

PLANTING PAPERS

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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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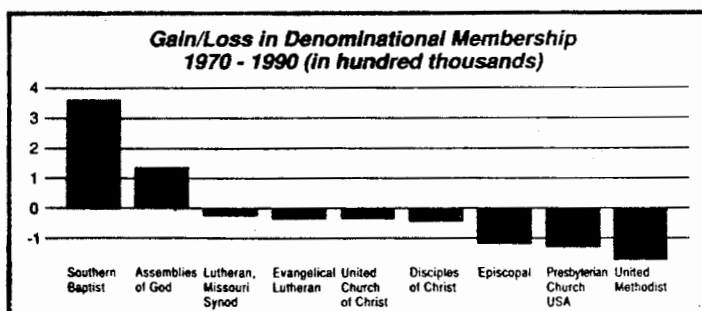
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The Planting Decade? - Editorial

What types of people make up the communities near you? What evangelical churches exist in or relate to those communities sociologically? Who are the people who do not attend church? In what locations are the people no-one is reaching? How can witnessing groups be implanted into those communities?

Trivia consuming

These are some of the questions that Baptist churches of the American Southern Baptist Convention are constantly being asked to answer. They are time consuming and energy consuming issues for any church to address. They can also be *trivia consuming*. The dross of trivia that so often threatens to clog our agendas, that clings so closely, sapping the spiritual vigour of our churches, is itself threatened by the fire of the divine priorities of which such questions are born. They form the basis of a mission agenda that is productive for the Kingdom. The Lausanne Link in December helpfully reported on the findings of an American church growth research group which can be summarised in the following table.



The commitment to evangelism through church planting - that is one of the more happy characteristics of our Southern Baptist Convention churches - is effective in reaching men and women and in bringing them into worshipping, witnessing communities. In a chapter on church planting, David Hollaway in his book, 'Ready Steady Grow', Kingsway 1989, makes the same observation on the basis of statistics from around the world church: "Denominations that show an increase in the number of congregations show an increase in total membership

and vice versa. Denominations that show a decrease in membership show a decrease in the congregations and vice versa.”

Planting Papers and indeed the whole operation of the BACUP network - BAptist ChUrch Planters - (!?!) - can play a strategic role in helping our churches both ask and respond to the questions posed above. The launch of this network is timely then since the numerical growth of the church depends in considerable measure upon the vigour of its church planting programmes.

People of the future

The coming ‘Decade’ also heralds the end of a millenium which perhaps highlights for us the sense of all-pervading change that colours the context in which we struggle to be Kingdom people. To live today as ‘the people of the future’ is a challenge indeed for many of our churches, who too often live locked into patterns of life and expression that belong to yesterday! Church Planting can without question become a key to unlock the fetters that threaten to imprison us within irrelevance, offering opportunities for evolution and discovery in bringing the gospel to today’s world.

(Robert Warner’s article addresses the importance of this very issue and in doing so

provides another affirmation of the timeliness of the launch of this venture.)

Risks

New church planting and the development of new expressions of the gospel life and message are risky undertakings however - as many of our people are quick to remind us!

To return to the Southern Baptists for a moment, it’s worth noting that while as many as 350 new churches are being constituted each year, up to a quarter of those are likely to fail in their first fifteen years of life.

It sounds a bit like the sower and the soils, doesn’t it? Risks there certainly are. But they are the risks of God, of the incarnation. They are the risks of faith, of the Kingdom of God being sown and growing in the kingdoms of this world. They are the risks of planting that must precede harvest.

It is the aim of those of us engaged in the launch and support of BACUP to help one another to take those risks, grounded in the realities of gospel and society and in the commitment of Him who said He would build His Church.

S.B.C.

The Primacy of Pioneering over Pastoring

by Roger T. Forster

The first call of Jesus, after declaring war with the words ‘the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand’, was for disciples who would be fishers of men (Matt. 4:28-22). The first priority laid on the apostles in the great commission was to make disciples and then only after that to teach all things that they had been commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). The first sermon after pentecost was an evangelistic one, 3000 being saved (Acts 2). Even shepherds in Jesus’ teaching go out looking for the lost (Matt. 18:12-14). Fishing precedes shepherding and shepherds must know how to fish. ‘Timothy’, says Paul, ‘do the work of an evangelist’ (2 Tim. 4:5), we might add, ‘whether you are an evangelist or not!’

Boredom?

Pioneering into virgin territory must take precedence over pastoring. Some sheep are pastored so much they are pastored to death and at the same time are pestering thir pastors in the same direction. Eternal life, if it is to avoid boredom, must be full of pioneering initiative. It had the colourful yet dangerous idea of becoming human and did so in Jesus. If that same eternal life resides in our flock - and we are sure it does - it will be longing to express itself in hundreds of new pioneering ways. If doors are closed to it, it could become frustrated and, being unable to be itself, cease expressing itself in the person in which it resides. We and our

people need to make room expectantly for the pioneering life and its invasion into new areas and challenges.

There is nothing quite so exciting as planting off a new church from an older one. It stimulates both parties, those going and those remaining, and gives opportunity for God to continue his adventure of living out the divine life in the human world. This means that Christian leadership itself must be pioneering into new adventures with God and giving inspiration, example and opportunity for the flock to be following in the same path.

Leadership criterion

One of the favourite verses in our fellowship leadership is 'change is here to stay', I have forgotten the chapter and the verse for the moment! This means that our teaching and activity priorities are in seeking to produce qualities for outreach into new frontiers, rather than to qualify people as holding operators. One of the principles, therefore, for leadership at all levels is 'does this person have an evangelistic heart or ministry?' This has been an essential criterion for the leadership at all times. Indeed it is like the law of the Medes and the Persians and is the one thing that doesn't change despite the above assertion.

Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers who are also evangelistic will keep the church moving.

QUOTE

“The New Testament tells me that the local church which receives the gospel is meant also to transmit it. In this way, the gospel creates the church which spreads the gospel which creates new churches ad infinitum.”

JOHN STOTT

Where this is not so the church will become static, then decline and die. Because I have seen this happen to many churches in our own country and abroad I determined that evangelistic pioneers must be in the decision making team of the church leadership. Evangelists must not be marginalised to the edge of church life. I once reviewed an excellent book on the high calling of Christian leadership where apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers were all carefully examined and helpfully set forth as callings to aspire to in leading the people of God. The evangelist was overlooked! It was no wonder that churches in that denomination didn't grow and reproduce themselves, at that time.

Sterile hybrids?

Apostles evangelise (Matt. 28:18-20), prophets evangelise (Acts 1:8; 2:16-17; 1 Tim 2:7), pastors evangelise (John 10:16) and teachers evangelise (1 Tim. 2:7). The five ministries are given to the church so that the church might do the work of the ministry (Eph.

4:11-12) and thereby reproduce itself, for like reproduces like, churches reproduce churches. In fact we could ask the question 'is a church a church that doesn't reproduce a church, or is it a *sterile hybrid*?' Let's pioneer on, planting, to the parousia - the fastest way to world evangelisation and the return of our Lord.

The Folly of Photocopying by Robert Warner

A church meeting was discussing getting rid of the pews. The vast majority thought they were uncomfortable, inflexible and inconvenient, inhibiting both worship and fellowship. One old lady spoke out in their defence - "But without pews the room wouldn't look like a *proper* church any more!"

That lady had the respect of the church as one who loves the Lord and serves Him daily. She has a zeal to reach unbelievers. But her comment reveals a deep confusion. She had muddled the unchanging gospel with the particular furniture to which she was accustomed.

This raises a vital principle for church

planting. **We have to know what it is that we want to plant.** Otherwise we are not only trying to plant the church of Christ; we are also trying to *transplant* our own particular expression of that church.

The gospel has an unchanging content, but the duty of an evangelist is to find new forms of expression to make the gospel clear in each new generation. The church of Christ has an unchanging gospel, but the task of church leaders is to find external forms which promote strength and health in the church of today. That means the forms are the servants not the masters of the gospel - **the structures are expendable.**

We all know how the structures of our particular local church easily become our masters. We tend to see more and more secondary matters as intrinsic to the gospel. What we want is the planting of the seeds of new churches - as the seeds germinate, the new church will take on a life of its own, which cannot be altogether predictable. There can be an unspoken pressure for us to embark on a quite different venture - *church photocopying*, replicating the secondary characteristics of our existing church.

1. Churches that belong

The apostle Paul didn't travel with a blueprint of church structures. He didn't even carry a model constitution! Despite the hostility of some Jewish Christians, he was committed to the freedom of the churches he planted. They weren't structured just like the church in Jerusalem or Antioch.

Paul was confident that Christ had secured full salvation, so outward conformity to old religious conventions was now at best superfluous and at worst dishonouring to Christ. What's more, because the Spirit was indwelling every believer, he could afford to have confidence in the new churches and move on: they would need help and encouragement, but Paul was never paternalistic or patronising towards the churches he founded. They were indigenous in their locality, and they were Paul's partners in the wider missionary task.

Many early missionaries to Africa were deeply confused. They not only believed in the supreme revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They also believed in the superiority of Western

civilisation. Moreover, many assumed Western civilisation was simply and profoundly Christian - imperialism was given a divine stamp of approval.

These unexamined assumptions had profound results. It was possible to despise arrogantly the culture of the people they sought to reach. They could impose aspects of Western society as necessarily better and Christian - tribes were taught not only of baptism, but that Christians use soap and wear clothing more suited to a Northern European climate.

We can carry these same prejudices into church planting in Britain. Our churches have so long been bastions of middle class respectability that we can easily assume such ways are better. Just as new converts in Africa were invited to leave their own context for a superior culture, subtle pressure can be imposed on our converts to become middle class. Just as new converts in Africa often remained dependent on the leadership of the paternalistic missionary, we can debilitate converts within the planted church by making them dependent on imported leadership - both in style and personnel - from the sending church. Indeed, the old fashioned term "Mother Church" may serve to reinforce unhelpful ideas of dominance or overprotectiveness, rather than a reciprocal relationship of service and encouragement as **partners, not parent and child**, in the gospel of Christ.

But that's not all. Many African churches founded by Western missionaries were taught to embrace the hymns and liturgy of Western churches. British denominational churches were replicated in the African bush. I remember talking with an African vicar after a preaching tour in South Africa. He went to a Zulu service - Book of Common Prayer with Hymns Ancient and Modern. Only when the official service was over did the Zulus begin to praise the Lord in their own style of music - suddenly the atmosphere was electric and the worship vibrant and authentic. We can commit the same offence, imposing upon a new church patterns of life and worship which, though they have served us well, **are not essential to the gospel.**

2. Rediscovering the Church

Church planting leads to hard questions. Not

only the pragmatic questions about the best methods. But also more fundamental questions about just what a church is meant to be. In fact, in a context of both paganism and breathless cultural change, these sharp questions need to be asked about existing churches too.

The true meaning of radical is one who returns to the roots (radix). We need to return to our roots, the distinctive convictions of the early Baptists and, above all, the distinctive convictions of the greatest church planters - the New Testament Apostles. We will never find a ready-made structure to impose. But we do expect to find principles to guide us.

Here are some sample questions to make a beginning:

1. Leadership. What patterns of team leadership are biblically appropriate and locally effective? We must repudiate the idea that a church is constituted by the presence of an "ordained minister". Whatever the functions, do we need names to replace the antiquated titles of "elders" and "deacons" (perhaps at least in some settings, "leaders" and "managers")?

2. Membership. Is our practice rooted in democratic principles? Or in the pattern of club membership, with attendant rights and privileges for those duly enlisted? Or do we need to rethink membership in terms of **partnership in the gospel**, a commitment to service, support and accountability together?

3. Church Meetings. What are they for? What is the place of prayer within them? Are they biased towards the articulate? How do their dynamics change according to the size of the church? Would we break down the separation of "business" from the rest of the life of the church by restoring the old practice of holding them on a Sunday - maybe after a fellowship lunch together?

4. Buildings. At what stage in the life of a church are they helpful? At what stage are they

unhelpful? What are the advantages of a multi-purpose building, as opposed to a room which can only be used in one way on one day of the week?

5. Constitution and Church Rules. Do we need to get away from the idea of locking the future of the church into our personal preferences in matters of detail and procedure? **No rules ever guaranteed the future orthodoxy or spiritual vigour of a church.** Would it not be better to have the minimum possible detail in the binding constitution, together with a set of our working practices, provisional and readily amendable, which we will not presume to impose on future generations?

6. Sundays. Who said there should be two services, neither more nor less? Who said they should be at 11.00 and a dreadfully inconvenient 6.30? (Sunday night is now a major social night for concerts, high profile TV shows etc., but such events don't start at 6.30 because Sunday afternoon is a key time for going out in the car or having friends round to tea.) Should our services be set at the times we are comfortable with, or at the times we think most accessible to outsiders?

QUOTE

“We may have justified fears about pragmatism or triumphalism in church growth. Yet the task of spreading the gospel was central to the ministry of Jesus; and the only way that task is to be achieved is by church growth - planting churches that grow.”

DAVID JACKMAN

7. Mission Centres.

Do some churches have the personnel and calling to exercise a wider ministry, providing support and encouragement to a number of smaller local churches? In some areas, several run-down buildings could be sold, and the money invested in developing a central mission centre, with a number of networked congregations then meeting in local halls and schools, and gathering centrally for regular celebrations, training, etc. If we could break out of narrow independency, would a model of a mission centre with multiplying congregations facilitate fresh growth today?

To serve Christ effectively at the end of our century we cannot afford to be saddled with nineteenth century methods and structures which once served the gospel but now inhibit it. I have

nothing against those who are happy to traditionalise at the price of becoming a Christian, but we need to insist that this is not a necessary cost of the gospel even though it has often been imposed without a thought. My heart is for the 50 million in our country who will not traditionalise in order to become Christians.

An indigenous church needs freedom. Freedom to discover what it means to serve Christ in a new cultural context. Freedom to become different from the sending church. Real church planting has no place for carbon copies.

“From the Sharp End”

Over the last three years evangelist Rob Frost, under the auspices of the Methodist Church Home Mission Division, has been exploring the possibilities of church planting using ‘seed teams’, groups of young Christians living in community together. Here he shares some of the experiences gleaned from the project.

A ‘Community Approach’ to Church Planting

by Rob Frost

The ten ‘Seed Teams’ who have been working in pioneer evangelism and church planting under the auspices of the Methodist Home Mission Division use ‘lifestyle evangelism’ as their main form of outreach.

We try to locate teams in the centre of newly expanding communities where there is little Christian witness. Sometimes we are able to rent a house, and occasionally a local council has made special arrangements to facilitate a team’s community work.

When the team move in they host a ‘housewarming’, inviting folk from a radius of several streets to visit their home. From this initial contact, the team build up a list of people from the local community who seem interested in contact and friendship.

Identification

We encourage the teams to get jobs in the local community, and whilst this is not always possible, we have been surprised to discover that part-time work is often available. One of our team leaders was the postman on a partially built estate, and he was able to make many useful contacts with new residents as they moved in.

Identification with a community is also important. Two of our team members joined the local workingmen’s club, and became members of the darts team. They quickly won the confidence of a constituency with whom the church had little or no previous contact.

The house itself is used as a very important means of outreach. The evening meal is often used as an opportunity to welcome new friends into their home, and to explain something about their project and their faith. The teams try to convey that their home is really ‘open’, and that people from the estate are always welcome to ‘pop in’, particularly if in need.

Contacts

Sometimes when the team are working in close liaison with a local church, they visit all of the ‘warm contact’ homes on the estate. Addresses of Sunday school children, youth club members or people who have had some pastoral contact with the church are followed up and invited to a home-group in the ‘Seed Team’ house.

But often, the church doesn’t know of any ‘sympathetic’ people on the estate, and there has to be a lot of ‘cold contact’ visiting using the questionnaire method or invitations to some special event before the team can build up some kind of picture of who is living in the streets around them.

Peer groups

Young people who hang around on the street or in the park at night have become a special burden for several of the teams. Friendship, an open home, and the opportunity to share with Christians of their peer group can create

tremendous opportunities, and we believe that a 'youth group' can pave the way for much new work in an area.

Teams have also discovered that 'mother and baby' groups are a tremendous way to reach the heart of a new community. Young mums face many pressures anyway, but the added difficulties of living in a new area can magnify their sense of isolation and loneliness. Friendships built up in such groups have been effective in creating opportunities for witness.

Lifestyle evangelism

The teams actively engage in 'lifestyle evangelism', praying each day that the Lord will lead them to make new friends naturally.

Contacts on a new estate whilst out shopping, cleaning the car, or cutting the lawn can be the first step to faith sharing. One team member found a lost dog, and, on returning it to the owner was able to share his testimony! The teams are instructed to explain the purpose of their work on the estate from the earliest contact so that no-one is under any misunderstanding as to where the team member is coming from.

From time to time the team engage in 'high visibility' events so that the local community are aware of their presence. One team served mince pies and punch on the green and sang carols under lanterns; another team organised a barn dance in a local hall, sharing some testimony and introducing themselves before the supper.

One team organised a giant picnic in a local park as a way of drawing the community together; and yet another organised a large Christmas 'Sing' at the local school. Many of these new 'commuter estates' have little or no 'communal life', and if the team can build relationships as part of its ministry, it can only be to the good.

Prayer - the key to fruitfulness

Each team's main aim at this stage is to form a housegroup. From the earliest days of its ministry in an area the team starts the housegroup, even if they are the only ones who attend it. Their prayer is that others will be added, one by one, and that through a course of very basic teaching about

salvation a nucleus of new Christians will be formed.

We are only in the third year of this experiment. With one team in year one, two in the second year and seven this year we've only embarked on a total of ten projects so far. It is too early to say if any of these 'Seed Team' housegroups could ever be termed 'a church'. What we can say, however, is that many have come to the Lord over the last three years, and that we believe that from these 'Seed Teams' a rich harvest will be gathered. If the teams could share one piece of advice it would be that prayer is the key to fruitfulness, and all of our teams regularly do prayer walks through their area.

QUOTE

"Prophets whose words are powerless, sowers whose seed all withers, fishers who take no fish, soldiers who give no wounds - are these God's men?...Or is it their belief that Paul plants, and Apollos waters, and that God gives no increase?"

C.H. SPURGEON

QUOTE

"The birth of BACUP represents a big step forward in the commitment to church planting current within the historic denominations. I believe the importance of church planting in Britain today is increasingly recognised among evangelical Christians and we clearly need networks like the Baptist Union to provide the opportunity for sharing, supporting, studying and strategising together. Baptists have long been in the forefront of evangelical endeavour in this nation - BACUP is yet one more indication that Baptists have not lost their cutting edge!"

CLIVE CALVER

From the “BAC-Room”

by David Coffey

General Secretary Designate of the Baptist Union

It has been my privilege to serve as the Evangelism Secretary of the Baptist Union for the past two years and I am delighted that my short tenure of service included the significant formation of Baptist Church Planters.

In June 1989 the Baptist Union convened a strategy consultation on Evangelism with a view to setting priorities for the coming decade. Church Planting emerged as the number one priority and a further consultation was arranged for June 1990 with Church Planting as the sole topic for discussion.

Stuart Christine, Geoffrey Reynolds and myself were asked to implement the recommendations of the consultation and the result is laid before you in this first newsletter of BACUP.

I can think of four reasons to rejoice:

1. The formation of BACUP is a sign that Baptists are recognising the urgency of the task of Mission. When the majority of the population is beyond the church and there is a growing percentage of young people who have never heard the good news of Jesus, then something radical in church structures is required.

2. Church Planting in a strategic way brings us into closer partnership with the World Church where there is so much expertise to be shared.

3. Whilst there has always been a Baptist commitment to planting new causes, it is the national features of BACUP which need to be highlighted as a unique departure in Baptist Mission strategy. The BACUP network will enable us to identify the gifts and ministries of church planters and evangelists and compile an appropriate catalogue of names; it should be possible to develop a national training programme in which all the colleges can participate, bringing their own emphasis to the programme; BACUP can offer an opportunity for research and study and the facilities to share experiences from the different regions which will prove a valuable part of this networking.

4. Baptists are not alone in their vision for church planting. This initiative brings us into fellowship with a large company of God's people from all denominations, who share a common obedience to fulfil the Great Commission by every means available.

As I relinquish responsibilities in the Mission Office at Didcot, I want it known that my heart for evangelism remains unchanged and members of BACUP can be assured of my active interest in the years ahead.

