

Mission Moments  
Printer-friendly version  
From the Center for U.S. Missions  
Following Jesus into the U.S. Mission Field  
July 14, 2006

Failure to Launch? -- --  
Why do so Many Churches Overlook Church Planting?  
by Mike Ruhl

On a recent flight from Orange County to Detroit, the Boeing 757 featured the in-flight film *Failure to Launch*. Even without headphones, the story-line was both obvious and engaging. Two aging parents are eager for their thirty-something son to move out of their home and launch his own life. So the parents hire a female consultant to facilitate their son's "launch into fulfillment" by moving out. The female consultant explains that most *failures to launch* are due to lack of self-esteem. So she launches a plan to create a romantic relationship with their son, craft a memorable first encounter, design an emotional crisis, plus multiply opportunities to fellowship with his close friends, and for them to convince and teach the son to "move out." The plan backfires, however, at least for a while. For instead of bonding with the female consultant, the home-tied son wants to break up. Hence the film title: *Failure to Launch*.

What about church planting? Those words refer to a Christian congregation seeing and seizing the opportunity for fulfilling spiritual reproduction by giving birth to a new congregation. Has your congregation considered investing energetically in kingdom-growth by daughtering a new congregation? Or might this be an example of a *failure to launch*? Is your congregational self-esteem, rooted in the merits of the cross and empty tomb of Jesus Christ, strong enough to push you out of the parochial nest and make new disciples for Christ by creating a new church in the real world? Has the Holy Spirit ignited a kingdom-growth vision which transcends addition and embraces *multiplication*?

Reflect on this listing of adapted *Church Planting Affirmations*, all of which support the successful launch of new congregations from existing congregations.

1. Church planting is biblical.
2. Church planting is based on fervent, continual prayer.
3. Church planting is indispensable to evangelizing the world.
4. Church planting is guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
5. Church planting is accompanied by bold witnessing to the Gospel.
6. Church planting trusts the Lord of the Church to make provision.
7. Church planting is about reaching all people wherever they dwell.
8. Church planting sees all humans in need of the forgiveness of Christ.
9. Church planting follows the New Testament in honoring diversity.
10. Church planting is sacrificial in nature.
11. Church planting is indigenous to the local context

12. Church planting is dependent more on the call of God than on human or financial resources.
13. Church planting is hard work.
14. Church planting includes ministry to the whole person.
15. Church planting is done best by and through local congregations.

Some of these affirmations may challenge our traditional (and organizational) perception about church planting, and even create some doubts and fears in an established congregation about “leaving home” by stepping out in faith to sponsor the planting of a new church. Is it truly more effective when local congregations plant new congregations instead of districts and denominations? Should new church plants truly reflect the context and culture in which they are planted instead of cloning the church culture? Can the world truly be evangelized without aggressive church planting? Can established churches with limited people and financial resources still plant a new church? Is it factual that God truly does “multiply the bread and fish” and provide the necessary resources to accomplish church planting? Will giving birth to a new daughter congregation only weaken the mother congregation?

Doubts and fears such as these are capable of closing the hearts and minds of existing congregations to the possibilities of making more and better disciples for Christ for time and for eternity through church planting.

In fact, for some congregations, it is like not wanting to “grow up and leave home,” choosing instead to remain in familiar surroundings that are safe and secure and free of risk-taking for a higher purpose.

*Failure to launch?*

## **Moment Extras**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Has your church planted a daughter church?
2. When was the last time your congregation discussed planting a new church?
3. What structures in your congregation enhance or hinder the opportunities to plant a church?
4. To which of the above affirmations do you resonate? Which do you find challenging? What about your congregation?
5. Is God stirring a desire to be a part of a new church plant? What will you do about this stirring?
6. What will you do to help your congregation launch, join or continue in a church planting movement?

### **Links**

Missions targets both growing, declining churches for `Ablaze!`

by Paula Schlueter Ross

<http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=9418>

Read about what the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is doing to foster church planting through the Ablaze! Movement.

Church Planting Movement from International Mission Board

by David Garrison

<http://www.imb.org/CPM/default.htm> and <http://www.newway.org/cpm/>

The first link features the entire Church Planting Movement booklet online broken down in chapters. The second link is a website that provides the Church Planting Movement in a workshop format including the booklet in PDF and Microsoft Word format, a PowerPoint presentation, a leader's guide for facilitating the workshop and much more.

Urban Home Church Planting at Xenos

by Dennis McCallum

<http://www.xenos.org/CLASSES/leadership/urbanhousechurchplanting.htm>

Lays out Xenos' approach to planting urban home churches including elements of success and constraints on church planting.

Church planting movements: 'God does it; we watch'

by Erich Bridges

[http://www.baptiststandard.com/1999/3\\_3/pages/planting.html](http://www.baptiststandard.com/1999/3_3/pages/planting.html)

This brief article shares how a church planting movement sprang up in South Asia.

Church Planting from Leadership Network

[http://www.leadnet.org/LC\\_ChurchPlanting.asp](http://www.leadnet.org/LC_ChurchPlanting.asp)

A great article discussing the impact on a church that has "mothered" a church plant.

### **News from the Center**

Upcoming Seminars -- Please pray that the participants in these upcoming seminars may use what they learn to be effective tools in God's kingdom.

- Basic Mission Planter Training, July 24-28, 2006, Irvine, CA
- New Mission Executive Training, Aug 23-24, 2006, St. Louis, MO
- Daughter Church Planting, Aug 25-26, 2006, Phoenix, AZ
- Daughter Church Planting, Sept. 8-9, 2006, Abiding Savior, Lake Forest, CA Register.

- Daughter Church Planting, Sept. 15-16, 2006, First Our Savior, Granada Hills, CA

---

*Mission Moments*, a biweekly electronic newsletter from the Center for U.S. Missions, brings information and encouragement to all who desire to share the God's great love in Jesus Christ with others. The Center for U.S. Missions provides research and training for mission work among unevangelized people in the United States. A partnership of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod World Missions, Concordia University in Irvine, California, and the North America Mission Executives of the LCMS, the Center serves all Christian denominations.

www.centerforusmissions.org  
Contact us at office@centerforusmissions.org  
1530 Concordia West; Irvine, CA 92612-3299; 949-854-8002 x1780; fax 949-854-6854  
Michael Ruhl, Executive Director, mike.ruhl@cui.edu  
Glenn Lucas, Director of Training; glenn.lucas@cui.edu  
Mike Zehnder, National Worship Consultant; pastormike@thefellowship.com  
Michelle Connor, Coordinator; michelle.connor@cui.edu  
Karen Kogler, Mission Moments editor; karen.kogler@sbcglobal.net

*To unsubscribe (or to subscribe if you received this as a forward), go to  
<http://centerforusmissions.com/index.php?page=news-subscribe> or email us.*