

CHURCH PLANTING



FULL GOSPEL CHURCH OF GOD

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The future of the Church in South Africa is in the hands of the denominations and churches who have faith and vision and mobilize people to develop new evangelical churches. The best way by far to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world and to contribute to spiritual care is to have a church in every neighbourhood.

Unfortunately most of our churches do not remember their own birth. Too few church members remember a healthy birth of another church. It causes us to be negative towards church planting. Let us look at the nine most common excuses why new churches are not established.

1. WE DO NOT NEED NEW CONGREGATIONS, BUT NEED TO BUILD SMALL CONGREGATIONS FIRST

These thinkers see the church as a building. New Testament church planting means to bring people together. Most Christians who get involved in the establishment or planting of a new church are dedicated and diligent. They have a pure theology, balanced prayer life and are students of the Word. They bring people to Christ, nurture them, make them disciples, and set them free in the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as in spiritual ministry to grow in the body of Christ.

Most traditional thinkers fear that the planting of a new congregation will entice members away from the established church. History has proven the contrary. When a new church starts with ± 30 new members, the church has to evangelize or die. While the older church reaches a numerical plateau and settles, it is the new church that evangelizes and baptizes more people than the old church. It usually takes stimulation and cross-pollination.

2. WE CAN DO WITHOUT SMALL, STRUGGLING CHURCHES

Everything in life starts small. Fortunately, small, struggling churches do not always stay small and struggling. Between 1970 and 1980 our church established 81 new churches. Today most of these congregations are independent and some of them are regarded as our large congregations. Thousands of people in South Africa heard the gospel because of the planting of these churches. More people in South Africa can be reached if more churches like that can be planted.

3. SOUTH AFRICA HAS ENOUGH CHURCHES

It may be true in some parts, but there are far too few churches in our country to meet the demand for Christ. There are areas with a population between 20 000 and 30 000 where we have only one congregation. A congregation of 200-300 members will never meet the need for the gospel without planting a new congregation. People need to be thoroughly evangelized and cared for.

Part of the problem is the attitude: "Don't intrude in my neighbourhood". To the traditional thinkers, the planting of new churches is seen as a threat to the existing church and not as an extension of the Kingdom of God. Within the context of the body of Christ, congregations are supposed to belong together to form and build each other.

7. OUR CONGREGATION CANNOT AFFORD TO ESTABLISH A NEW CHURCH

A leader of a denomination was asked how many churches they planned to establish in the next decade. His answer was "10". The reason: It would cost R500 000 to plant a church. A church building, residence and trained minister are required. A Superintendent of another denomination was asked the same question. His answer was "200" new churches could be established in a decade. "How will you be able to do it?" His answer was: it would cost R5 400 per month. They could rent the necessary facilities or pitch a tent. Also they could provide an overhead projector, chairs, etc.. In most cases they get a self-sufficient planter, and as the congregation grows, they pay their own settlement costs. It's cheaper than you thought. God will provide. 2 Cor. 9:10-11.

8. PLANT A NEW CHURCH! WHO, ME?

The Baptist Church overseas serves as a good example. They started with nothing:

- Lead a small group of pioneers in community care
- Establish a children and youth ministry
- Build an own church identity through service to the community
- A ministry to senior citizens
- Evangelize and nurture new Christians and make disciples of them
- Train leaders
- Pray, lead worship
- Preaching and teaching
- Encourage men and women to get involved in service
- Accept a mission project
- Build friendships

They built a church for the cost of a pastor's salary and in most cases the pastor is partially self-supporting. You and I can do it too.

9. A CHALLENGE TO YOU

It is true that some denominations reached the end of their production line. They traditionally do not establish new congregations. Such a denomination will have no impact on the 80% South Africans who still need to be evangelized. You and I are aware of the need for South Africa to be evangelized. Let's do it while we still have the opportunity. South Africa can only be evangelized by the planting of hundreds of churches. But who will plant them, who will hear the Macedonian calling? For this purpose you and I are called to produce, to reproduce, and to grow. Plant a church.

Congregations may engage in individual planting of a new church. Together, as districts and regions, we can do it better and faster. Get your people together and plan a planting. Invest in planting. Support evangelism on local as well as church level. Seek the face of the Lord. It is His will that we should multiply. Set up a blueprint for your town, city or district and let us plant churches.

A co-worker in the planting of churches
Pastor Tienie Berrangé

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