

## **Why Start New Churches?**

Most church planting projects involve the investment of a considerable amount of time, energy, hope and money. It is essential that the Church not squander its resources but, instead, invest them wisely. New churches have been started for a large number of reasons – some better than others. There are, however, at least ten compelling reasons to start new churches.

Beginning new faith communities is a significant way to embody the Great Commission of Jesus to take his message to all people. Church planting projects are mission stations. They are outposts of the Kingdom of God. While it is true that existing churches also play a part in fulfilling this call, new churches have a vital role to play as well. The investment of resources in new church development is a witness to the desire of the Church to be faithful and obedient. The focus and preparation required for a successful planting project is a sign-act demonstrating the commitment of the Church to heed the words of Jesus.

Starting new churches is an historic way in which the Church throughout the ages has responded to both the needs of people and the call of God. As Christians have moved to new lands and new communities, they have taken their faith with them. Wanting to have a place in which to worship and gather with other followers of Jesus, they began to organize churches and construct buildings. Due to ethnic, racial, cultural and other factors, churches were formed both as people moved to new locations and as new people moved to new countries and associated with those who shared a common background.

New church development allows for the creation of churches that match the demographics of the community. North America has a countless number of churches whose membership is not reflective of the community in which it is located. A large number of these churches are not effectively reaching their community nor do most of them have the cross-cultural skills needed to do so. To effectively reach people with the life-changing message of Jesus, it is imperative that indigenous churches are created and conveniently located near their target populations.

New churches are often more effective at reaching people not currently involved in church than are existing churches. Some people find it easier to participate in a new church that does not have a complex set of long-standing traditions, customs and practices and that does not have a set of established (entrenched) leaders. New church starts often appear more welcoming to guests and more open to new people than existing churches. In addition, new churches reach out to people out of necessity – they will cease to exist if they do not attract people to the new church.

The presence of a new church in a community can have a positive effect on other churches in that community. This effect may be due to an increased awareness

of churches among members of the community due to the advertising and outreach efforts of the new church start, the positive interactions between the planter and the pastors of existing churches in the community or even the desire of existing churches to “keep up” with the growth of the new church start. Churches related to the sponsoring organization located in the general area of the new church start may also benefit from sharing in the training and coaching provided to the church planting team.

New church starts serve as living laboratories for utilizing new methods of outreach and evangelism and new forms of church structure and ministry focus. Starting churches is still an experimental endeavor; it is not an exact science. As the cultural, political, ethnic, theological and philosophical context of ministry continues to change, new forms and methods are needed to help people meet, know and serve Jesus. New faith communities provide the real world environment in which to explore a variety of ministry approaches.

No church connects well with every kind of person in their community. Across North America, over 50% of people are not meaningfully involved in a faith community. Regardless of the number of churches in a particular city or town, there is always room for a new church that shares the message of Jesus in a new, dynamic, innovative manner. Starting a new church that offers a different atmosphere, format, mission emphasis, worship style, outreach method and/or quality of hospitality, has the potential to reach a portion of those people who are not currently attending a church.

Starting new churches illustrates good stewardship of the differing gifts given to those whom God has called to serve as pastors. Some pastors are strong shepherds who sense a call to care for people and build long-lasting relationships. Other pastors have a more apostolic call and sense a pull towards starting new faith communities and creating new ministries. Neither call is “better” than the other; they are just different calls. Biblical stewardship calls us to always make the wisest investment of our resources that is possible. Creating new churches represents one aspect of biblical stewardship on the part of sponsoring organizations.

New churches are usually more “nimble” than existing churches, that is, they can adjust to changes in the culture and the changing needs of people more quickly than churches with a long tradition and a large number of standing rules. This ability to incorporate changes in tactics, approach, style and method can make new churches more likely to appropriately adjust to changes in their context than existing churches.

New church development is an investment in the future. The life cycle model of churches predicts that, unless an intervention is made into the cycle, most churches will begin, grow, plateau and start to decline within a time frame of less than forty years. Many churches are significantly older than forty years and the

state of the Church in North America reflects what the life cycle model predicts. New churches are needed in order to provide the opportunity for the Church to exist for the generations yet to come.

This information is provided by Dr. Don Nations, a pastor, planter, consultant and coach. Don is the founder and Lead Coach of DNA Coaching. To contact him, visit [www.dnacoaching.com](http://www.dnacoaching.com) or email him at [don@dnacoaching.com](mailto:don@dnacoaching.com). Copyright 2003. All rights reserved.