". He would meet me on Leisure Isle in Knysna with a flask of coffee and some biscuits my mom had baked or muffins or rusks and he would then ask me how it is with my soul !!! He knew when I needed this time almost instinctively and I still have the privilege of sitting on the bench.
  
- 6. Be flexible, The best way to plant churches is to be flexible. What I mean by this is that far too many have pushed to plant a church and it's been about their agenda as opposed to the reality before them. Stop and think and find alternatives. Maybe it's just to start again with a class meeting. Maybe it's to start a self help scheme or a gardening group that will develop into a church plant in it's good time. Build relationships with other flexible people too who will not become so pushy that you can't even breathe. Take it easy and see what the Lord is wanting. Maybe go back to a quiet prayer space and come alongside of others who will dream a bit with you. It would be good also to see how others have done church planting.