

Ministry Rationale and Overview

Mission Church Legal/Operational Startup Support

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Experts agree that church planting is essential to fulfilling the Great Commission

- **Tim Keller:**

- “A vigorous and continuous approach to church planting is the only way to guarantee an increase in the number of believers and is one of the best ways to renew the whole body of Christ.”
- “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.”

- **Peter Wagner:**

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

- **Ed Stetzer:**

- “The truth is that many churches are shutting their doors, and we need more church plants to keep up and impact the world with the gospel.”
- “Among the best ways for us to reach people with the gospel is personal evangelism and church planting. Even with all the changes in culture, this remains our best option for reaching unbelievers.”

However, church planting is very challenging and stressful ...

- **Ed Stetzer:**

- “I've written an article on how to plant a church without losing your soul. I've seen many leaders, including those who would be considered successful, and those whose work failed to produce lasting fruit, crash and burn while doing the very thing God called them to do.”
- “Don't get me wrong, the job is still dirty -- very dirty. Leadership, finances, volunteers, systems, vision, evangelism, discipleship, and health of the planter and his family are jugular issues. The church planter graveyard remains ominously overcrowded.”

- **Gospel Coalition writers:**

- “We mustn't underestimate the emotional costs involved in planting a church. Whether it be the constant change, pervasive uncertainty, isolation, support raising and recruiting, leadership development, frenetic pace, or unrealistic expectations—church planters need to manage all of these, not to mention the daily responsibility to lead people in the truth.”
- “Church planting is a roller coaster. Ask anyone who was ever mad enough to jump on and strap in for the ride, and they'll tell you the same. Some days, the joyous thrill will make you want to scream ecstatically from the top of your lungs. Other days, you'll be so low that you'd rather just stagger off and puke.”

... as workload, financial, and marital concerns weigh on the planter

Workload

- **Gospel Coalition writer.** “Ministry is consuming, and church planting often gobbles more than normal due to starting everything from scratch. The church planter has to organize, plan, find locations, set up, clean up, prepare, preach, counsel, visit, lead, and more until he drops. But that’s the normal routine for church planting (and much pastoral work). He may not have a solid team around him. He has new people wanting to talk with him. He spends time doing community visits and contacts. He’s not accustomed to the preparation that goes into Sundays, so he’s strained every week. If he could physically do it, no doubt, he could spend 24 hours per day in church work?”

Financial

- **Barna Group report.** “Financial stress is overtaking many church planters, leading some to even consider quitting the calling altogether. The study found that only 41 percent of church planters feel personally secure in their finances. Further, and more worrisome, are the strains on their marriage as a result of the financial stresses associated with church planting. Most church planters are entrepreneurial problem solvers. But these findings add up to a daunting reality for even the most resourceful of ministry leaders. The emotional implications are most concerning.”

Marriage

- **Eric Hallett,** District Superintendent, The Wesleyan Church. “If you are a church planter and married, you are most likely going to confront significant marriage stress.”
- **Fred De Jong,** CRC Church Planter. “Church planting is really hard work. And it’s hard on marriages. Ours almost didn’t make it... Pride, busyness, and avoidance motivate us to bury our relational issues in the hard work that a new church requires.”
- **Parakaleo ministry (PCA/MNA).** “Multiple research studies highlight the difficulty of ministry in general, and church planting in particular. When you start a business or ministry, the exhaustion factor is very high, and this impacts the marriage. The church planting couple expend a great deal of energy pouring into the lives of their leaders and the congregation. It’s a time of great giving out and little putting in or restoring. The premature departure or burnout of the pastor or spouse can have a disastrous effect on a fledgling church. Many fledgling churches fail because of the stresses placed on the pastoral couple. In fact, some ministry marriages do not survive the rigors of church planting.”

In this stressful entrepreneurial but essential role, church planters must master and balance many critical priorities

1. Leadership Development and Reproducing Culture
2. Financial Self-Sufficiency and Viability
3. Launch Team Development and Mobilizing Volunteers
4. Systems, Processes and Cultures
5. Casting Vision and Avoiding Mission Drift
6. Evangelism and Discipleship
7. Spiritual, Physical and Mental Health of the Planter and Family

Source: *7 Top Issues Church Planters Face*, Report Prepared by Exponential and Ed Stetzer

Just when viability is reached, attaining legal/operational independence is an additional priority

- Viability often means:
 - Critical mass of regular worshippers
 - Financial self-sufficiency
 - Enough qualified, available, and “called” ruling elder candidates
 - Presbytery support for self-governing and self-operating
- Legal / operational independence means:
 - Complete new legal entity steps and documents
 - Upgrade visitor, member, household, and donor information system
 - Establish administrative/financial processes, policies, systems, and staffing
 - Adopt sustainable information and communication technologies
 - Institute applicable human resource management practices
 - Install due diligence / risk mitigation measures, like insurance and child protection policies

This additional priority / necessity of achieving legal entity status and building back-end services raises three concerns

1. Reduces capacity for and progress toward main priorities, especially:
 - Congregational discipleship
 - Specialized ministry enhancement
 - Ecclesial steps toward independence
 - Member readiness and commitment
 - Leadership recruitment and development
2. Stress may intensify since legal/operational matters are often outside a planter's "strike zone"
 - Typical planter attributes are often entrepreneurial and relational and not administrative.
 - Generally not experienced or equipped in building foundational legal/business infrastructure.
 - Most planters can/could get it done, but not easily or efficiently.
3. Sources of appropriate help may be available but could be insufficient.
 1. Parent church resources, which would be ideal, may not have skills, proximity or capacity.
 2. Peers, mentors, and network/presbytery leaders offer guidance but usually can't assist much with implementation.
 3. Internal volunteers are rarely qualified, willing, and available to address breadth of requirements. If prospective ruling elders could help, their focus should be on congregational leadership and shepherding, not administration.

So where can a church planter find help at this stage?

Church planters at this stage could use an “*executive pastor on demand*” to maintain priority focus and manage stress while attaining independent status

- Big ideas:
 - Provide legal/operational on-ramp / startup support to smoothly build a timely sustainable internalized foundation.
 - Supply “admin-in-a-box” or “operational starter kit” containing turnkey/reusable resources.
- Objectives:
 - Enable the planter to be less sidetracked and anxious, better able to carry out his unique calling and vision/mission for the church plant.
 - Help mission church transition efficiently to necessary self-governing and self-operating status.
 - Increase success rate of church-planting strategy.
- Approach:
 - Offer consulting / project management services performed by well qualified church executive.
 - Adapt/customize to each church planter’s needs – not a “cookie-cutter” or bundled package.
 - Deliver virtually/remotely anytime/anywhere using technology to minimize time & expense.
 - Meet & work in person when essential/desirable/possible and affordable.

This ministry to church planters is supported by sound Biblical rationale

- Christ's Body is led by prophet, priest, and king roles. Planters must excel in the prophetic and priestly responsibilities but often need teammates to help plan and fulfill kingly duties.
- Jesus taught about our need to plan, to have right resources needed for success. "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" Luke 14:28 (ESV)
- The healthy Body of Christ is composed of many parts; planters often have ministry gifts but need complementary help from those with gift of administration.
- Acts 6 model: Elders focused on people/Word ministry, delegated diaconal work, and the church grew numerically and spiritually.

This ministry to church planters offers discrete specialized services at the right time in a flexible way

- Ecclesial/legal roadmap and timeline – help plan for path ahead
- Strategic ministry planning, coaching, and execution; align operations to support mission & vision
- Checklist of needed operational capabilities, policies, and infrastructure
 - Decide on priorities and urgencies – what to do “now, next, and later”
- Legal and risk management resources
 - Legal templates: Articles of Incorporation & bylaws, plus assist with EIN, 501c3, sales tax exemption (all partnering with local attorney)
 - Insurance buyer’s guide (partnering with broker)
 - Policy templates : Financial, employee manual, performance management, conflict of interest, child protection, sexual misconduct, data protection, records retention
 - Employment and volunteer applications; ministerial housing allowance form
- Technology-enabled approach; advocate “cloud” software options
 - Accounting/payroll, church management system, communications, productivity tools
- Staffing plan by function: part-time staff, contractors, outsource, volunteers
 - Collaborate with Auxilio which, when/where appropriate, provides church plants wide-ranging, bundled technology & operational outsource services.

Consultant / project director is well-qualified to lead this emerging ministry to church planters

- Christian ministry operations executive for 20 years
 - Chief Operating Officer of EPC national office: 2013-2019
 - Executive Administrator at The Kirk, large PCA church and school in STL: 2004-2012
 - Administrator in parachurch ministry headquarters (Cru): 1972-1977
- Ruling elder in church plant plus small and large Presbyterian churches
 - Officer in EPC churches for 10 years, in PCA church for 20 years
 - Member (4 years) and chairman (2 years) of national PCA Administrative Committee
 - Chairman of local host committee for 2021 PCA General Assembly in St. Louis
- MBA / business executive for 25 years
 - Major and startup company experience: Monsanto, Ernst & Young, Oracle, e-Markets
 - Technology and management consultant
 - Business systems project director
 - Operations and marketing management
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