

# Church Planting Manual: A Seven-Step Strategy Guide



Gospel Fellowship Presbyterian Church  
Presbytery of the Ascension  
Summer 2021

# North Cranberry Area Church Plant

**Overview:** Planting a church may be one of the most difficult things that any group of Christian believers can attempt. From the outset, it seems as though every force is moving against us in order to prevent us from accomplishing this feat. The force of inertia says “we are already comfortable with the status quo.” The forces of funding, staffing, and leadership say “this is impossible.” The forces of Satan say “this is foolish.” Voices of critique and criticism may say things like, “Now is not the time,” or “We are not able to do this with our limited resources.” Attitudes that suggest, “We already tried that” may be discouraging.

And yet our mission is to fulfill the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 which states that,

“Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Goals:** Therefore, the goal of this brief document is to show:

- 1) Why church planting is important and cannot be neglected, and
- 2) How it can feasibly be done by the leadership and members of Gospel Fellowship PCA, with significant help from Ascension Presbytery and the Missions Committee of the Presbytery.

**Limitations:** This document is not an infallible guide. It is not a glimpse into the future. It is entirely possible that we might try *everything* in this manual and still not have success. It is also possible that the actual practice of church planting may vary widely from what is drafted here, as the church takes on a “life of its own.” Of course it is also possible that the church planting process is far more successful than this document indicates. God may bless a new church plant more than we can ask or imagine. The purpose of this manual, however, is so that we might have some basic blueprint from which we might proceed together to plant a new church. We can only pray, then, that God would bless our endeavors so that His own Kingdom may come.

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# Foundations of Church Planting, Ascension Presbytery Missions Committee

**OUR VISION:** That God, by His grace and for His own glory, will transform our presbytery into a cooperative, collaborative, grassroots church planting culture that is gospel-driven (Acts 20:24).

**OUR HOPE** (only fulfilled by Christ working through His people):

- To see all of our existing churches become houses of prayer for all the nations (Mark 11:7), thus embracing a Great Commission mindset (Matthew 28:16-20).
- To see people coming to Christ from the diverse communities and people groups in our region (Romans 1:15-17).
- To see healthy biblical churches planted across our region in urban, suburban and rural contexts (Acts 15:40-41).
- To see Western PA impacted by the transforming power of the gospel (2 Cor. 10:14-16).

## WHY PLANT CHURCHES?

1. Church planting is a collective calling; the New Testament record has served as an example and a plan for the growth of the church since the time of Christ. Each rising generation of God's people is called to embrace and further the vision, being faithful to be God's people in the places they occupy by divine appointment. Many scriptural texts inform the process. Acts 11:19-30 serves as a summary text. Its key themes:
  - The church has an outward face that includes intentional evangelism (v. 19). It is those who had been scattered by the persecution who were telling the message. This reflects the outworking of Christ's command, as you are going into all the world, to make disciples of all nations.
  - The Gospel is for all ethnic groups -- v. 19-20 tell of the transition from Jews exclusively, to Jews and Greeks as the recipients of the message.
  - As the Gospel is proclaimed and people respond, a church is planted in Antioch (v. 21-23). Beginning with Acts 13, we learn that the Antioch church served as a sending church, commissioning Barnabas and Saul to go as missionaries and plant additional churches throughout the region. God works through individuals to fulfill different purposes and to advance his work through different roles at different stages in their lives. The text speaks of those who proclaimed the Gospel initially, and then of Barnabas and Saul being sent to Antioch by the church in Jerusalem, to offer further teaching. We learn later that Barnabas' role varied according to the need of the time.
  - The church at Antioch ministers in deed as well as in word, responding to the needs created by the famine in Judea (v. 27-30).
  - In summary, the culture of the group of people who – for the first time in history – were called Christians (v. 26) was: Gospel proclamation, church planting, missionary sending, and the expression of God's mercy in word and deed.

2. The motivation for church planting comes from the words and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ as found in Mark 10:45: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*

The core of the gospel message is that Jesus Christ came and died to save His people from their sins. As the heart of the Gospel, this message must be foundational for all of our endeavors. Empowered by Christ's Spirit, applying His atoning work to our own lives and proclaiming it to others, we are called to offer humble and sacrificial service to Christ (Romans 12:1-2).

3. The multi-generational perspective for church planting comes from the words and ministry of the Apostle Paul as found in 2 Timothy 2:2: *And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* We need to be reminded of the necessity to pass on the teaching of the whole counsel of God to future generations, rather than just being faithful to that which we have been given, or even merely to be faithful as pastor-evangelists in this one generation. The church of Jesus Christ is to be an ongoing, growing, multiplying movement – disciples who make disciples.
4. The multiplying effect of church planting can be seen in the fruit that the Holy Spirit brings (John 15:5-8). This practical result of obedience to God's direction in gospel proclamation is seen in church planting. The fact remains that more people come to faith in Christ in new churches than in established churches. Surveys show this to be true in the evangelical world at large. It is also true in the PCA.
  - A survey of the first five years of more than 100 church plants in the PCA shows these results: Over 100 PCA mission churches, through their first 5 years of ministry, saw 1 adult profession of faith per 25 people attending Sunday worship. In comparison, the PCA as a whole sees 1 adult profession of faith per 50 people attending Sunday worship.
  - New churches also serve as missionary sending churches. A survey of 14 PCA churches planted in the years 1977 - 1986 showed a total of more than \$1 million in benevolent giving from those 14 churches in just one year. This review (in 2006) was twenty years after their initial planting.
5. The need for church planting is greater than before. North America has always been a mission field, but the challenge and opportunity of our home mission field is steadily growing. The number of unchurched people is increasing, as a result of church people drifting away from their practice of faith, and as a result of the immigration of people who bring with them no active religion or religions other than the Christian faith. This is evident even in the boroughs of Western Pennsylvania. It can be said without hesitation that the fields are ready for a greater harvest than before (Luke 10:1-2). God calls His people to pray, and to go forth into the harvest as laborers empowered by His Spirit.

*Approved by Presbytery: January 31, 2015*

6. The mindset for effective church planting in a post-Christian culture is quite similar to what we might expect from missionaries called by God and supported by Christ's church to serve in cross-cultural contexts. This incarnational objective involves the intentional building of relationships, culturally sensitive witnessing and gospel proclamation (see Acts 16:25-34, 17:22-32, 18:1-6, 19:4-10), gathering of people into worshipping bodies (see 1 Cor. 14:23-25 Ephesians 2:14-22), discipling converts, and training lay leaders (see Acts 14:21-23).
7. The mobilization for effective church planting involves collective praying, giving and going.
  - A. Church planting begins with and is sustained through concerted prayer. Jesus said: *... for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5). The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Matthew 9:37-38).* Prayer is foundational and needs to be integrated into the entire church planting process – beginning with the vision for a church plant, finding a church planter, all the way through the selection and ordination of officers as part of becoming a particular church. As a collective endeavor, church planting ought to involve the entire presbytery in praying for its effectiveness. Opportunities to involve our churches in praying include:
    - Times of prayer in worship services or other gatherings of the entire church family
    - Committing to pray for specific church planters
    - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday prayer focus on church planting in our region
    - Prayer networks for church planters, spouses and interested others
    - Prayer for the presbytery committee for wisdom, clarity of purpose, ability to think strategically about our region, good communication and effective teamwork.
  - B. It is incumbent upon followers of Christ to give sacrificially (time, talent and treasure) to minister the gospel to those who do not know Christ (Romans 10:13-15, 2 Cor. 9:10-13).
    - As a collective endeavor, the Presbytery of the Ascension adopted the following: ***Encourage every particular church to give 1% of annual tithes and offerings as their sacrificial contribution to the Presbytery's Church Planting Fund.*** (01/31/15)
    - The necessary resources for church planting will in a significant way come from the larger Body of Christ. Effective stewardship includes casting a vision and inviting others to share in the privilege of gospel proclamation (Philippians 1:4-6, 4:15-16).
  - C. Faithful disciples can be involved in church planting efforts in numerous ways.

- Though not all believers are called and gifted to be evangelists, all are called to be faithful witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8, 1 Peter 3:15).
- Local churches can be encouraging their members to invite unbelieving family members, friends and neighbors to worship and other ministry activities for the purpose of building relationships and spiritual exposure to the truth of the gospel. The vast majority of people who come to faith in Christ, do so through the ongoing witness of a trusted friend or relative (see John 1:40-41).
- Local church contexts vary, but there are effective ministry tools available to assist congregations in evangelistic outreach that is biblically and theologically informed. All of our churches ought to be open and welcoming of people of differing racial, socio-economic and faith backgrounds (see Colossians 2:10-12; Galatians 3:26-29).
- Not all pastor-teachers are called and gifted to be church planters (1 Corinthians 3:6) Nonetheless, the apostle Paul exhorted Timothy, in addition to the faithful preaching of the Word, *As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry* (2 Timothy 4:5). As under-shepherds of Christ, all Elders are to “set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples” (BCO 8.5).

8. There are several biblical methods of church planting and in reality the Holy Spirit uses differing methods in differing contexts to fulfill Christ’s promise that, *I will build my church* (Matthew 16:18). The PCA Book of Church Order affirms this reality (BCO 5.3; 8.6). Three of the most common methods in Presbyterian and Reformed circles include:

- Core Group – A group of believers interested in establishing a healthy church in their community begins openly meeting together for prayer and Bible Study. A commission is formed to oversee the work, and ultimately a church planter is called to lead the effort.  
(cf. Paul’s ministry in Galatia, Philippi, Berea, Ephesus – Acts 13-14, 16, 17, 19)
- Mother/Daughter Relationship – A healthy established church sends off a group of its members (sometimes with officers and a pastoral staff member) to plant a new church in a neighboring region. The Session of the mother church provides oversight of the work until it becomes a particular congregation.
- Evangelists – The gospel is shared by believers and/or missionaries with the effect that the Lord opens the hearts of people. Converts are gathered together to be discipled and formed into a distinct worshipping body. (cf. Barnabas sent to Antioch – Acts 11, Paul’s ministry in Athens, Corinth – Acts 17, 18)

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# Theological and Biblical Rationale for Church Planting

Let us share with you a secret about John Calvin (1509-1564).<sup>1</sup> You may already know, for instance, that he is the great-grandfather of the Presbyterian Tradition. You may be aware that he is the preeminent theologian of the Reformation. You may have heard of his magnum opus, *“The Institutes of the Christian Religion,”* still the standard theological textbook for many pastors 500 years later. But did you know that Calvin had another passion besides reformed theology? Church planting!

In his article, *The Calvin I Never Knew*, Dr. Frank James of Reformed Theological Seminary writes,

Early records are sparse, but we do have concrete information from 1555 onwards. The data indicates that by 1555 there were five underground Protestant churches in (staunchly Roman Catholic) France. By 1559, the number of these Protestant churches had multiplied to more than 100. Scholars estimate that by 1562 there were over 2150 churches established in France with approximately three million Protestant souls in attendance. One can only describe this as an explosion of missionary activity.<sup>2</sup>

This is all but incredible inasmuch as many of those young church planting pastors lost their lives to the guillotine for proclaiming the Protestant doctrines of grace. Many of these young martyrs were trained by the hands of Calvin himself at his Geneva Academy. Recent research has made it increasingly clear that Calvin and his Genevan counterparts had a comprehensive church planting strategy.

## The New Testament Model

One of the relevant applications from this historical anecdote is the importance of church planting for Bible-believing Christians. While many evangelistic efforts will come and go (medical missions, tent revivals, conferences, video tapes, Mercy Ships, etc.) *the* single most effective way to spread the gospel is through planting new churches.

Tim Keller is the former senior pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, and founder of a strategic church planting center in New York City. Under Keller's tenure, Redeemer helped spawn over 100 churches of various denominations. He writes,

The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for 1) the numerical growth of the Body of Christ in any city, and 2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of existing churches in a city. Nothing else—not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational

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<sup>1</sup> A great little book on the life and ministry of John Calvin is *Portrait of Calvin* by T.H.L. Parker. (Minneapolis MN: Desiring God, 2006). This work is republished from the 1954 version by the same author.

<sup>2</sup> This article is also available on the internet in the form of four audio lectures originally delivered at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando Florida.

<http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewiTunesUCollection?id=378879861>

consulting, nor church renewal processes—will have the consistent impact of dynamic extensive church planting. This is an eyebrow raising statement. But to those who have done any study at all, it is not even controversial.<sup>3</sup>

The effectiveness of church planting should not be too surprising to us. After all, it is *the* prescribed method of evangelism in the pages of the New Testament. When we follow the Apostle Paul through his three missionary journeys in the book of Acts, we find that his goal was simple: plant new churches by establishing local congregations headed by competent elders. For instance, at the end of the first missionary journey (Acts 13-14), having been maligned and nearly stoned to death, Paul and his team refused to beeline back to the comforts of their home church. Instead, they retraced their paths, hundreds of miles out of the way, in order to “appoint elders for them in each church, and with prayer and fasting, commit them to the Lord” (Acts 14:23).

We might infer that the Apostle Paul was not content with “drive-by evangelism.” Notice that the job wasn’t done until new local churches had been firmly planted. Paul writes to the young pastor Titus, “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders *in every town*, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5, emphasis added). While Paul swept through the known world preaching the gospel fearlessly, he continued to train and appoint young men such as Timothy and Titus to lead the local churches that his mission founded.

While the heritage of big tents and famous evangelists have often dominated the American consensus of what truly consists of “evangelism” (i.e. Charles Finney, Billy Sunday, D. L. Moody, Billy Graham, Franklin Graham etc.), the Reformed tradition in the line of Calvin has preferred the more quiet and difficult route of church planting. Thoughtful Presbyterians have nothing against the aforementioned methods of evangelism per se, we just see a clear mandate to plant new churches in the pages of the New Testament as over against “big show”-style events.

## **Biblical Rationale**

The Biblical rationale for church planting is so plentiful that it cannot be adequately summarized in this brief space. Nevertheless, the precedence for such an endeavor can adequately be seen in the book of Acts, where Paul and Barnabas are first set apart by the Holy Spirit for the work by the church of Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).

Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel in Cyprus (13:4-21), and continue on to Pisidian Antioch where “the word of God spread through the whole region” (13:49). Despite severe persecution and nearly being stoned to death, Paul and his band continue on to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe where the Gospel is received with varying success.

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, “Why Plant Churches.” P.1.

[http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Why\\_Plant\\_Churches-Keller.pdf](http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Why_Plant_Churches-Keller.pdf)

Nevertheless, before returning to their home church (a more direct geographic route) Paul and his companions retrace their steps in order to “strengthen the disciples and encourage them to remain true to the faith” (14:22). Here a crucial decision is made as Paul “appointed elders for them in each church, and with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord” (14:23). In these actions, we clearly see church planting as a God-ordained, and carefully measured apostolic activity.

These bold and courageous tactics are replicated on Paul’s second and third missionary journeys as well (Acts 15:39-18:22 and 18:23-21:17 respectively). We note Paul’s desire to reach unbelievers with the Gospel (Acts 17:16ff) by taking extraordinary measures to ensure that the pagan (unbelieving) audience of his day heard the saving truth of Jesus Christ.

In the midst of his journeys, Paul becomes the founding pastor of a number of churches, his letters to which would eventually become a major portion of the New Testament corpus. Thus the books of 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1-2 Thessalonians can rightly be considered the by-product of the church planting work.

Paul’s letter to the Romans is not, however, the product of his own church planting efforts. This church was likely formed by Jewish and Gentile Christians of the Diaspora, perhaps as early as 49 BC. However, in this letter, Paul clearly reveals his church planting ambitions stating, “It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation” (Romans 15:20).

Paul’s church planting zeal is carried over in his pastoral epistles (1-2 Timothy and Titus) wherein he urges the latter young pastor to “straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you” (Titus 1:5). By this, Paul meant that the work of evangelism is not completed until the local church is fully organized. He is also careful to make sure the young pastors have a carefully organized leadership team of elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3), and that various programs are developed to care for the needy (1 Timothy 5).

Paul’s letters indicate that the three marks of a True Church are to be present in all Christian churches: 1) The Word is preached with authority (2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5), 2) the sacraments are rightly administered (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), and 3) church discipline is in affect (1 Corinthians 5).

All of the above events, of course, are founded upon Jesus’ Great Commission (variously articulated in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47-48, and Acts 1:8). Thus, church planting is an endeavor sanctioned and ordained by the Lord Himself.

## **Why Does This Method Work?**

Of course, planting new churches is met with a number of objections including the ubiquitous question, “*Why should we plant new churches when we have plenty of old ones?*” The answer is that new church plants best reach three groups, 1) those who belong to emerging age generations 2) new residents to a given area and 3) multi-ethnic communities.<sup>4</sup> Think about it for a moment. Suppose you were new to an area such as Northern Cranberry: would it be more exciting for you to try to elbow your way into a small, tight-knit congregation that has existed for decades, or to join with others who are beginning a new heritage together? Some would undoubtedly prefer the former, but more and more are being led towards the latter.

Often, long-existing churches have difficulty reaching out to the de-churched (those who feel embittered and disenfranchised by what they perceive to be the stolid ‘establishment’). Perhaps this is because the burden of maintaining the current roles of an up-and-running church is hard enough. Long-existing churches often struggle to reach outside the four walls of the church because the maintenance of church tradition, the perpetuation of ongoing programs, and other “sacred cows” (pet projects that no longer serve their original purpose) consume vast amounts of personal capital, both staff and volunteer.

Nevertheless, when an established church begins to feel called by God to give birth to a church plant, two great ends are attained wonderfully and simultaneously: the existing church is renewed with missional passion, and the church plant is birthed to focus on evangelizing the lost. It worked for Paul and Calvin, and it still works today.

## **Pray With Us**

At our recent elders special meetings for strategy planning in Spring of 2021, the current session of Gospel Fellowship PCA unanimously sensed that God may be leading us to plant a new church sometime in the next five years. While this project will undoubtedly be an arduous task, the elders are asking for your concerted prayers as we begin to enter a season of discernment and research. Would you please lend your prayers to this great task of planting a new church? Join us in praying to God for the following needs:

1. Ask the Lord to reveal a strategic geographic region, ripe for the harvest, in which a church plant might take root. Think not of those persons most like yourself, but of those who might not assimilate easily to an established church. Those who have been burned by “religion” before, those skeptical of the claims of Christianity, and those unfamiliar with the Bible’s basic teaching are of utmost concern.
2. Plead with the Lord to set apart twelve to twenty individuals who can commit to help the church plant by giving 2 hours a week for 52 weeks. God may be leading you to consider giving time, talent, and treasure sometime in the near future.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 2.

3. Beg the Lord for a rent-free facility to incubate the young church. While the economy seems to be at a near crawl, God's Kingdom knows no human limitations and should not be thwarted by financial difficulties.
4. Finally, pray for the future pastor who will take the reins of the church once growth begins.

If you have any interest in helping with this project, please give us a call. May the Lord continue to bless and grow His Church.

## The Vision of the Session of Gospel Fellowship PCA

In April and May of 2021, the Session of Gospel Fellowship PCA began to hold a series of meetings in which we considered our short-term and long-term future. Having weathered the storm of the pandemic by God's grace, we felt it was time to begin to seriously consider how we might grow as a congregation. At that time, we divided up into brainstorming teams and attempted to discern — to the best we were able by prayer and hope — what the Lord would have us to do.

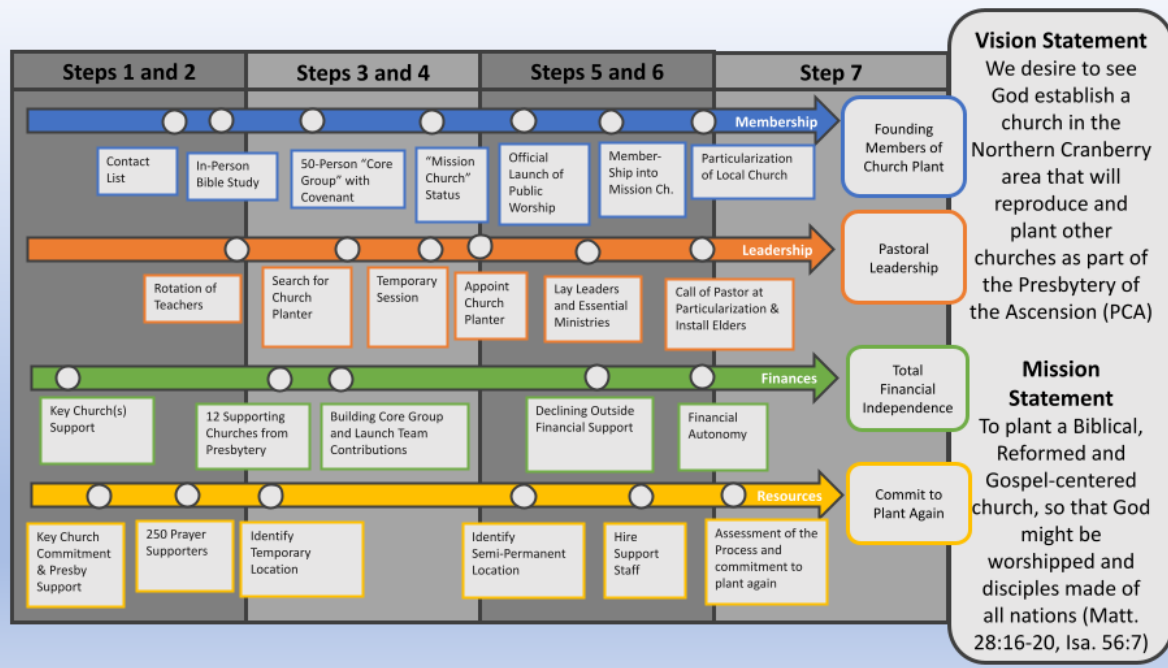
We considered how we might contribute towards the global Great Commission, and how we might reach our local community with the Gospel. As the Lord leads, we will pursue these ends with faith and zeal. Additionally, we identified several new housing developments that we need to reach in the near future as our community is growing in population. Moreover, we considered what building repairs we might need to make in order to prepare for an influx of visitors.

Nevertheless, standing out among our discussions was the need to contribute towards a church plant in the greater, Northern Cranberry area. For all of the reasons given in the Theological Rationale portion of this manual, we as the elders of Gospel Fellowship, believe that we are uniquely positioned to help — indeed even to spearhead — this endeavor in cooperation with the other churches in Ascension Presbytery.

Together as the Session, we stood with a unanimous resolve to begin the work necessary to undertake this glorious and humbling task of planting a local congregation in Northern Cranberry, knowing both how vital and daunting the task truly is. Therefore with great dependence upon God, we have decided to take the preliminary and necessary steps towards this endeavor, working alongside and with the blessing of the Presbytery of the Ascension's Mission Committee.

Part of our early planning is to construct this larger document in which we will attempt to spell out our plans, given that we regard and receive James' warning about boasting in tomorrow (James 4:13). In addition to this document, we have created a smaller, separate document to detail our own growth plans entitled, **"Advance: A Five Year Strategic Plan for Gospel Fellowship PCA."**

If the Lord would bless and favor our plans, and should our brothers and fathers in the Ascension Presbytery join us in prayer and material support, we resolve to humbly begin this great task.



# The Seven Steps of Church Planting

## Step One: Season of Discerning. 4-6 Months. 1 Samuel 1-3

**Summary:** The first step is a season of discernment. This means that we are thoughtfully and prayerfully seeking God's will in this endeavor. We are in discussions with one another and members of the Ascension Presbytery Missions Committee to determine if and how we can begin this task.

**Do we sense it is God's will for a new church to be planted?** If the Lord is not with us in this task, it will be impossible. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to ask Him if He would be pleased to use us in this way. We should individually and collectively seek His will and His face in prayer.

**Why do we believe this is so?** At this time, we believe that the Lord is calling us to this task for the following reasons. 1. Because it is Biblical. 2. Because Church planting is a highly successful way to sow the seeds of the Kingdom. 3. Because there is a great need in the Northern Cranberry area for a distinctively Reformed Congregation. 4. Because Gospel Fellowship is uniquely equipped to aid and lead in this endeavor as a Key Church.

**How has this been assessed / affirmed?** This has been affirmed in 1. Our standing in complete unity among the Session members of Gospel Fellowship PCA and 2. In our seeking and receiving the approval and blessing of the Ascension Presbytery Missions Committee.

**Commitment of Key Church / Session to church planting.** By the "Key Church," we are indicating the church that takes the primary steps towards developing the plant, in this case, Gospel Fellowship PCA. The commitment of the Key Church has been stated above under the section, "The Vision of the Session of Gospel Fellowship PCA." In addition to this, we have made larger plans for our congregation's future in a separate document entitled Advance: A Five Year Strategic Plan.

**Have we committed ourselves and others to fervent PRAYER?** Although the Session and individual members of Gospel Fellowship have been praying about this issue, we need to recruit prayer partners for this project. Our goal is to recruit 250 prayer partners that will lift this endeavor up for 365 days.

### Checklist of Goals for Step One

- ☒ Elders prayer and discernment



- ☒ Sensing God's guidance towards church planting
- ☒ Establishing Biblical foundations
- ☒ Affirmation and assessment of others
- ☒ Identification of Key Church Commitment
- ☒ Commitment to pray
- ☐ Recruitment of 250 Key Prayer Partners

## Covenant to Join in Prayer

I, \_\_\_\_\_, a believer in Jesus Christ, do solemnly promise to be one of at least one of hundreds of believers who will pray regularly for the planting of a new Reformed Church in the Northern Cranberry area. While there will undoubtedly be many challenges that may arise, I believe that church planting is a crucial need, and I resolve to pray that God would be glorified in this endeavor.

- On this day, I pledge with my brothers and sisters in Christ to pray regularly for this church plant. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here)
- I understand that the theology of this Church Plant will be that faith expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here)
- I understand that this will be a difficult and laborious task, to which much frustration may be expected. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here)
- I understand that a young church may even require me to personally sacrifice my time, talent, and treasure in order to fulfill this task \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here).
- I am aware that Satan will do everything he can to dissuade me from keeping my promises to pray, and I plan to resist him (James 4:7) at every turn.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (initial here).

Above all, may God be glorified in this great endeavor, and may He use even the prayers of a child of God such as myself to build His own Kingdom.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email - please print clearly

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home address Line 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home address Line 2

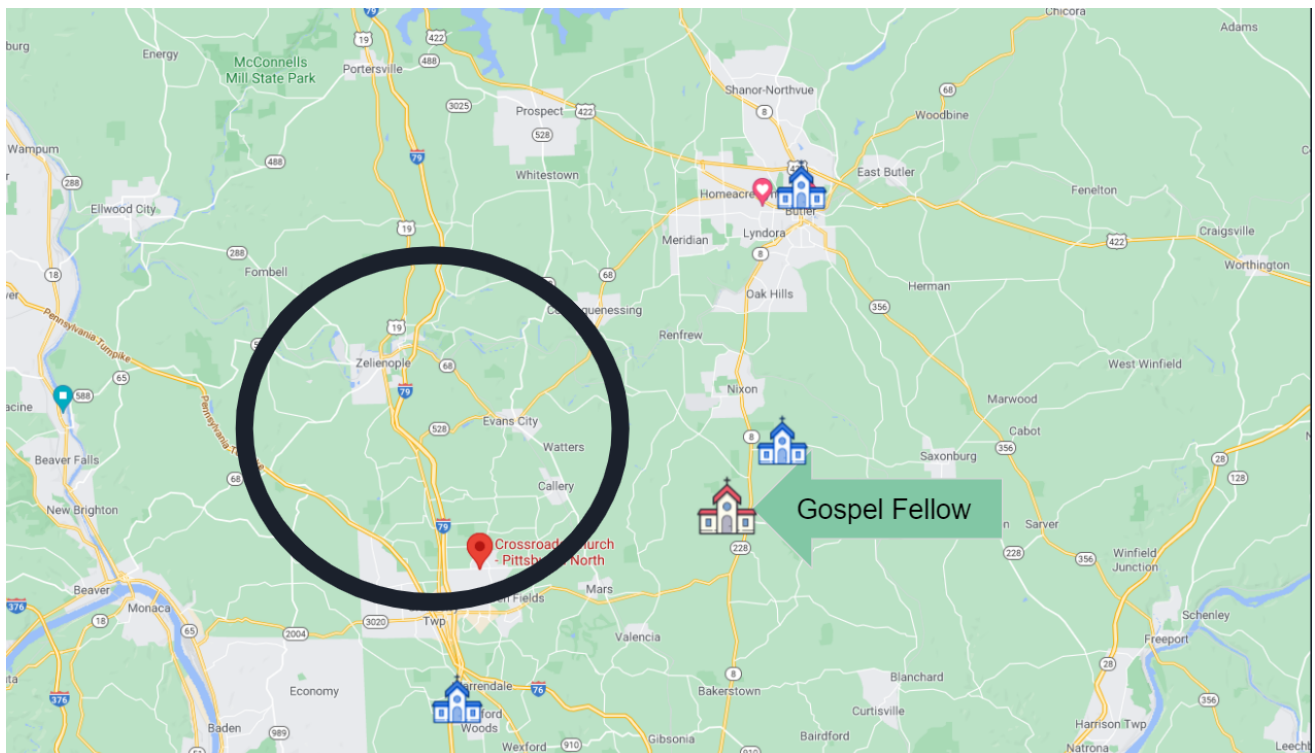
\_\_\_\_\_  
Current Church Name (if any)

**Please send a scan or photo of this covenant to [cranberrynorthchurchplant@gmail.com](mailto:cranberrynorthchurchplant@gmail.com) or mail a physical copy to 161 McFann, Valencia PA 16059.**

## Step Two: Season of Visioning. 6-9 Months. Habakkuk 2:2-3

**Summary:** In this step, we continue to think, plan, and pray. Here we move forward by identifying the location of possible meetings, establish key theological foundations, and create a list of initial persons that could participate constructively.

**Determine ministry focus group / area. “Target demographic.”** In this strategy manual, we have identified the Northern Cranberry region as being the most likely place to endeavor to begin. This is our conclusion for the following reasons. 1. The population of Cranberry continues to grow. 2. There are few, distinctively Reformed witnesses in the area. 3. The population expansion seems to continue to grow outwards, and northwards from the city of Cranberry. 4. There are several churches, including Gospel Fellowship, that can reach this area without competing for members and funds.



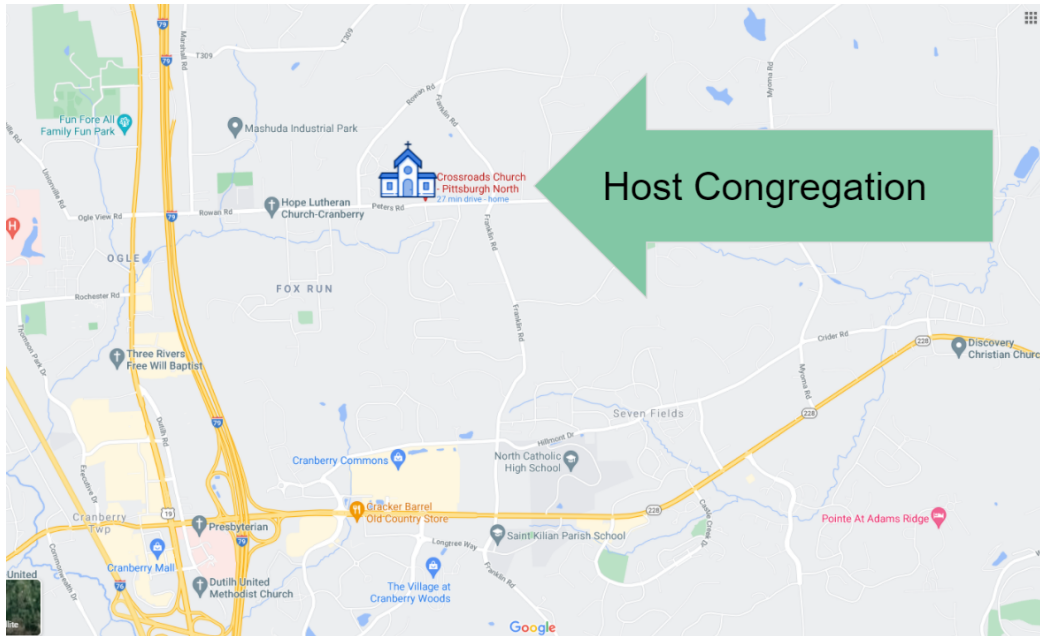
**Non-negotiables (theology/mission).** As far as establishing our non-negotiables, we will endeavor to plant a church that confesses the Reformed faith as defined in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. This church should be planted in accordance with our Book of Church Order, and hold to a high-view of Scripture. It will value corporate worship, catechism of children, evangelism, and community.

**Develop a written proposal / action plan (preliminary buy-in).** Our written plans, consisting of the present manual, will be used in the following way. 1. We will use this document to unite our Session around a common goal, 2. We will use this document to gather support and help from other churches in our Presbytery as well as to communicate our vision to the Ascension Missions Committee, 3. We will utilize this document to explain the process to our own congregation at Gospel Fellowship PCA, and 4. We will use this document to train and recruit possible regular attenders and future attenders of the Church Plant.

**Vision-casting with presbytery churches to gain congregation buy-in.** It will be very important for us to let people know that we are planting a church in this area. We must first alert every church in Ascension Presbytery and ask for their help. We must do this by presenting information at as many presbytery meetings as possible. We will try to recruit other churches into this process with us, by asking for material and financial help, including providing possible interested contacts. Additionally, we must ask our own congregation at Gospel Fellowship to give charitably to help fund a church planter that can be called and commissioned to begin.

**Create a list of potential interested parties.** Beginning as soon as possible, we must begin putting together a list of possible interested parties. This list should consist of the following types of people: A. Those who are Reformed or in the PCA who are interested in a church plant. B. Those who are Reformed but NOT in the PCA who are interested in a church plant, if they do not already have a church home. C. Those who have selective skills that will be necessary at the very early stages of church planting such as inviting, teaching, organizing, managing, web-design and marketing, and child care. D. those who have a number of personal contacts in the Northern Cranberry area. Interested parties should be asked to sign the prayer pledge as we gain 250 prayer supporters.

**Bible study / prayer group(s) with focus on EVANGELISM.** Once this list is begun, interested parties should be invited by email and phone call (and even possibly direct mailing) to begin participating in an in-person preliminary Bible study. This Bible study would do well to focus on the concepts related to evangelism, as early study attendees will be crucial to inviting others to begin forming the . This group, in our view, should begin meeting immediately at a “host church” or site. At this moment, we have identified Crossroads Church as a willing and able congregation to host our studies. Those who participate in the in-person study will be asked to join our 250 prayer supporters as well as to consider our covenant core group. Bible studies will be led by a rotation of several members of the Ascension Presbytery including staff from the Key Church and other ministers or elders.



## Checklist of Goals for Step Two

- ☒ Determine ministry area and target demographic
- ☒ Establish non-negotiables and theological foundations
- ☒ Develop written church planting manual and strategy guide
- ☐ Vision casting with Ascension Presbytery and congregation(s)
- ☒ Create list of potential interested parties
- ☐ Begin in-person Bible Study Prayer Group
- ☐ Encourage in-person Bible Study participants to sign prayer pledge (250 people) and/or consider signing the covenant of intent to join the core group (50 people).

## Step Three: Season of Gathering. 6-12 Months. Luke 10

**Summary:** In this season, the church begins its official meetings in the form of early Bible studies; it begins to form sincere relationships, and develops a financial base.

**Identify 1<sup>st</sup> temporary meeting location and begin initial meetings.** To this point, we have identified what we believe to be a very willing and open location for early meetings. This location is Crossroads Church. This congregation is pastored by Mike Arnold who is known to several ministers in the PCA. This church is itself part of a planting ring within the conservative end of the UMC. This church is very close to the desired location of the plant and is open to be used in the evenings for Bible studies. At some point, we should be willing to leave this location if necessary to find another location that either

- A. is closer to our desired location or
- B. suits our ends better in terms of times and dates and usage.

**Develop authentic caring community.** A church must begin to care for her participants long before it particularizes with the Presbytery as a local church! Caring community must be foundational from the very beginning. The group will be encouraged to find ways to pray with and for one another, to support each other during times of difficulty and crisis, and to share one another's burdens. This may mean taking tangible steps towards showing love to one another through prayer groups, card writing, visitation, and informal settings.

**Church Planting Covenant to form "Core Group"** The Church Planting Covenant is a specific written document that early participants will agree to sign which indicates their willingness and intentionality to be a central and important part of the planting process. We will attempt to get 50 persons to sign the covenant to join the core group. See "Church Planting Covenant" below. By "core group" we mean those 50 persons who sign a covenant to give at least one year of their time, talent, and treasure towards planting the church. Many of the core group will undoubtedly stay with the plant and eventually become the first class of new members at particularization, though this is not always the case. This group will be critical in the early stages of formation and maturing stages towards church growth. Their active participation in the first year will be crucial.

**Begin the search for potential planters.** In our view, the earlier we can begin the process of finding a qualified church planter, the better. By "qualified," we mean ordained in the PCA, or can soon be ordained in the PCA. Where do we find such a man? We network with men who have planted before, or those who have been affirmed by others of their calling and giftedness for church planting. This search may include seminary students with exceptional skills in evangelism, or even men serving in other NAPARC churches willing to transfer into the PCA. Most denominations have some

process of assessment for Church Planting, which is very useful in discerning the “fit” between a man’s gifts and a specific missional context. In the PCA, going through the MNA Assessment Center also provides access to ongoing training, ministry coaching, spiritual mentoring and a network of other church planters. We are not looking for just any man, but God’s man for Cranberry Township. The individual should be highly relational, a self-starter, and relentlessly motivated to see Christ made known. He should have the express call upon his heart and life to participate in the advancement of the Kingdom of God through church planting.

**Establish financial support base.** In order to be in a position to call a church planter, it will be necessary to first raise a financial support base to make serving as a full-time planter possible. It may be the case that funding dictates that this person start part-time, or as a tentmaker (bi-vocational) church planter. Nevertheless, we do not believe that anything less than a full time church planter would be ideal. In order to make this possible, we will need to raise funds from the following means:

- **Presbytery** - Ascension Presbytery should be willing and able to give generously to this project. In our view, every church in the Presbytery should place SOME amount of monies in their annual budget towards this project. Given that a little can go a long way, we encourage every single church in our presbytery to consider giving to this endeavor. Our stated goal will be twelve (12) supporting churches.
- **Key Church** - Not only that, but the key church (in this case Gospel Fellowship) should lead by example in giving towards the church plant. It would be our hope that Gospel Fellowship give the lion’s share of the contribution in the first five years, with the intention to pair down giving as the core group and eventual membership take more and more capability into their hands.
- **Core Group** - Third, the core group (those who sign the covenant of intention) should also prayerfully consider what they can give towards the church plant. In order to be fully vested in the ultimate success of the church plant, those 50 persons who sign the Church Planting Covenant should agree to give as the Lord enables towards the success of the venture.

**Communication – advertising, website, social media.** As early as possible, the Church Plant should begin advertising in the areas of website creation, social media pages and posts, and audio/video channels. In today’s media, many people watch or listen online several times before visiting a new church. Social media should be “out ahead” of the project so prospective visitors have information to search before visiting in person.

**Initiate networking and sharing of gospel in WORD and DEED.** The most important thing a church plant needs is a visible and tangible witness of the love of Christ in the local community. The core group should purposefully find ways to serve in visible and personal ways in the community which it seeks to reach with the Gospel.

### **Checklist of Goals for Step Three**

- ☒ Identify first temporary meeting place
- ☐ Begin initial in-person meetings and Bible Study
- ☐ 50 Persons to sign the Church Planting Covenant
- ☐ Begin search for qualified church planter
- ☐ Establish Financial base for support
  - ☐ 12 Churches from Presbytery
  - ☐ Financial Support from Key Church
  - ☐ Financial contribution from 50-persons in Core Group
- ☐ Communications to Begin
  - Advertisement
  - Website
  - Social Media
- ☐ Initiate networking and sharing of Gospel in Word and Deed



# Church Planting Covenant

I, \_\_\_\_\_, a believer in Jesus Christ, do solemnly promise myself, for the next 365 days, to the arduous task of planting a new, evangelical, and Reformed Church in the Northern Cranberry area. While there will undoubtedly be many challenges in the way, I believe that church planting is a crucial need in today's post-modern context. Further, I believe that church planting is one of the primary vehicles of evangelism in the pages of the New Testament, particularly the book of Acts.

- On this day, I covenant with my brothers and sisters in Christ to give at least 2 hours per week, for 52 weeks, to the Church Plant in order to see it grow.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (initial here)
- I have read the document entitled "Church Planting Strategy Manual," and am in general agreement with the vision cast therein.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (initial here)
- I understand that the theology of this Church Plant will be that faith expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here)
- I understand that this will be a difficult and laborious task, to which much frustration may be expected. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here)
- I understand that I may have to reprioritize my other commitments in order to place this church plant highly enough on my own agenda in order to support it adequately. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here)
- I understand that a young church may require me to sacrifice time, talent, and treasure in order to realize this dream. This will include my financial support as the Lord enables me to give \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here).
- Should unanticipated obstacles arise in the midst of this endeavor, I will promise to discuss them with my pastor, leadership team, and elders rather than be reduced to complaining or gossiping.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (initial here).
- I already know that Satan may do everything he can to dissuade me from keeping this covenant, and I plan to resist him (James 4:7) at every turn.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (initial here).

Above all, may God be glorified in this great endeavor, and may I use whatever talents the Lord has given me (Matthew 25:14-30) to see that His Kingdom is built "on earth as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email - please print clearly

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home address Line 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home address Line 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
Current Church Name (if any)

**Please send a scan or photo of this covenant to [cranberrynorthchurchplant@gmail.com](mailto:cranberrynorthchurchplant@gmail.com) or mail a physical copy to 161 McFann, Valencia PA 16059.**

## **Step Four: Season of Discipling. 6-12 Months. Matthew 28:16-20.**

**Summary:** In step four, the church moves forward as the core group moves towards greater and greater unity of purpose and mission. A budget is developed, and conflict is intentionally minimized. A key event happens here, as a church planter is called.

**Develop and disciple the Core Group:** As the group grows, much maturation will likely occur. Not only will individuals grow in their own faith, but the group will grow closer and closer together. Unity will begin to emerge. New friendships will be established. The Bible study will begin to look, feel, and act more like a church.

**Implement nurture & cell group ministries.** Where possible, small groups and cell groups may be established. These may be groups related to couples, women, teens, or men. We will have to be patient here to develop those which most naturally are ready to emerge. This should not be forced, but proceed from natural needs within the core group to further ministerial opportunities.

**Enter “Mission Church” status.** The ministry now takes on a more formal status and is officially recognized by the presbytery (the local association of PCA churches) as a unique work, an infant church maturing towards adulthood. Not yet in full bloom, the bud is beginning to form.

**Appointment of a temporary Session.** As an officially recognized work that has not yet called its own elders, a “mission church” requires a temporary governing body to oversee its development toward eventual particularization. This oversight may be provided by the Session of the Key Church or some other appointment of elders from the presbytery.

**Search and Appointment of the Organizing Pastor.** Once several potential planters have been identified, it becomes necessary for the temporary governing body to determine who will spiritually and publicly lead the work. Depending on how the work was first initiated will in significant ways shape this process (ie. appointment of an ordained pastor by the presbytery, call of an assistant pastor to serve from a supporting church, or the call to an ordained/ordainable man to the specific work of church planting.) This is one of the most important steps of the entire church planting process. We must be very patient here as this process cannot be taken lightly.

**Develop leadership philosophy and strategy for intentional equipping for ministry.** As the church planter is searched for and eventually called, the temporary Session would do well to begin to develop its own strategy. As it learns about the needs and concerns of the core group, concrete steps should be developed to solve the complex of problems that will be cropping up naturally: is space sufficient? Are people hearing

about our church plant? Why are some people returning and others not? Is there tension developing among our core group?

**Disciple men to potentially serve as future elders.** The temporary Session is just that, *temporary*. Their work is essentially to work themselves out of a job. While a church cannot officially have its own elders until particularization, the process of cultivating such men should happen as soon as possible. Strong lay leadership and self-governance is crucial to the future health and wellbeing of the church plant. As the temporary Session oversees the “mission church,” they will keep a constant eye on who the Lord may be raising up as elders. The church as a whole should be engaged in praying for such future leadership.

**Budget Development.** At this point the church plant will require its own written budget. It will have to take concrete steps to move up and out from the financial shelter of the Key Church and the Presbytery toward self-sufficiency. The official development of a budget is a key moment in this process.

**Form Launch Team to prepare for the initiation of public worship on the Lord’s Day.** At this point the Core Group is developed enough to engage in worship on the Lord’s Day. Some have possibly fallen away, but others have joined anew. Still, those who plan to be a part of the first class of membership should be stepping forward. It is now clearer who has gifts to be developed and where responsibilities should be placed in the coming years.

**Manage conflict for unified vision / values.** Mechanisms should be devised to prepare for the inevitable conflicts that will emerge as a natural byproduct of the complexities of church planting. Are some people working to undermine the mission? Are some trying to co-opt the vision plan for the church? Is there any sense of miscommunication between Presbytery, Key Church, and Launch Team? These difficulties should be addressed head on rather than ignored.

**Strong teaching focus on following Jesus and gospel applied to life**  
**DISCIPLESHIP.** As the Bible study and lively community begin to prepare for the launch of public worship on the Lord’s Day, the teacher of the congregation (church planter or teaching elders) should intentionally focus on issues of discipleship.

#### **Checklist of Goals for Step Four**

- ☐ Development of Core Group
- ☐ Enter “Mission Church” status and establish temporary Session
- ☐ Budget Development
- ☐ Conduct Search for Organizing Pastor (Church Planter)

- ☐ Development of Leadership Philosophy
- ☐ Preparations for public worship on the Lord's Day
- ☐ Manage conflict
- ☐ Teaching focus on Jesus and Gospel with Discipleship
- ☐ Official call of Organizing Pastor, with examination and approval of Ascension Presbytery, if necessary

## **Step Five: Season of Worshipping. 1-3 Years.**

### **John 4:23-25**

**Summary:** In this crucial fifth step, we aim towards the official public launch of the church, by developing a program of worship, including a regular Lord's Day worship liturgy and schedule. Here, we will ensure that the worship style fits with our convictions and the demographic of the group we are reaching.

**Identify a semi-permanent location for Sunday worship based on needs of target area and Core Group.** In order to open the church for worship, we will need to identify and secure a worship site that is sufficient for this need. NOTE: this may be different from the location of the original bible study, and different from any final location acquired through rental or purchase.

**Official Launch:** The official launch of the church is one of the most significant markers of growth and development. What was once just a Bible study has gathered enough people to warrant opening Sunday (Lord's Day) worship. The team should steadily build toward this over several weeks and months, including as much publicity as possible in the weeks leading up to worship.

**Develop front-line kingdom prayer.** Prayer remains central and grows in significance around the time of the official launch. Once the church "launches" this is a very critical moment. Momentum cannot afford to be lost here.

**Develop biblical worship and style of gospel preaching to fit cultural context.** The worship of the church plant shall be Biblical, rich in Scripture, robust in theology, and reverent in style. The worship services should comport with the Regulative Principle of worship as described in our Westminster Confessional documents. That being said, some latitude shall be necessary as building usage, musical leadership, instrumental talent, and liturgical leadership of the church planter are all taken into consideration.

**Initiation of essential ministries for adults, families and children, Sunday School, etc.** Along with the official launch of the church, several important aspects of a fuller church ministry must necessarily develop in conjunction. Here, we envision the beginnings and development of a Christian Education ministry, including studies and classes for adults, children, and families. If the facility and building usage permits, Sunday school classes or home group studies should develop. Some early committees may begin to emerge naturally or as directed purposefully by leadership.

**Develop lay and gift-oriented ministries.** For the growth of the church to be a success, it cannot merely rely on the time and talent of the church planter, though he is clearly a strategically important person. It would be wise to begin identifying lay leadership in the areas of women's ministry, widow's care, and diaconal ministry.

**Develop essential ministry systems.** Essential ministry systems may be defined as any organized ministry, committee, or outreach in which a need is apparent and critical to moving forward. Office management, pastoral care and visitation, digital outreach (website, video, podcast), children's care (nursery, youth, CE), building and grounds (if necessary), budget and finance team, and any other necessary systems should develop concretely here.

**Establish pattern of church life; gathered in WORSHIP and scattered in SERVICE.** The church plant must be seen as far more than a place to go on Sunday mornings, but a vitally connected group of believers in covenantal union with one another to truly care for each other and reach the community with the gospel.

**Members received into the "Mission Church".** At this point, a community of believers will consider this their "home church" community. In fact, the Lord may be pleased to grow this community with new believers for whom this is their first church! In recognition of this and in preparation for the next stage of development, the temporary Session will begin receiving members into the "mission church."

#### **Checklist of Goals for Step Five**

- ☐ Identify semi-permanent location for worship
- ☐ Build towards official launch date with promotion
- ☐ Official launch of Lord's Day morning worship
- ☐ Frontline Kingdom prayer
- ☐ Development of Reformed order of worship
- ☐ Launch of essential ministries
  - ☐ Adult discipleship
  - ☐ Childcare and youth ministries
  - ☐ Widows care
  - ☐ Diaconal ministry
  - ☐ Elder and leadership training
  - ☐ Other committees as necessary
- ☐ Launch of essential systems
  - ☐ Office administration
  - ☐ Child care ministries
  - ☐ Website, video, podcast teams
  - ☐ Buildings and Grounds team
  - ☐ Budget and finance team
- ☐ Development of Lay Leaders
- ☐ Worship and service as a pattern of life

☐ Members received into the “mission church”

## **Step Six: Season of Maturing. 3-5 Years.**

### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

**Summary:** Sixth, the church plant emerges from the care and oversight of others, and becomes its own viable congregation. Staffing and other organizational necessities are established.

**Particularization by the Presbytery.** Particularization is the process by which a mission church becomes an official church. In essence, it has been acting like a church for some time, but this finalizes the process. Its classification is no longer a “church plant” but a local church. This process will be made official at a service of organization, in which members of the mission church take vows, elders and deacons are installed, and its pastor is officially installed.

#### **Develop ordination / mentoring process for Elders & Deacons.**

Particularization requires that the church plant have elders and deacons boards, as it is impossible to be a particular church without a session. Preparations for this should have begun months earlier as the men who will become elders and deacons are trained and prepared for this significant role. The temporary Session will lead the church through the process of nominating and electing those men who will serve as its first elders.

**The congregation itself calls its pastor.** While the organizing pastor has been serving this church for some time, he has done so officially by appointment of presbytery. A basic right of a local congregation is the privilege and responsibility of calling its own pastor. This is an exciting and crucial stage of development. The church must strive for a unified discernment of the Lord’s will in extending this call to either the organizing pastor or some other qualified candidate.

**Mission church gains financial autonomy.** At some point, the church must gain financial autonomy. Though it has benefited greatly from support from the Presbytery and the Key Church, there must be an endpoint in which a more sustainable model is reached. Particularization should be that point, since it would no longer be best practice to receive money except for extraordinary circumstances.

**Congregational growth necessitates part-time support staff.** The church will likely have to hire some additional staff to help and assist the church planter. Some possibilities include part time office staff, or part-time youth worker(s). If a building has been acquired, custodial staff may be necessary.

**Determine process of preparation and steps leading to formal church membership.** At particularization, the members of the “mission church” are



received as its founding membership. This is a beautiful moment. A membership process will then have to have been established so that new members are aware of our Reformed conviction, confessions, and theological distinctives.

**Develop a mentoring process for healthy disciples and small group leaders.** Small groups are often very instrumental in church growth. It would be wise to develop a process in which new small group leaders are developed.

**Maintain an outward sense of MISSION and lead increased spiritual GROWTH.** Although there is no guarantee of growth and success for any one individual church, the more healthy a church can become, the better. In this, the greatest kind of “health” is faithfulness and devotion to the Lord. The church should be prepared for many difficulties over the months and years, and yet faithful, patient, obedience is absolutely necessary.

### **Checklist of Goals for Step Six**

- ☐ Election of future elders and deacons
- ☐ Election of pastor by the congregation
- ☐ Particularization by Presbytery
- ☐ New Session and Deacon board begin regular care of congregation
- ☐ “Mission church” members become first class of founding members
- ☐ Financial autonomy from Key Church
- ☐ Part and full-time support staff
- ☐ Membership process for subsequent classes of initiates
- ☐ Small group leaders developed
- ☐ Increased growth

## **Step Seven: Season of Multiplication. Ongoing. 2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

**Summary:** At this point we celebrate God's work! If we should make it to this point, great praise is due to God for carrying us there by His mercies. The church plant, key church(s) and Presbytery would do well to consider ways to expressly glorify God for what He has done. Technically, there is no "final step." Once the church has particularized, it does not conclude the process, but begins again to think evangelistically and with a heart for mission. Here, the fully mature church thinks beyond itself and towards the possibilities of expanded ministry.

**Evaluate the church's health and growth (renewal dynamics).** The church would do well to continually evaluate its own growth and dynamics. This evaluation can be either internal or from external help.

**Lead the church to expanded ministry.** If the Lord wills, many of the ministries of the church will grow, several will grow and plateau, and others will not grow at all. Those ministries that do not grow may be trimmed and removed in good conscience. As God is sovereign, the church leaders should joyfully follow His lead in what will be permitted to grow and what should be pruned.

**Lead the church to extension growth (church planting, ministry internships).** As much as possible, the church should begin to think beyond its own walls. It should take as many opportunities as is prudent to participate in other growth ventures besides its own concerns. This may include participating in other church plants and their desired goals.

**Lead the church to healthy organizational growth (stewardship of leaders, financial resources & location).** Constant maintenance and progress should be striven for in terms of organizational management. As with ministry success, much of this is through the painful process of "trial and error" as well as following God's lead in discerning what works and what fails.

**Lead the church in identifying, equipping and ordaining future leaders.** One thing that all strong churches do well is to help call and equip future leaders. This might be in identifying future pastors, other church planters, and missionaries. Wherever possible, the healthy church encourages this rather than stifling these opportunities.

**Develop global missions and local outreach programs (become a sending church).** Depending on its context and witness, the young church should be looking for more and more opportunities to do outreach. This may require inventing new ministries, or "plugging into" existing ministries that fit (soup

kitchens, homeless ministries etc.). Not only that, but the church should look forward longingly to support foreign missionaries and missions.

**Permanent property secured and occupied.** Not all churches can build or purchase property, but some will. It is impossible to know what will be the future of this congregation. At the same time, direct efforts must be made to secure the future potentiality for the church's physical location. Though many churches will move two to three times, some will need to move more than that. Some not at all. But one question must be considered above all: can we continue to grow where we are currently placed?

**Prepare the church to plant another church.** Though it may seem a million miles away (especially at the beginning of the process) the church must consider the possibility that it may be wildly successful in the Lord's good graces, and need to plant again soon. This should be our goal rather than a theoretical impossibility.

**Strong kingdom vision for healthy, growing and REPRODUCING biblical, covenantal & missional churches.** Overall the church should build and maintain a very strong hope for evangelical multiplication.

### **Checklist of Goals for Step Seven**

- ☐ Celebrate God's great work among us
- ☐ Evaluation of church health
- ☐ Ministry expansion
- ☐ Organizational growth
- ☐ Leadership development
- ☐ Global and local missions and outreach projects
- ☐ Securing permanent property
- ☐ Preparation to replant and begin the cycle anew

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **1. Will our Sunday Morning worship services at Gospel Fellowship (main campus) be changing as a result of this plan?**

No. Our main campus will continue to put forth the same Bible-preaching, Christ-centered worship service as we have been.

## **2. Are we constructing a new building for the Church Plant?**

Perhaps in a decade or so! We must not think of “new buildings” when we speak of a church plant being conceived. A common misconception is that a church needs a building to be a “church.” In the Bible, the word “church” never refers to a building, but to a congregation (or gathering) of Christian believers. This seven-step plan provides for a grass-roots model for launching a new congregation. For this reason, any construction projects would be years down the road in the future.

## **3. How will this plan affect our budget?**

Because of the constraints on the economy, the elders see this project coming together with very little dedicated funds from our main campus budget. We do, however, intend to fund the lead church planter on a descending scale over a course of 5-7 years. The goal for the church plant is that it would be self-funded in five years.

## **4. Will Pastor Matt or Pastor David be moving to the Church Plant?**

No. Our two teaching elders will remain dedicated to the main campus. They will, however, serve in an advisory and supportive role.

## **5. Who will do the primary preaching and teaching at the Church Plant?**

A team of Elders will be leading the church planting effort which will begin by gathering a core group focused on Bible study and prayer for the unchurched in the region. When things begin to coalesce, a search will begin to find a man to be the organizing pastor. His arrival will commence the planning for the launch of public worship. His pastoral ministry will include the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments.

**6. How can I help with this project?** Please pray about joining the core group to form a nucleus of gospel-oriented believers. Further, we are looking for 250 prayer partners to join us in intercessory prayer for this project on a daily or weekly basis.