



PLANTING PAPERS

(June - September 1991)

Planting Papers Issue No. 2

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Planting Papers aims to promote all aspects of church planting within the Baptist Union and beyond. All contributors, in sympathy with this aim, have full freedom of expression, and views cannot be said necessarily to represent those of the BACUP executive or editors.

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"From the Sharp End"

The "Church" for the Unchurched - Editorial

- ◆ **Imagine...**a church that never bores anyone away from the Kingdom;
- ◆ **Imagine...**a church that is contemporary, creative and relevant to its surrounding community;
- ◆ **Imagine...**a church that actually respects unbelievers and understands their need for time in decision-making about Christianity.

AIMSPEAK (Spring 1990) reported on such a church - the Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago. WCCC is a church that takes the Great Commission seriously - a **"church" for the unchurched.**

WCCC was started in 1975 with a rented cinema, an unpaid staff, some borrowed equipment and a huge vision for reaching out to the unchurched people of their area. The dream was to build a church that would speak the language of our modern culture and encourage unbelievers to investigate Christianity at their own pace.

After conducting a community survey to discover people's attitudes to traditional church, Willow Creek created a unique approach to presenting the Christian faith. The church's contemporary style sparked an enthusiastic response from the community. In little more than a year, attendance mushroomed to more than 1,000. That number nearly tripled by the time the church was three years old. Faced with standing-room-only crowds, the church bought land in South Barrington, Chicago (currently 127 acres).

Seeker Services

WCCC's three weekend 'Seeker Services' (one Saturday night and two Sunday morning) now attract more than 15,000 people (mostly non-Christians) to hear a relevant message presented through music, drama and sermons in an environment and style entirely geared towards the benefit of the unbelievers. It's the midweek services that address the needs of the 5,000+

believers, challenging them to deepen their devotion to God through worship, prayer and in-depth Bible teaching. A separate youth ministry attracts around 1,300 teens on a Tuesday night.

The basic philosophy of Willow Creek is to provide a framework that enables effective friendship evangelism. All believers are encouraged, not to make contacts, but to build integrity-filled friendships in their community. The provision of 'Seeker Services' ensures that no-one is embarrassed to invite their friends to the church. No visitors are ever made to feel out of place, bored or pressurised in any way; on the contrary, the whole service is designed for their benefit.

A Seeker-Centred Church

There's easy parking, good stewarding, well-presented grounds and clearly signposted amenities. There's very little community singing and no requirement for visitors to give any money in the collection. There's professional drama and contemporary music, with a relevant message from scripture addressing real issues in

the community. The notices are all for visitors, not internal church announcements, and there are no appeals or altar calls.

As with all overseas ventures, we must realise that the WCCC model is not directly transferable to the UK scene, but there are some important basic principles about reaching the unchurched masses which we need to consider.

In the next issue of 'Planting Papers' Stuart Christine will be reviewing his visit to this Chicago church and more details will be available about a Willow Creek UK Conference in Birmingham, June 16th -18th 1992.

As we consider church planting, the fundamental issue that Willow Creek have so successfully addressed, namely reaching the unchurched in a secular context, must be high on our agendas.

The unchurched are now the majority of our nation. If we too take the Great Commission seriously, surely we must also be concerning ourselves with planting 'churches for the unchurched'.

Power Planting

by David Finnell

If you had to decide between the perfect church planting strategy, or the empowering of the Holy Spirit, which would you choose? Certainly we would want both the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and, through His leading, a perfect strategy. But if you could not have both, which would you choose?

Most people would choose to see the work of the Holy Spirit in their ministry. But when people are asked this question, another question often follows: How does one tap into the power of the Holy Spirit in ministry? The answer can most easily be explained through one word - prayer. *"And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness,"* (Acts 4:31, NASB).

Probably the weakest link in the armour of

the average church planter is his prayer life. It is amazing how many church planters spend five to ten minutes a day (or less) in prayer, and then wonder why they are struggling in their efforts at church planting.

Last year I received a letter from a colleague who said he had spent his first four years as a church planter labouring in the flesh. But now things were changing and God was working through him as never before. It reminded me of how I had spent much of my first few years struggling in the flesh. No longer. God is in the process of teaching me 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we*

are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ," (NASB). There is no power in our daily activities on the human level. Before we make any effort in the human or physical realm, we must first wage war in the heavenlies through prayer. Then our daily activities become a way to claim the victories that have already been won in battle on our knees.

In November 1988, I spoke at a church planting seminar of a North American mission organization. One church planter, working in a predominantly Muslim area, shared how he had spent years struggling in his work with no visible response at all. As we discussed his frustrations, it appeared that he was approaching his ministry in an appropriate manner for his particular context. But then I asked him about his prayer life. He reluctantly admitted that he probably spent less than ten minutes a day in prayer. I focused in on this as a problem of such magnitude that if he didn't address it, he had a limited chance to ever see results.

I recognize that the harvest belongs to God. But all too often we use that as an excuse for our failure to claim the spiritual power that God wants to direct through our lives in response to our prayers. On a human level, we cannot overcome the spiritual powers that stand against us. We must learn that without prayer, we have only limited access to God's power. A minister in a Christian culture might be able to maintain the status quo in his church without a prayer life. But he will never be able to go on the offensive, to attack the kingdom of darkness, and to rescue souls into the kingdom of light. It takes spiritual power to do this. It takes spiritual power to plant churches, spiritual power that can only be accessed through intercessory prayer.

In the spring of 1989, I received a letter from the previously mentioned missionary who had been at the church planting seminar. He shared how God had taught him to pray. Prayer was now his number one strategy. He was spending about three hours a day in prayer, and the Holy Spirit was beginning to move in power. For the first time in his ministry, he was seeing

a response to the Gospel. Obstacles that had remained intact for years were beginning to crumble. He was praising God for teaching him the concept of spiritual warfare.

If we are to reach the world for Christ, I believe it must be done through the planting of churches. But if we are to plant churches, we must be involved in *power planting*. To power plant churches, we as church planters must:

- ◆ personally be mighty prayer warriors,
- ◆ teach church members that a lifestyle of intercessory prayer and evangelism is the normal Christian life, and
- ◆ teach those supporting our ministry of church planting to be intercessory prayer warriors and to pray daily for our specific needs.

David Finnell is the Director of the International Network of Church Planters and on the graduate faculty of Columbia Bible College and Seminary. David previously served in Singapore as the Director of the Baptist Centre for Urban Studies.

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Spurgeon's College, 189 South Norwood Hill,
London SE25 6DJ

Sabbatical study opportunities

in

CHURCH PLANTING

October to December 1991

and in

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January to March 1992

A maximum of six study places are available in each of these units of the Mission Studies Course.

Details from: Stuart Christine, Oasis Director for Church Planting and Evangelism.

Tel. 081-653 0850

Probably the weakest link in the armour of the average church planter is his prayer life.

Spurgeon and Church Planting

by Mike Nicholls

Church planting ventures regularly featured as items for news and inspiration in the Baptist monthly magazine "The Sword and the Trowel".

Particularly from 1865-1875, new church planting and resuscitation ministries, sponsored by Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle and carried out by Spurgeon's men, were the most prominent feature of Tabernacle News. They reveal many of the principles that contributed to the success of C.H. Spurgeon's church planting ministry. What were they?

1. A leading figure

There is no doubt that Spurgeon sits astride the whole enterprise of church growth in London. Statistically it is profound. Twenty-seven new churches were founded by students from the Pastors' College between 1859 and 1867. In the second half of the nineteenth century the number of churches in London doubled and nearly all of these were founded under Spurgeonic influence of one kind or another. When students were sent out to new areas or existing churches it was normally at the command of 'The Guv'nor'. Spurgeon was keen not just to plant missions but to found churches and it was his enterprises, imaginative, powerful and generous vigour which inspired many to venture out in Christ's name at a propitious time of revival activity.

The work was closely linked to the London Baptist Association and Spurgeon owed much to the friendship of two other London ministers - Landels and Brock. Nevertheless every major church planting venture in a particular geographical area requires one person who becomes its catalyst. Spurgeon fulfilled that role.

2. Convincing theology

Spurgeon was an evangelical Calvinist who shared the principles of Calvin's theology derived mainly from Puritan literature of the seventeenth century and inspired by the revival preaching of George Whitefield and the insights of Jonathan Edwards. He proclaimed the

sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, resisting a hyper-Calvinism that did not evangelise and Arminianism that seemed to lose the gospel. Spurgeon preached himself as if the destiny of his congregation depended upon that word. He sent out men similarly inspired, believing that they were to go out to find God's elect and bring them to their eternal destiny by means of prayer and preaching.

3. Appropriate training

The Pastors' College was founded in 1856 in response to a need for local men who were already engaged in evangelistic preaching to be trained so that they might do it more effectively. Within the college a general education was given for those who needed it, and a specific ministerial education centring on biblical and theological studies was available. The students were required to do little outside of the classroom except to be available for practical enterprises. They took no university examinations. They lived in local communities; and they trained in the classroom and on the job.

The nature of training is vitally important. They were trained in a practical atmosphere for a time that was long enough so that they gained knowledge but did not lose their evangelistic zeal or the cutting-edge of their proclamation.

He wanted to train men from all sorts of backgrounds, to enable them to plant churches in needy areas.

QUOTE

"Among the historic denominations, the Baptists are giving us a challenge and lead in the necessary practice of church planting."

ROGER FORSTER

4. There was an ecclesiastical principle

It was obvious that Spurgeon did not only wish to send out local evangelists, or those who would use mission stations as agencies of social concern. His strategy was absolutely clear. He wanted preaching in a hired hall to gather a group of converts, and for that group to be established as a local church of people covenanted together with Christ and with one another to be an agency of the Kingdom in that local community. The foundation of a local church was basic to his understanding of mission.

5. There was financial fellowship

Spurgeon placed the funds of the Tabernacle and special building loans at the availability of those who were sent out in the Lord's name to plant churches. He was the most generous donor, often taking churches under his wing, preaching in various places and ensuring that the fee went to a particular cause. He led by example and he made sure that the Baptist family was committed to the principle of giving to others so that church planting could take place.

It became the aim of the London Baptist Association that they should plant one new church a year. This kind of strategy is Association life in action at its best, and during these years in the mid-nineteenth century, financial fellowship gave rise to new churches.

6. Adequate buildings

Spurgeon was convinced that once a handful of converts had been gathered the essential need was to raise money to put up a building. Initially it might be a functional structure and then something better could be erected; but he believed that the establishment of a building not only gave opportunity for new enterprises on behalf of the church but it gave the local Christians a sense of belonging together in a particular place to the cause of Christ. In our own day when there are many people wondering about the viability of church building this aspect of his strategy is significant.

7. Local leadership

In the reports in "The Sword and the Trowel" much is made of the induction services

of the pastors of these new churches. This is indicative of the fact that Spurgeon was committed to the need of local leadership not just in the provision of a pastor but in the provision of Elders and Deacons who would share the leadership of that local congregation, wise, and godly leadership was essential. He sent in the pastor before the people were there. He sent him not only to do the work of an evangelist but to become a pastor to the flock and to equip them for the service of ministry. A new leader was often linked with an experienced pastor for mutual help and support.

8. Perfecting the Church

Spurgeon's vision not only concerned the planting of new churches but the perfecting of that congregation. He not only wanted sinners justified but sanctified also. He wanted the local church to grow into a vision of the bride of Christ that would commend Christ to the local community of needy people.

He was thus concerned that the church should not only be properly constituted, properly taught, and properly led, but that its vision of all that Christ had in mind for its members should be clearly fulfilled and maintained.

9. Encouraging support

For ten years the annals of "The Sword and the Trowel" contained literally hundreds of reports of what was going on in these newly-founded churches. The record of the College does not consist of the academic prowess or achievements of the students, but of the number of souls saved under their ministry. All this was not to boast, but to provide encouragement for the local church who would know that other Christians were thinking of them, praying for them and taking an interest in them. It intended to evoke support of the Tabernacle members, who needed to have a vision beyond their own local church to be delivered from self-satisfaction and to pray and give for the cause of Christ beyond their own doorstep. He also wanted the readers of "The Sword and the Trowel", who covered an increasingly wide area, to share this vision and to be involved with it. All members were to be mobilised for evangelistic outreach using all available means.

Thus Spurgeon as church planter is a

significant indicator of what was possible in a very different sociological and religious context from our own day and yet provides an example and an incentive of those principles that may

well be practised today, and enable Christians in the nineties to take part in a vigorous church planting programme.

BACUP STUDY GROUPS

Responses from the 150+ subscribers to "Planting Papers" have shown real interest in the formation of study groups in various areas of church planting. Convenors for the most popular areas are being found with a view to launching this aspect of the network's activity at the July "BACUP" Conference.

If you haven't yet indicated a preference in this area then please let us know (by completing the response form at the back of this issue) so that you can be linked up to a group right from the start.

'Failure Factors'

- Roger Sutton reflects on a church planting survey

During 1989 a survey of 58 UK church plants and resurrections was undertaken by Rev. Adrian Argyle and Rev. Roger Sutton. One of the analyses that was undertaken was a comparison between the most successful and the least effective projects.

To define success/failure we looked at growth rates, baptisms, conversions, the impact on the community and its ability to attain the goal it had set. The first sobering point is that it only took five baptisms in a year to hit the top ten on the success list! The majority of the churches achieved very little conversion growth.

We identified three particular areas of concern for us as a denomination.

1. Lack of analysis:

At the end of the survey each church was asked if they felt the project has been "successful", "mainly successful" or had been "ineffective". They were then asked, if they had to do it again, would they do anything differently.

The successful churches were candid in their remarks detailing their failures and analysis of the project. However the vast majority of the average and less effective plants saw no problems whatsoever! All of them saw the project as successful and most would not have changed

a thing if they had the chance to start over again.

This shows firstly that people's expectation of a church plant succeeding or not does not seem to entail growth and baptisms, simply to exist is termed a success! Although I can see some positive point in this, surely the goal of planting is to impact a local area with the Kingdom of God and see the lives of people change and growth occurring. Church growth is still not a major influential factor in church life. We still seem content to simply exist for our own sakes. The Great Commission is still not at our foundation, even in church planting.

The only other reason for this gap between reality and perception is that analysis is simply too painful to take. To admit to problems and failure is too hard. We like to keep ourselves cushioned from reality. Successful planting will only succeed during the decade if we are prepared to take a realistic painful look at what we do and how we do it. An honest assessment of what we did well and what we completely failed in. Only then can we move on with the Lord, repentant, wiser and better equipped. Better for someone to say, "Let's close it down, it didn't work", than to carry on like the emperor walking down the street with no clothes on. That is embarrassing for us and more

particularly to God.

2. Lack of evangelistic strategy

There was a surprising lack of developed and ongoing evangelisation in these plants. Many did not do anything and some dabbled in visitation and guest services, but the main story is one of inaction and ineffectiveness.

I think we have something of the Welsh churches' mentality in that we expect revival to fall from heaven (like it did in 1904-5) with very little effort on our part. This extreme Calvinism is still prevalent in our churches.

Goals need to be set, resources analysed and strategy defined. An in depth survey of the area needs to be carried out. Questions like "How can we reach them?" "What's the culture like?" "How are we going to nurture them?" Time and money need to be given to publicity, linkage events, social care projects. Services must be visitor friendly and stong emphasis on friendship evangelism.

3. Lack of church growth knowledge

We must begin to realise that there are two stages in a planting project. The first is the start, the first 1 - 2 years of the plant, the initial encouragement, the initial growth and interest.

Then comes the realisation that the plant is now a church and needs to take on normal church growth principles.

One of the problems in the survey was that many of the projects coming out of the mother church were from a mother that itself never grew and evangelised. So after the initial excitement of being together on the front line has dulled down, many simply did not know what to do next! Our future planters must be trained not simply for the initial stage but for the secondary stage as well. How to grow established plants.

Roger Sutton is part of the ministry team at Altrincham Baptist Church in Cheshire.

BOOK REVIEW:

Churches With Roots by Johan Lukasse

(Published by MARC/STL £6.99)

I was given this book by one of my Deacons, enthusing and saying I should read it, and his comments are not the only glowing commendations I am aware of.

However, after the first couple of chapters of helpful material, my enthusiasm waned to frustration, and from a prospective church planter's point of view, I would have to say there is better investment to be had elsewhere for a similar cost.

So why my disappointment? Firstly, so much of the material is dealt with at quite a superficial level, and the central five chapters headed 'Church Planting:...' either did not really live up to the title, or remained too slight.

Secondly, the Belgian background, out of which the author writes. Having subsequently learned something of the work of BEM, I can

appreciate with hindsight the illustrations and allusions from that experience, but without awareness of BEM, or its work, they failed to come across meaningfully. Thirdly, I think the book tries to do too much all at once.

This may be a good read for the general reader, but for the prospective church planter who wants to really prepare, I would have to say invest your money and time in something else.

*Reviewer: Graham Licence
(Burnham-on-Crouch)*



PRELUDE TO SYMPHONY!

With at least 60+ anticipated for the coming July Conference...(there are still places, by the way!)...we are expecting a most invigorating meeting of minds, energy and vision.

But better still is on the way!

BACUP is able to announce that for 1992, in conjunction with the BU Mission Department, we are involved in the planning of B.I.C.E.C.:

BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE for ESTABLISHING CHURCHES

March 23rd-26th 1992

This gathering, sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance, is likely to be one of the most significant in the area of church planting that UK Baptists are likely to have the chance to participate in during the Decade of Evangelism.

Speakers will be drawn from the Baptist community worldwide and attendance is being sought from delegates from across East and West Europe.

Amongst many exciting possibilities that this conference will offer we hope to be able to extend the scope of our own Network to take on a truly European dimension..."EBACUP" here we come!

(Correct pronunciation best sought from a Northerner!)

BOOK REVIEW:

"Church Planting - Our Future Hope" by Charlie Cleverly

Published by S.U. £3.50

Although this book starts out like a testimony of experience and is, it is much more than that. Charlie Cleverly's aim in writing is to challenge "as wide a circle of believers as possible to consider biblical and practical principles for church planting that will enable us to promote and plan for growth more effectively." A number of pragmatic reasons for doing so are discussed where Charlie Cleverly is unashamedly an optimist for planting something "new" that will not carry with it the old problems.

Some current activities in church planting initiatives are covered in a variety of traditions with Baptists and their Oasis/Spurgeon's training course given first mention. Though this leads denominational action, others are further ahead, most notably the New Churches (called House Churches here!), with Youth with a Mission and Vineyard getting a mention. Anglicans, unsur-

prisingly bearing in mind the author, get a whole chapter and this provides those of other traditions with fascinating insights into their actions and the extraordinary problems associated with the parish system.

In a sense all this is introduction to the next sections of the book which deal with leadership and priorities for new churches. Leadership is opened up in a very helpful and really practical way - the first two steps in ten, to being close to God are cited as "Go to bed earlier" and "Get up first" (p.80), items most, if not all of us, need to hear - and act on.

After this come details of the expectations we should have for a new church in terms of worship, fellowship, evangelism and training. Without doubt these are **musts** to be read by anyone thinking of church planting. They embody a perceptiveness and thoroughness born

out of real and excitingly successful, though clearly hard, experience. One gap is that little comment is made of the external factors in planting - those outside the team such as the culture disparity and environment into which they go.

Finally Charlie Cleverly gives us something seldom found in Christian literature - realistic trouble shooting tips for when things go wrong, which he follows with a rationale of church planting as an advance of the kingdom and thus a fight with the principalities and powers and how to make headway.

In school terms this is a basic primer for all who hope to engage in church planting, but it is much more as it achieves the stated aims by elucidating thoroughly practical details which have been sharpened on hard but rewarding experience. It challenged me to want to engage in planting and that means acting in other areas of my life too. Charlie Cleverly has served us all well.

Reviewer: Gerry Barlow

Ruddington

South East Church Planting Training Day

for church planters and their teams
at Cranham Community Church
near Upminster/M25
with

**Rev. Charlie Cleverly
Rev. Stuart Christine
Bishop Roger Sainsbury**

This is an interdenominational event
Saturday 16th November 1991
10.00 am - 4.00 pm

More information from Stuart Christine
071-653 0850

“From the BAC-Room”

A 10 Point Manifesto for the Centrality of Church Planting in Denominational Mission Policy

1. Church planting is happening and will happen in the denomination whatever the stance taken by Baptist House and the Mission Department. If, however, there is a lack of commitment on the part of the Mission Department then our churches will turn elsewhere for direction and encouragement.

2. It is a fact that the most vigorous spiritual movements both in the UK and internationally are those which have a vigorous church planting programme at their heart. A denomination that does not respond will become marginalised and tend to lose its most dynamic leaders to where the action is.

3. The UK is increasingly a mission field and quite simply, new church planting is the most effective form of extending the evangelistic contact radius of a local church.

4. There is the question of Europe. If the challenge of the UK is great then the mission challenge and opportunity presented by the rest of Europe is greater still. The role of the UK churches in this regard is clearly important since they can model patterns of planting activity and strategy that are more likely to be acceptable and effective than those derived from the United States.

5. In terms of the ecumenical debate the other main line denominations are conscious of the Baptist voice in the area of evangelism and mission. A clear Free Church voice in the area of church planting is important both in its own right and as a balance to what is being said by Anglicans and the New Church Movement.

6. In days of rapid and dramatic cultural development church planting is a vital means of stimulating the development of new patterns of church life and witness that are able to stimulate the denomination into development, and that will enable it to maintain its cultural relevance.

7. The increasing ethnic diversity and cultural fragmentation of many of our towns and cities presents a challenge to patterns of local church witness which heretofore have characterised the mission profile of our denomination. Church planting is a means of targeting the "people group" orientated nature of our major population centres.

8. A vigorous new church planting programme offers special possibilities for the development

of holistic patterns of mission since by its nature such programmes aim to be culturally sensitive and community responsive in a way that existing churches with longer community/theological history find it difficult to emulate.

9. Church planting can promote radical thinking about the nature of the church. In the present climate of the pursuit of a new Baptist identity and appropriate engagement in the ecumenical process, the practical experience and ecclesiological thinking promoted by our vigorous church planting programme will prove a most helpful source of input to this process.

10. The development of strategic thinking within the Mission Department cannot therefore be complete without a strong new church planting dimension. For this dimension to be well informed and in touch with the life and experience of our churches it would be helpful for close and ongoing consultation to be maintained between the Department and those involved throughout the denomination in the study and practice of planting.

We invite a response from our denominational leaders to assure us that these points are being considered at the forefront of the new denominational agenda.

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS



“If you agree, disagree or have any other useful comments about any articles published in *Planting Papers*, or about any other aspects of church planting, why not write to us and have your views published in a future issue. We welcome all correspondence.

Please write to: The Editors, BACUP Planting Papers, 189 South Norwood Hill, London SE25 6DJ”