

“Mother/Daughter Concepts for Starting Churches”

By Wayne Schulz

Introduction

Have we unwittingly fostered the mindset that only the Synod can plant churches? “The Synod’s mission!”

Why Should We Start New Churches?

- 1) God’s redeeming love in Christ, the motivating factor! (1 John 4:10) Our deep need.
- 2) The Great Commission, the guiding opportunity; an outlet for God’s redeeming love in Christ.
- 3) More beachheads for the Means of Grace, the illuminating tool of the Holy Spirit.
- 4) The nature of God’s Church: living organism, grows, reproduces, multiplies. Marvel at this!
- 5) The historical record: the Book of Acts. As the Word of the Lord grows (in hearts) and goes (people to people), congregations multiply. Testimony of the Holy Spirit.
- 6) The growing population and the American record:
 - 1899 to 1906: one new church for every increase of 280 people in the USA.
 - 1980’s: one new church for every increase of 685 people.
 - 1890’s: one new Lutheran parish for every increase of 5,000 people in US population.
 - 1980’s: one new Lutheran parish for every increase of 15,000 people in US population.It is true that the Church grows not only through the multiplication of new churches. Records show, however, that Lutheran efforts at starting churches have not kept pace with the earlier historical record.
- 7) Urban growth areas also grow in numbers of unchurched.
- 8) New churches tend to be less internally-structured and more outreach-minded (evangelism), aiming their ministry more at reaching the unchurched.
- 9) New churches are often a rallying point for newcomers and for others who have drifted into inactivity.
- 10) New churches provide meaningful opportunities for Christians in older churches to become involved in the birth of something new (for which future generations of Christians will thank them).

When and Where Do We Begin New Churches?

- 1) The ideal model: the thirty-something percent ratio; when an area or development is
 - -30% complete
 - -30% in progress
 - -30% planned for the future
- 2) Many variables, depending on place and culture.
- 3) The *Community Profile Form*, a helpful tool. Also, *Church Information Demographics* (Cf. BHM Office for address and details.) Study your community!
- 4) Consultation with the District Mission Board is important even if no Synodical support will be needed for a church-planting venture. (Strategic planning of district, region, and area. DMB has guidelines for help.)
- 5) Involvement with the District Mission Board is essential if funding of a church-planting endeavor is to be dual-natured (partially by DMB, partially by mother congregation or multiple mother congregations).
- 6) If a congregation or a group of congregations desires to become involved in starting a new church, they should prepare a proposal as a feasibility study, and present it to the District Mission Board for evaluation and negotiation. If DMB funding will be necessary, the request for the same will have to be presented by the DMB to the Board for Home Missions for approval according to the usual pattern.
- 7) Full involvement or partial involvement in church-plantings (especially where there is a strong WELS base) could be very helpful in increasing the numbers of new WELS mission startups and in doing thorough outreach work in areas where the WELS could and should be present. Local, hands-on initiatives and ownership should not be stifled: When people say, “That’s the Synod’s mission,” they will tend to watch from the sideline and let the Synod do it. A better plan for areas where the WELS is

strong is to seek more local involvement and to let “the Synod” do it in frontier areas where the WELS is not as yet well represented.

Concepts for Brainstorming and Development of Proposals

- 1) *District Mission Board initiates a project with an interested WELS nucleus* (often with manpower from another WELS church). Pattern for 60’s and 70’s.
- 2) *Use existing manpower* in self-supporting congregations to do exploratory work in areas targeted for openings. The BHM would pay the pastor the equivalent of ¼ of a missionary’s salary to do this work (in addition to normal salary from pastor’s congregation). He would work to:
 - a) start a congregation geared for self-support
 - b) start a daughter congregation
 - c) start a satellite of an existing congregation
 - d) start a congregation that will be a part of a dual parish for the foreseeable future, or
 - e) start a preaching station as an outpost for Gospel proclamation.
- 3) District Mission Board initiates a project by calling an *outreach explorer* (church planter) to work an area six to eight months before holding worship services. Often without a WELS nucleus. Pattern for the 80’s and early 90’s.
- 4) *A mother church gives birth* to a daughter congregation and funds it entirely. No financial help from the District Mission Board. This is the normal understanding of the mother/daughter concept in the WELS. It has produced *few* churches in the WELS the past 30 years.
- 5) *An individual personally funds* a new mission for a period of three years (or so). The pattern for home mission expansion in some church bodies. Church Extension Fund (CEF) may or may not be necessary.
- 6) *Several individuals support* a new mission startup for a period of three years (or so). CEF assistance may or may not be necessary.
- 7) *A congregation splits* in order to form another congregation. This saves a costly enlargement of facilities in the mother church (or an even more costly relocation).
- 8) *A group of mother congregations* (multiple mothers) begin a new church in a growing nearby area (which they cannot thoroughly serve in outreach work) *with a nucleus from each* joining the new church. The multiple mothers give the needed support for operating expenses *and* future building expenses.
- 9) *Same* format as #8 (above). Multiple mothers pick up operating subsidy only. CEF funding is necessary for the buildings.
- 10) DMB initiates a church-planting venture and supports the project with operating subsidy for three to five years. An individual, group of individuals, a single congregation, or a group of congregations agree to *purchase the land* and raise the necessary funds for the initial building project.
- 11) *Combination of multiple mother congregations and DMB involvement* (similar to #8 & #9 above). Not just verbal/moral support, but the support of people and congregations committed to the cause of an outreach exploratory situation. *For this to occur we need:*

(More Detailed Example)

- a) A meeting of prospective congregations to receive their blessing and permission for informational meetings and publicity about the project.
- b) Creation of a task force (mid-wife group!) of about six mission-minded, creative, and supportive people to lay out plans for extension of information and solicitation of member interest and support in each participating congregation. Members would be given various types of possibilities for committed participation at an informational Sunday service. Samples of types of involvement:
 - *Prayer support.* Individuals involved would be placed on the new church’s mailing list.
 - *Financial support.* For operating subsidy or for the future land and property purchase. Over and above normal congregational support. A monthly, annual, or occasional commitment. Three to five years.

- *Personal membership commitment.* Three to five (or so) families/individuals (interested in the ministry of a developing congregation) commit themselves to working with a church planter and the new congregation. Those who would accept this would be commissioned in a church service at about the time the church planter arrives on the scene (to increase local ownership; to make the statement: “We are not losing these people. We are commissioning them for a special ministry!”) / The need to know and be involved in the vision for this mission and its ministry of outreach. / They would attend church in the mother congregation and give a certain percentage of their offerings to the mother congregation during the first 6-8 months (pre-natal stage) of the exploratory effort. This would reduce the impact of their commitment on the mothering congregations.
 - *Telephone canvassers*
 - *Neighborhood canvassers*
 - *Computer help* (and other secretarial)
 - *Musical help*
 - *Utilization of talent bank of mothering groups*
 - *Banners, hymnals, furniture*
 - *Definitive & enabling school policy for members of new mission*
 - *Joint youth activities*
 - *Sharing of Bible class ministry/fellowship*
 - *Monthly gym night for new group*
 - *Provide choirs for weekly service*
 - *Others:* (Brainstorm ideas from your group and for your area.)
- c) After the degree of mothering has been determined, the task force would prepare a report and proposal for the DMB and its request for manpower for the new mission. Task force would continue to serve as liaison in both directions.
- d) *Birth process* of the new mission summarized:
- aa) *Conception* (vision, strategic planning, team development, levels of commitment)
 - bb) *Pre-Natal Stage* (approvals by DMB & BHM, call, outreach explorer on scene and working community or target area for 6-9 months, outreach work, development of prospect list, caring and Bible study groups develop, outreach explorer works in harmony with DMB ministry plan and with the ministries of the mothering congregations, establishment of a network system of support)
 - cc) *Birth* (first public worship service, regular thereafter, ministry around group’s mission statement)
 - dd) *Growth Toward maturity* (leadership development, OPA manual, organizational structure, people in mission serving in accordance with their gifts, evangelism, assimilation, new buildings, self-supporting)
 - ee) *Reproduction* (Now what? Church is born to reproduce. Daughter churches start granddaughter churches! Each one starts one!)
- 12) A conference, circuit, or district doing a version of #11.
- 13) *Adoption.* DMB begins a new mission according to its strategic planning. Another church (or churches) in the region adopts and supports it. If the adoptive church (or churches) is from outside of the region, it would be called an uncle, aunt, or cousin church.
- 14) *Colonization.* A mother church sends out a colony of 50-75 of its members to form the nucleus of a new church. The colony may support the entire project, or the mother congregation or DMB make a two-year (or so!) commitment to the remainder of the operational support.
- 15) *Hive off or loaning* method. Some members of the mother church are “loaned” to the new mission effort. They “hive off” for a period of one year to lend support and then return to their congregation of origin.
- 16) Several home *Bible study groups* merge to form a congregation.

- 17) The *multi-site option*. Congregation continues as one legal corporation with one governing board, staff, budget, building fund, and membership roll, but with two sites, two worship areas, two Sunday schools, and two sets of trustees. This arrangement could have one or two pastors. (Or: one site, multiple congregations) It often becomes a second congregation (eventually).
- 18) The *satellite approach*. Appropriate where friendship evangelism/networking has been embedded as the Christian way of life. A congregation could increase its staff to have one or more satellites. (*See addendum*) Characteristics of satellites:
 - a) They could be geographical, cultural, people of similar interests, student-based, or combinations.
 - b) The satellite would require minimal space (storefront, strip mall, or other rented or purchased quarters) for Bible information classes, fellowship, and possibly midweek worship.
 - c) The mother church would continue as the administration center (ministry planning, staff, coordination, scheduling), worship center (satellites would worship with the big group or have a special time designated for their worship), and nurturing center (school, specialty Bible classes, core curriculum).
 - d) If a satellite group grows to a large size, it could divide and form another satellite, or it could go on its own, fund its own building, create its own identity, and become another mother church.
 - e) The satellite approach may not work well in a traditional area (“We’ve never done it that way before!”). But it may be a concept that has come of age for some of our very large churches in traditional areas and some of our growing churches in non-traditional areas. Calgary example: mother church; satellite #1 (solid group in a growing area 20 miles north); satellite #2 (Friday morning classes at the University of Calgary); satellite #3 (one of several fast-growing housing areas in which members will do intensive outreach work).
- 19) Additional ways (from your brainstorming) of starting new churches with the mothering and multiple-mothers concepts:

After you have done this, write up a proposal for consideration by the District Mission Board! Teamwork!

Additional Ways for Mothering Groups to Help the WELS in Starting Churches

- 1) Pay the salary of one staff member for one, two, or three years.
- 2) Purchase the land for the mission (with DMB approval of site location).
- 3) Purchase the parsonage for the mission, or make payments on the parsonage for the first five years.
- 4) Purchase the building for the mission. Or raise funds for a portion of the building. Or have a matching funds relationship with the mission for building expenditures.
- 5) Use accumulated or willed funds to make an interest-free or low interest loan to the new congregation for a period of three to five years (or so!).
- 6) Purchase a second-hand building as the mission’s initial unit.
- 7) A builder’s club assists with the building or remodeling project. *Builders for Christ* volunteers needed!
- 8) Congregation makes a one-time financial grant to the mission either for operating subsidy or for building projects.
- 9) One congregation guarantees full compensation for the church planter for 12 to 18 months. A second congregation assumes the cost of the church planter for the next 12 to 18 months. Or a second congregation pays the cost of a second staff person for the second 12 to 18 month period. Several other churches finance the purchase of land. (or variations of these)
- 10) Two or three smaller churches merge at a new location.
- 11) One or more sponsoring churches loans the money for site acquisition on a second mortgage so that the new mission can take out a first mortgage from a lending institution to finance the first building. *Research ways for creative financing!* Other suggestions?

“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed” (Proverbs 16:3)