

Mission Plan Paper

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PM758 Church Planting

November 21, 2021

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Theological Interaction

As we begin to uncover the issue of church planting from a biblical vantage point, there is no better instruction manual than the scriptures themselves. The early church accounts of church planting are not merely descriptive narratives, but a prescriptive mandate that continues to guide the church from generation to generation. Although there will be various cultural and generational divergences and differences, the core value of church planting is a universal one rooted on the pages of holy scripture. The Lord commissioned his church in Matthew 28:18-20, saying,

And 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.’¹

Anybody’s last words are crucial and worth remembering, but the words of our Lord in particular are consequently all the more significant. In these His last words, His final instruction to His disciples, He not simply invites His followers to share their faith or testimony, instead He gives a clear mandate to plant churches. He guides them to ‘make disciples’ and what is more, to ‘baptize’ them. This directive foresees new believers to be incorporated into a worshiping community that has accountability structures in place with biblically set parameters (Acts 2:41-47). Just like in the early days of the apostles, people came to faith and were immediately baptized. This account indirectly reveals that new converts were placed within a community where they could learn the apostles’ teaching and be held accountable to the revealed Word of God. Comparing the clear development in the early church to contemporary methods of evangelism, reveals a canyon like incongruity. Unfortunately nowadays, the aim is to bring a person to a quick and easy crossroad to decide what responds to give to the gospel presentation. No matter how many new believers a particular ministry implies to claim,

¹ All biblical quotations taken from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

evidence suggests neither church growth nor changed lives demonstrated by the fruit of true conversion. In truth, these so called ‘decisions’ are not true biblical conversions as we see in scripture, birthed in repentance and faith; instead, they may at best be described as the beginning of a soul’s journey that seeks God. New believers need to be shepherded, disciplined, and plugged into a biblically vibrant community that continually desires to multiply itself in the context of church planting. If a new believer is not brought into a fellowship of other believers, it is as Luke records in Luke 8:11-13,

The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.

To avoid short-term moments of emotional euphoria, churches must be driven to present the full counsel of God, share the consequences of a life surrendered to Christ and urge people to count the cost of discipleship.

The apostle Paul, the greatest missionary who ever walked the earth, had a very simple and clear strategy. On his missionary endeavors, he aimed to reach large metropolitan areas that had either a large Jewish community and or were centers for idol worship. He went to a strategic place, preached the good news, and planted a church in each city comprised of the new believers (cf. Acts 16:9, 12). Furthermore, we know that his goals were to jump start new local churches, considering one of his first actions was to appoint elders to shepherd the local flock (cf. Titus 1:5). Only then did he consider his work in the city had been accomplished (cf. Romans 15:19, 23). Paul worked on two assumptions in his ministry. Number one, he felt, in order for the greatest amount of influence to be utilized in a region, he would have to go the big cities. Secondly, to secure a permanent channel of influence in any given location, a local church would have to be established. Therefore, one of the most necessary continuous tasks must be to plant new local churches which will result in more people coming to faith as they

hear the gospel presented. Furthermore, there is an on-going renewal and revival of already existing churches in the city and the region. No alternative initiative, megachurch strategy, evangelistic crusade, parachurch ministry or outreach program will be as effective, as consistent church planting.

Despite threats of social exclusion, official external persecution, and internal heresies, the first generation of Christ followers made disciples in their communities in an unparalleled rate. In his book, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, Alan Hirsch points out that the church today can and should work like the apostles of the first century². Having said that, he suggests that there are five essential marks of biblical ecclesiology to help recover the fundamental strengths of the early church. Firstly, the church must be Christ centered. Without having a clear understanding of who Christ is, the church will not fully grasp how vital the centrality of Christ is. Secondly, the church must be discipleship driven. In other words, to have Christ reproduced on a continual basis will create the opportunity to further cement the gospel in new believers and provide a need for more local churches. Thirdly, the church will exponentially manifest its love through new disciples and be known for being a compassionate community. Fourthly, as gifts and callings are realized, Christ will work through every believer who is willing to be used for the expansion of the gospel of salvation. Every time a new church is being planned, new energy and enthusiasm are released, and a missional mindset is fostered once more. Lastly, Christ will redeem all of creation as the church faithfully lives out its Christ ordained commission in the world.

Thus, from a biblical viewpoint, every church, regardless of its size or development should play a role in church planting, a mandate given by the Lord. This could mean joining a church-planting network, financially supporting an existing church plant, or simply committing

² Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI., Brazos Press, 2009), 54.

to pray for those laboring in this way. When the apostles initially heard the Great Commission, it causes us to pause and reflect what they did; they planted churches. Our aspirations should be no different. William Carey once famously said, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.”³

Contextual Analysis

Followers of Christ were first called Christians at Antioch. This outward looking, missions-driven church, had been grounded in the faith for an entire year as Barnabas and Paul exhorted them in the gospel. They were sent out, to take the message of Christ into uncharted territories (Acts 11), to a people who worshiped idols, to communities who had never encountered the good news. It was by every account an enormous, if not an impossible mission. However, Luke records in Acts 13:2,3, “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” Before sending out its first church planting missionaries, the church recognized the groundbreaking task facing them, and they intentionally soaked their plans in prayer, seeking the Lord’s provision, guidance and wisdom before setting sail. Being unified in its purpose and mission, the missionaries were sent out to preach the gospel, make disciples and adding new believers into the community of faith. This early church planting account is a foundation stone for any endeavor to be undertaken in the twenty-first century.

As a new church planting opportunity is realized, so is the potential for an untapped evangelistic zeal among existing believers. The gospel witness will take on a whole new priority as believers begin to move in the direction of establishing a new church plant. Studies⁴

³ William Carey *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792; repr., London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 83.

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Why Plant Churches? — Redeemer City to City*

have shown that new churches will have 60-80 percent of its attendees come, having had no previous church affiliation of any kind. Whereas churches with a more established background, receive 80-90 percent of its new members as transfers from other churches. Therefore, a new church will have six to eight times more people who are new in the body of Christ altogether. Evidence suggests that in order to reach people who have not yet been introduced to the gospel, church planting is the most effective way to fulfill the Great Commission. There are practical benefits of connecting with a church planting network or at a minimum collaborate with a church that has gone through a church planting process. Older congregations have an established influence, stability and a respectability in the community. There are available financial resources and a proven wisdom that display a faithfulness and sustainability. On the other hand, starting from scratch will force a church planting endeavor to focus the needs that are in community. There will be a heightened awareness of unbeliever's concerns, doubts and hesitancy. The new church plant will be focused on face-to-face relationships, meeting in homes, establishing a strong sense of community. This initial phase will need an approximate time of two years. There will be a unique influence to reach the unchurched, inviting them to events and incorporate them into church life.

Therefore, the goal should include a renewed evangelistic spirit within established church structures and on the other hand new church plants should be empowered to take off with all the enthusiasm, creativity and innovation, unique to a newly birthed fellowship. Over the span of church history, the most effective way to spread the gospel and establish new communities of faith has been church planting. Tim Keller 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 a city and (2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing

churches in a city.”⁵ Keller’s assessment is correct. According to a LifeWay Research study⁶, church plants consist of fifty percent of new converts. This means that new churches multiply disciples by doing outreach and connecting to those who were previously unchurched. Part of that reality can be traced the pull of a start-up that is filled with ideas, momentum, and flexibility. The possibility to shape someone’s perception and understanding of what church is supposed to be like can have a great impact on a person’s openness to the gospel and understanding of church. Church plants usually lack large budgets and are thus forced to be simple in their approach and allow for creative ways to overcome some of those early hurdles. In fact, it is those infancy days of trial and error that have the potential to be the most fruitful days of them all.

Target community – Analysis

City Name: Bad Waldsee (State: Baden Wuerttemberg, Germany)

Population: 20,149 (last updated: December 31, 2020)

Area: 108,55 km²

City structure: 6 districts

Located at the edge of the German alps and only 50 km north of Lake Constance, Bad Waldsee is situated in a perfect geographical location for holidaymakers from near and far to pilgrimage annually and enjoy a time of relaxation, nature, and rest. The town offers diverse shopping opportunities, museums, lakes and a medieval town center. Its suburban feel offers a great place to live for senior citizens, families and those pursuing careers in larger business hubs. Cities like Ravensburg, Ulm, Friedrichshafen and Lindau are only a short drive away on the federal highway B30.

⁵ Daniel Yang, 4 Trends Shaping Church Planting Through 2050.

⁶ Timothy Keller, Why Plant Churches? — Redeemer City to City

Bad Waldsee is situated in the heart of a traditionally catholic dominated region, evidenced by the 15th century Roman catholic church towering over its skyline⁷. A smaller Lutheran church exists only a short walking distance away with a more modest 19th century church building⁸. Both churches report an aging church membership and a decrease in weekly service attendance⁹. In addition to these two central places of worship, there are in a radius of 20 kilometer: 18 Lutheran churches, 3 Pentecostal churches and 2 Adventist churches¹⁰. There are no theologically reformed churches in the vicinity of Bad Waldsee, forcing believers of a reformed conviction to travel further distances in order to be part of a faith community which ultimately disconnects them from their immediate environment.

Looking at the demographics represented in Bad Waldsee, we see a broad spectrum of age groups present. The breakdown is as follows¹¹:

Age group	Total (in numbers)	Total (in %)
0-2	582	2.89
3-5	538	2.67
6-11	1.121	5.56
12-17	1.297	6.44
18-24	1.511	7.50
25-34	2.361	11.72
35-44	2.330	11.56

⁷ Kernstadt - Bad Waldsee (bad-waldsee.de)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Mitgliedschaftsuntersuchung ausgewertet – EKD

¹⁰ Christliche-Gemeinde-Datenbank - Gemeindefinder für FeG, EFG, Baptisten, Evangelische Kirchen, Brüdergemeinden, Pfingstgemeinden uvm. (christliche-gemeinden.eu)

¹¹ Municipality of BAD WALDSEE, STADT: demographic balance, population trend, death rate, birth rate, migration rate (urbistat.com)

45-54	3.015	14.96
55-64	3.010	14.94
65-74	2.161	10.73
75+	2.223	11.03
TOTAL	20.149	100.00

The largest age group represented are those aged between 45 and 64 years of age. In other words, those who have established careers and families. However, the fastest growing demographic is the 23–34-year-old age group. These are the people starting in the jobs and families. Although most people have a white-suburban background, there is a slowly growing multi-cultural community, made up of eastern European, middle eastern and African groups. They make-up 11.64% of the population in Bad Waldsee¹². There are several popular daycares, and renown schools located in Bad Waldsee. Three large colleges can be reached within a 20-minute drive. Bad Waldsee is an official health resort and houses two clinics, drawing people from all over the country to go and seek rehabilitation and recovery. All this leads me to conclude that it is the perfect place to begin a church plant. People with traditional backgrounds living next door to those seeking a more liberal worldview; many religious, others atheists, some agnostics and all of them in need of the gospel.

Strategic Plan

To be a church planter, I must be passionate about the local church. Having grown up within the church, I have seen the good, the bad and the ugly. Nonetheless, Christ’s words to his disciples still ring true today, “I will build my church and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). For there to be a desire to plant a local church, I must see her for what

¹² Municipality of BAD WALDSEE, STADT: foreign population per gender, demographic foreigners balance, growth rate of foreigners, citizenships (urbistat.com)

she is, namely, the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33). Before even venturing out to gather people together and plant a church, core values must be clearly defined in order to visualize which puzzle pieces need to be part of a biblically based community that strives to honor Christ.

Core Values

1. *The Word of God* – The Word of God is the foundation of our lives and of all ministries. All our convictions and the fabric of the church’s DNA are based upon the living, breathing Word of God.
2. *Prayer* – “My house shall be a house of Prayer” (Mt. 21:23). To be a healthy church, we must teach, equip, and practice prayer in a regular setting. Our desire is to nurture an attitude of prayer and a deepening relationship to God corporately, but also individually.
3. *The local Church* – It is through the local church that God is building His kingdom. He has commissioned his disciples to make disciples through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Although part of a global community,
4. *Worship* – Worship is a vital part of the Christian fellowship, an outward expression of an inward experience. Music is one crucial element of worship and can be used as a strategic element of proclaiming the gospel.
5. *Community* – The local church should be a place in which people feel protected, encouraged and admonished as we journey together in faith, all by the sovereign grace of God.
6. *Evangelism* – At the heart of the gospel is the Great Commission. We want to foster a desire for evangelism, releasing resources and people to impact their communities with the message of salvation.

Goals

Through long periods of prayer and meditation, clearly defined goals must emerge with a desire and strategy to implement them. These goals should be gospel-driven, kingdom-oriented and

Christ-exalting. The overarching desire is to ‘make disciples’, equip and send them out to truly live for the gospel in their own context. Key strategic goals include:

1. *Team* – If the whole exercise depends on the ideas and talents of one person, the church plant will not be a sustainable, let alone a healthy one. The planting team must consist of men and women who are willing and ready to engage at the front lines. People who have counted the cost and who are willing to sacrifice to bring the Kingdom forward.
2. *Knowing Christ* – Spiritual busyness is a disastrous condition if it fails to result in sitting at the feet of Christ and be nourished oneself. For those investing in kingdom work, especially those exhorting others in the preaching and teaching of the Word, need to be driven by the desire to know Christ more intimately. As one church planter put it, “I want to preach as a man who has not merely been to seminary, but who has sat still in the presence of Jesus.”¹³
3. *Engaged Community* – As the church plant meets, loving relationships should be nurtured and authentically lived out. Key components should mutually encourage one another to live in the truth. These relationships should demonstrate how God’s redemptive work is manifesting itself as the new church plant lives out being reconciled to God and to one another.

Once the right team is in place and the core values and strategic goals have been set, a method must be agreed upon. It is vital that the church planting team stays in constant communication with each other. Meeting more regularly creates a heightened awareness of the community and allows the team to be engaged in each other’s lives more naturally. A regular meeting place must be found, whether it is someone’s home or otherwise. It should however be able to accommodate more people than the initial planting team. Goals should be assessed and adjusted monthly, giving the team the opportunity to reflect on all of team’s activities. To avoid being complacent, people should be invited regularly to visit a fellowship meeting. Bible believing

¹³ Alan Ramsey, 3 Goals—and 3 Enemies—in Church Planting (thegospelcoalition.org)

churches in the area should be told of the church plant, providing opportunity for prayer, open dialogue and even avoiding an unhealthy fear of competition. The church plant should plan to do monthly outreach events in the community, sharing the gospel, telling them about a new church plant, and inviting unbelievers to come and bring their questions. Keeping it low key, sharing a meal, and living authentic community will provide a platform for the gospel to be shared and souls to be saved.

Conclusion

Church planting is a vital part of the Great Commission, making disciples and incorporating them into the local church. Any such endeavor must be prayed about and thought through. Preliminary analyses must be done, and the soil must be tended to continuously. There will be dark and lonely days, frustrations and disappointments will also be a reality. All that being said, if the gospel is true, if Christ is on His throne, then there is more spiritual power available for those faithfully executing the Great Commission than the problems that may be coming at you, no matter how big they may seem.

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