How to start a church for Dummies!

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By Nick Klinkenberg

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Chapter 1.

Why Start New Churches?

(This is covered in depth in my book “Multiplication”, Inspiration & Tools for Church Planting.) See: www.visionchurches.com

“The single most effective method for fulfilling the Great Commission that Jesus gave to us is to plant new Churches”. Two Thousand years of Christian history have proven that new churches grow faster, and reach more people, than established churches. The growth on any plant is always on the newest branches”. Rick Warren. (Stetzer & Bird. Viral Churches. Jossey-Bass, 2010. Page 11).

Mission leaders worldwide agree that, “Church planting is the best long term evangelistic method under Heaven”.


Evangelism is finished when people are serving God in His Church. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you”. So we see that evangelism is going, making disciples, baptizing and teaching people to GO. Where better than the local church can this be fulfilled?


Dr Ralf Winter also provides helpful comment in this area: “The extensive activity of starting new congregations, the care and feeding of (new) congregations is thus to me the central activity to which all evangelistic methods must be bent”. (Jim Montgomery, Principles and Practices of DAWN. 2nd ed. Pages 6-8.)

The reason we begin new churches is for Harvest! The best way to reach this world for Christ, is to plant more churches. It’s all about harvest. It’s about planting outposts of Heaven.
Chapter 2.

Why start new Networks and Movements?

“The healthiest churches are those who reproduce, according to a national research project called FACT2008. Among the protestant congregations surveyed, those whose leadership spent the most time recruiting and training leaders were the healthiest. Similar results came from leaders who promoted a clear vision and emphasized evangelism. The massive survey factored in results from more than 2,000 random Protestant congregations. (Stetzer & Bird, Viral Churches. Jossey-Bass, 2010. Page 31). FACT2008 Hartford Institute for Religion Research, www.hartfordinstitute.org

Stetzer and Bird say, “for years, most Bible teachers have referred to Paul’s travels as his ‘missionary journeys.’ We prefer to call them Paul’s ‘church planting journeys’”.

I am convinced church planting is not a theory, trend, program or latest fad. Church planting is the dominant method of evangelism in the book of Acts, and the key to spreading the Gospel.

What about churches planting churches that plant churches? Instead of churches only making disciples, what about disciples reproducing themselves...disciples multiplying churches. Radical! After all, we are commanded to ‘disciple nations’ (Matt 23:19-20). The idea of churches multiplying disciples will never result in huge multiplication. We must think past addition. 1 + 1 + 1 = 3, is wonderful and better than nothing, but what about 3 x 3 x 3 = 27. Multiplication. Ralf Moore says, “It’s time to stop counting converts and begin counting congregations”. (Stetzer & Bird, Viral Churches. Jossey-Bass, 2010. Page 43).

Imagine churches that were born pregnant. They had in their DNA when they began that they were going to continue planting churches. What a great purpose for every new church!

If we are really serious about reaching Europe, I am absolutely convinced, that we need to strategically begin new networks or movements. Churches of all shapes and sizes, meeting in all sorts of different places from homes to halls to cafés to concert chambers; Classrooms to school rooms and university campuses and theaters. If we don’t strategize for this, Europe, in fact the world, will not be reached. It is necessary that we start in the influential cities but what about the thousands and thousands of small towns and villages? Europe is made up of these towns and villages; even larger cities are many small villages merging into one.

Churches reach a certain size because of many factors but usually one major one; the leadership capacity of the leader. This does not always need to be an issue. Let’s find leaders of 1000’s, 100’s, 50’s and 10’s and network together to support, encourage, resource and enable one another to lead their churches. Imagine 6 small villages some with 2500 people to 5000 people. They are in a radius of 19 kilometers. Usually one village is unable to sustain a church, buy buildings etc. I realize there are exceptions of course. But remember we are talking about the rapid multiplication of new churches! So one congregation has 12 people, another grows to 28 people, three others are around 42 people and one is 75 people; 211 people in total. They are each too small to bring in expertise, guest speakers, special seminars or courses or really serve their village with a school makeover. They certainly don’t have the finance to buy a building, or begin new congregations. Many may not have the musicians or drama teams to put on several special events over a year; but together they can do so much! Plus start new churches! I believe this can happen. Let me go further, this MUST happen if we are to reach Europe!

This means new networks and movements. In fact networks and movements that will start other movements! Imagine that!

Of course as always leadership is a key. In this case Apostleship. Here is my list that I have gleaned over the years, this is certainly not exhaustive:
The ability to see ahead and lead in areas of breakthrough.
Harvest focused.
They are able to pioneer.
They are people of great faith.
Signs, wonders and miracles take place regularly.
Leaders of leaders.
Show humility, teachability and display wisdom.
They love building the local church.
They are able to create an atmosphere of God's presence, so release, envisioning, faith and the impartation of God takes place in people.

“My best guess is that most apostles can handle up to 50 churches fairly well. Few could handle as many as 150 without creating some kind of bureaucracy to help make it happen.” (C.P. Wagner. *Churchquake!* Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999. Pages 141-152)

He also writes, “The personality of the apostle is undoubtedly the most important variable...experience counts as well. The more mature and seasoned the apostle, the more churches can be handled”. (C.P. Wagner. *Churchquake!* Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999. Pages 141-152)

So why not start networks and movements of churches, thereby releasing more apostles and also creating another style or culture which will meet different needs. The facts are not everyone will come to one church in a city of 50,000 people. It takes all sorts of different kinds of churches to minister to different kinds of people. One of the keys is that churches and leaders should never do ministry alone. They should never feel alone, it's simply too dangerous and tough! This is again where overseers come into their own, fathers, apostle type figures. Every church needs a friend/an overseer.

What is a church planting movement? According to Garrison, “a church planting movement is a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous church planting churches within a given people group or population segment”. (Garrison, David. *Church Planting Movements: How God is redeeming a lost world*. Richmond, VA: Wigtake resources, 2003).

David Garrison has his list in his excellent booklet “Church Planting Movements”. Here is a list I picked up from Ben Wong many years ago. I believe it has validity and clear focus. Looking at movements through the years I believe he has hit on some crucial factors. (Note: movements or networks are one & the same).

1. Movements, move in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a supernatural dynamic lead by the Holy Spirit, allowing the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be exercised. This is normal Christianity.

2. Movements have their own music and style. Look at the camp meetings of the last century, Wesley, Salvation Army and more recently Vineyard, Hillsong, C3, Bethel Church. It seems where there is a move of the Holy Spirit, new songs are birthed.

3. Movements have their own publications, communications and resources. Vineyard Churches, Hillsong, C3 Churches, Bethel Church are examples of this. Their DNA and way of doing things is communicated and taught through these.

4. Movements have their own training and education. Again there is a DNA that is taught and caught. A new generation always needs to be discipled and trained.

5. Movements impact their community. Look at the Salvation Army, Methodists, and Pentecostal movements.
The two factors that enhance and perpetuate a movement’s or network’s growth.

1. Vision. For ownership others must carry and incarnate the vision. The aim is for people to own the vision as theirs. The result: the vision carries on through the good times and also through the difficult and tough times.
2. Training. Continued training, mentoring and discipling must take place. Vision and values must be taught over and over again in various ways by different people. The WHY is a huge factor; so people know what and how?

Chapter 3.

What is Church?

I think the West has confused this issue and made church very complicated and confusing. I also think that the Western world has complicated Christianity. The Bible was never meant for an elite few. Nor was it simply for information, but the Bible was primarily for transformation. We are called to be hearers and doers of the Word. The book of Acts was not called the book of beliefs. It is the book of the ACTS of the Holy Spirit and the Acts of the disciples.

Four components make up what a church is:

A. Matt 22: “Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul & strength...Love your neighbour as yourself”.
B. Matt 28: “Go, make disciples of the Nations & baptize them in the name of the Father, Son & the Holy Spirit. I am with you always till the end of the age”.
C. Jesus gave us two ordinances: Water Baptism and Communion (The Lord’s Supper).
D. Size...how large does a church have to be to be a church? Matt 18:19-20. “Where two or three...there am I in the midst”. In the Jewish tradition 10 men 13 years and over had to be present for it to be an official meeting. Jesus smashes this thought altogether for He doesn't genderise or put an age to the gathering or say where it must be.

Of course if the components above (A-C) are seriously adhered to, then it will not stay 2-3 people.

Church can regularly be in a restaurant, theater, café, church building, school or home. We are not talking about house churches. A church is a church, wherever it meets. Size is determined by the leadership capacity and the size of the town.
1. **So the WHY is for harvest.** The Vision is to see people come to Christ and built into a community of Faith.

2. **It is important to have Values:** The non-negotiables. For example, the VALUES (or the 5 heartbeats) of Vision Churches International are listed below. They are 5 key values or heartbeats that we are not prepared to live without, these define who we are:

   - Supernatural;
   - Multiplication;
   - Apostolic-Leadership;
   - Reaching the Lost;
   - Training Development and Discipling.

   (For more explanation of these see our website: www.visionchurches.com)

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**Chapter 4.**

**How to Start New Churches & Multiply them:**

*Please note this is a guideline, in some cultures and nations planting can happen rapidly without following this process completely. I plead for wise, divine creativity.*

When a church is planted it should never be isolated and alone, strength comes from partnering together and networking. Accountability is our best friend. Let me say that together we can do the impossible . . . we can reach lands, cities & towns! We bring support, partnership, encouragement and resource to one-another. [The results are networks and movements and this is, I believe, God’s plan.]

We cannot and should not attempt to start and plant churches by ourselves. Let me push this a little further, I believe it is unbiblical. It's just too dangerous and difficult.

**How to start churches...that start churches...**

**SEED:**

**Seed PLANTED:**

**Seed RISES:**

**Seed GROWS:**

**Seed MULTIPLIES:**

*The idea is from the Thomas Stewart Lifecycle. See page 210 of “Multiplication” for a more detailed account of the process of Church planting.*
See below for a detailed explanation of the process.

**SEED**

**Strategic vision.**
This is where strategic Vision takes place.

- The tree is already in the SEED. The SEED of a new church begins first and foremost with a vision or dream or idea for a new church. Someone or some group of people must develop a conviction that a certain church must be planted in a certain place, people group or both.
- Spend time in prayer.
- Writing down the vision helps to clarify the overall objectives to be accomplished.
- It's crucial to clarify the specific target audience or community to be reached.
- If two or more people have this vision, they need to be in agreement about it. Any disunity regarding the vision will not allow the formation of the SEED to occur properly. The seeds of dissention are in the beginning of any organization and must be eliminated.

**Strategic planning.**

- In addition to vision, a new church requires the definition of a clear philosophy of ministry or game plan that describes broadly how the vision will be implemented. An important step in this process is analyzing the target group or community. The philosophy of ministry will expand and clarify the vision, describing such things as purpose, priorities, style of worship and style of ministry.
- Develop your action plan; stating how the church will uniquely reach its target community and why people would even want to become involved.
- Fuzzy goals, fuzzy plans, fuzzy actions.
Team Development.

- The formation of appropriate support systems to help the church planter in his or her ministry.
- A prayer team and supportive church family are absolutely essential.
- Clarify your accountability relationships.
- Financial support often needs to be arranged. Sometimes additional training is required prior to launching a new church project. Begin the value of tithes and offerings among the team.
- Develop a team of people for the new church plant. Five to eight people.

SEED Checklist:
Simply review this checklist during the seed stage to determine the agenda items which need to be addressed, before moving on to the SEED PLANTED phase. If this isn’t done, complications may develop during the PLANTED and / or Seed RISES stage.

- I have developed a clear vision for this new church.
- The initial target audience has been specifically defined.
- I have surveyed / observed my target audience and understand their felt needs.
- I have formulated a focused philosophy of ministry which describes the new church’s: Purpose / priorities / style of worship / ministries.
- Goals and action plans have been decided.
- I have a support team.
- The home church support and areas of accountability have been discussed and decided.

Top priorities for development:

**Action Plan**

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Seed PLANTED

For the church, life begins with a seed. In order for a church to embark upon a healthy and effective life, it too must accomplish a great deal during the “PLANTED” stage.

Take your time – once you have started there is no going back. If a church rushes into its first public worship service without having developed properly, it can suffer the same fate of a miscarried or aborted child. On the other hand, if a church spends too much time in seed PLANTED development stage it will lose life-giving momentum and vision.

The key for a successful seed PLANTED stage of a church, is to know what needs to be accomplished prior to launching the worship services. If the essential functions are developed during this time, then a healthy baby can be expected.
Outreach and Evangelism

- Evangelism must be consistent, natural, relevant and effective. It must have a high value.
- Understand the needs of the target group.
- Make contacts with people who do not regularly attend church; demonstrate genuine Christian love.
- Find evangelistic methods that work.
- Help new Christians reach their networks.

Group Multiplication

- Start your initial small group/ connect group.
- Leaders need to be trained and mobilized to lead small groups within the new church. These groups are essential for effective evangelism and assimilation, providing a healthy and growing environment for new people.
- Form new groups as quickly as possible.
- Meet regularly with small group leaders.

Ministry Foundations

- Preliminary plans need to be formulated for every major ministry the church will develop within the next 1–3 years. Be flexible.
- Mobilise your team in preparation for going public.
- Take care of important administration issues.

Seed PLANTED Checklist

- Unbelievers are coming to faith in Christ.
- New Leaders are being trained to start connect groups.
- At least two or three groups are in operation now.

My top priorities for development:

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Seed RISES:

The new plant begins to RISE above the ground. The birth of a new church is just as exciting as the birth of a new baby. After months of anticipation, preparation and critical development, that big day arrives when the new church holds its first public worship service. The new church has developed enough of its own strength and maturity that it can safely and gladly announce to the general public, “We’re here and have we ever got something to offer you!”
Just as the rising of a new plant or the birth of a new baby, the process requires skill and timing, so the initial “entrance” of a new church into the world must be carefully planned and implemented.

Public Worship Services

- Choose the right time and location. Your first worship service makes a very important statement about your church. Consequently, you should put a great deal of thought into it.
- Make worship preparation a special event, so that people will truly celebrate God. If you use live music, establish a weekly rehearsal from the start that will allow the worship leaders to be ready to guide people into the presence of God.
- The critical size needed for effective worship will vary depending on your philosophy of ministry. You’ll want to start having services when you have enough people for your style of worship. Your worship facilities should be easy to locate.
- Clearly define your worship style so that it is culturally relevant to your target group. This is particularly important if you plan to attract and assimilate unchurched people into your congregation.
- Train your worship team.

Children’s Programming

- A major question many parents ask when they consider a new church is: “What does this church have to offer for my children?” That question is especially important for those with younger children. Before you start your first worship service, the question should be asked, how are you going to meet the needs of children?
- Providing consistent pastoral care for children and their families greatly increases a new church’s potential for growth.
- Parents look for three things: a safe and happy learning environment; evidence that their children are cared for and enjoy themselves; proof that they are learning Bible truths.

Seed RISES Checklist

- We have adapted our style of worship so that it will be appropriate for people in the target group.
- We have secured an easy-to-find location.
- Our church has enough people to conduct our style of worship.
- We have trained leaders for our children’s ministry.
- We provide excellent nursery care.
- Our children’s program is effective in reaching and assimilating new children and their families.
- More leaders are continually being trained.

My top priorities for development:

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Seed GROWS towards maturity.

Independence and self-sufficiency are key words for this stage of growth. As a tree grows from a small shoot into a midsize tree, then into a full size tree, its maturity levels are marked by increasing independence and self-sufficiency. The tree now stands on its own strength and begins to have an impact on the surrounding world. Likewise, as a church grows to maturity it becomes stronger and increasingly self-sufficient. Essentially, all the growth that occurs in this phase is an amplification of the growth that took place in Seed PLANTED stage. The key elements of growth in this phase include the following:

Leadership Development

- In order for the church to experience continued growth, more leaders need to be constantly recruited, trained and mobilized into ministries for which God has gifted them.
- Use modeling and "on-the-job" training.
- Maintain high organizational standards.

Ministry Development

- The leadership team must guide the process of evaluating, planning and implementing ministries that accomplish church goals.
- Help believers to discover, develop and use their God-given gifts in ministry.

Evangelism and Assimilation

- Maintain evangelism as a high priority. Making disciples is a primary mandate for all churches and requires receive high emphasis in time, creativity, money and programming.
- Help members to cultivate "redemptive relationships”.
- New groups are needed to incorporate new people.
- Implement newcomer/membership orientation.

Dynamic Worship

- Focus on active response to God.
- Increase the number of people preparing for worship.
- Keep worship creative and celebrative.

GROWTH Checklist

- Our church is effective in outreach.
- Newcomers are being assimilated.
- There are at least 6-7 small groups for every 100 people attending.
- New leaders are regularly recruited, trained and mobilized into new and existing ministries.
- Our people are mobilized to use their spiritual gifts in ministry.
- Aim for 60 roles or tasks for every 100 people attending.
- Ministries are developed according to our philosophy and priorities in order to meet community/church needs.
- Evaluation of all ministries occurs regularly.
- The quality of Christian character and commitment in our church is increasing.
- Update 3-5 year plan. Our people clearly understand and are committed to the goals of our church.
- Our worship services are meaningful celebrations and help people respond to God.
Seed MULTIPLIES

Few things in life are more exciting or challenging than becoming a parent. However, becoming a grandparent is also wonderful. Actually, humanity would cease to exist within one or two short generations were it not for the grandparent-grandchild relationship. The reason is simple. We were created to reproduce. Reproduction from one generation to the next is part of our natural job description as humans and for all living creatures in general.

The tree grows, develops and begins to drop seeds and new trees are formed. Is the true fruit from an apple tree, another apple, or is it another apple tree? I want to suggest it is another apple tree. Let me go further, a church has matured when it has planted another church.

The church is born to reproduce. Not only is it a part of the natural job description of the church as a living organism (the Body of Christ), but reproduction is also part of a church’s divine job description.

If a church does not reproduce, there is something wrong, since it fails to do what is supposed to occur by its very nature. Also, if a church does not reproduce, its failure could be an act of disobedience to the Lord of the Harvest.

The church is born to multiply and will do so, if it is healthy. To ensure reproductive health in the church, the following critical elements need to be in operation.

Great Commission “Eyes”

- See the opportunities to reach lost people. A church can multiply if it looks out upon the fields of humanity and sees them as ripe for the harvest. This kind of church is committed to reaching the unreached and unchurched people of the world with a view to making them responsible, obedient disciples.

- Embrace church planting in your church purpose. The philosophy of ministry of a healthy, reproducing church explicitly states that the church will multiply itself. If that statement is not present, then the church has not adequately grasped the nature of the church, nor the mandate to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20).

Planting and Implementation

- Establish faith-stretch goals.
- Obtain goal ownership.
- Leadership is needed for new churches. Prayer for workers is the best means to recruit church planters. God loves to answer this prayer!
- Mobilise and supervise church planters.
- Help daughter churches start granddaughter churches.
MULTIPLICATION checklist

- Our church is effectively making disciples in its own community.
- Our people are aware of the fields of the world ready to be harvested.
- As a church, we are committed to reproduce other churches in order to make disciples of all people.
- Our philosophy of ministry explicitly states our commitment to reproduce other churches.
- The church budget demonstrates our commitment to start new congregations locally and around the world.
- Our church has a specific plan to reproduce other churches.
- We are implementing our plan to multiply new congregations.

My top priorities for development:

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It is my prayer that these guidelines are able to work for you as you seek to fulfill the Great Commission that Jesus gave to us.

An Article on the Power of Networks: by Pastor Steve Graham

The theme for this year’s retreat is: “Relationships... help the pieces of the puzzle come together”. I wonder what you think when you read that? I suspect that for many of us we think that it is saying that if we take the time to connect with other leaders then the pieces of the puzzle of our ministry or of our church will begin to come together. I want to suggest that there is a much deeper way to understand that sentence: that as we connect we realise we are one part of “the puzzle”, that “the puzzle” is not my ministry or my church but “the puzzle” is actually the network of churches...and things begin to make sense because I find a place to fit within a network of churches.

I want to show this from three aspects of the letters of Paul in the New Testament. I want to look at the little bits that we often skim but when we look at them together, we get a picture of how the early church functioned. A picture that is incredibly energizing and will blow our minds about how strongly they thought in terms of a network of churches and how radically they lived that out in practical ways. Firstly I want to look at the little bits at the beginning of the letters, where we meet Paul and his co-writers; secondly I want to look at the little bits normally at the end where Paul greets individuals and we meet Paul and his co-workers. As I said, normally we skip over these introductions and endings to get to the theology in the middle of the letters but taken together, they have quite an impact and give us a picture of the life of the early church. Finally I want to show how New Testament scholars view the early church and summarize this picture that emerges.

The “big idea” is that the early church was highly networked. The question then is firstly, what does this say about how we think about our ministries and our churches and being part of a network of churches and secondly what practical steps do we need to take to see the VCI Network of churches develop and move forward into new dimensions - to use the current buzzword, how do we take this

Following is an excellent Biblical explanation on the value of networks. Presented by Steve Graham at the 2011 VCI Retreat, New Zealand.
Paul and his Co-Writers.
We often talk about Paul and his letters. We see Paul as a great apostle and know he wrote thirteen letters. However consider the following.

1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes
2 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother
Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus
Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother
1 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silas and Timothy
2 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silas and Timothy
Philemon 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother

Yes Paul wrote 13 letters. However seven of those thirteen - more than half - have co-writers. If you then consider that three of the other letters, the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), involve Paul writing directly to a co-worker, then that leaves only three letters where Paul writes to a church by himself: Romans, Galatians and Ephesians. Then I think it is possible to see reasons why each of these were actually the exceptions to his normal practice of co-authors e.g. Romans was written to introduce Paul to the church in Rome in preparation for his visit and to state his understanding of the gospel. Galatians is a specific defense of Paul’s apostleship and Ephesians is something of a generic circular letter.

I believe Paul was deliberately modeling something by this co-authoring of letters. Paul presented ministry not as the great individual but as a team. This is very countercultural for us Westerners who have been raised on the model of the great heroic individual leader, the John Wayne kind of figure who does not need anyone and boldly leads as a loner. This was theologically important for Paul. We have a Trinitarian foundation to our faith. The trinity says ultimate reality is relational, it is community. Paul modeled this in ministry and he took the trouble to model it in his letters. Ministry was done in relationship and in partnership with others, in a network of ministries.

Imagine a letter to the churches of Vision Network that comes from Nick, Trevor and Sheridyn. That communicates something in itself and has another dimension of authority and breadth.

Secondly let’s look at the little bits normally at the ends of the letters where Paul often greets people and mentions them by name, often his co-workers. Estimates vary, but scholars identify between 81 and 95 co-workers of Paul in the New Testament depending on how “co-worker” is defined. If we just stick to individuals who Paul names in his letters there are 36 (see the Dictionary of Paul and His Letters). These are names we may have heard of – people like Andronicus, Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla, Barnabas, Epaphroditus, Junia, Luke, Mark, Onesimus, Silas, Timothy and Titus.

Let’s look at some of these little bits at the end of the letters.

Romans:
Look at Romans 16. Paul is writing to a church he has never visited. He greets 28 individuals, 26 by name (and a mother and a sister of someone named). That is incredible! I have been to Eastside Church a number of times and I could not greet 26 people there by name! And this is in a time and culture without fast and cheap airfares,
without Skype, email, conferences at hotels etc. How did he know 26
people there? Part of this refers to the third section below, the highly
networked society of that time and the even more highly networked
church. Some of these people were business people who had
travelled back and forth between other Christian centers (Corinth
and Ephesus) and Rome. However many are co-workers who Paul
has worked with in other places and are now in Rome or workers
that he has heard about in Rome.

vs.1. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in
Cenchrea. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the
saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been
a great help to many people, including me.

Phoebe was one of the leaders in the church in Corinth – perhaps in
Rome on business but probably tasked with carrying the letter.

vs. 3. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. 4
They risked their lives for me. Not only I, but all the churches of the
Gentiles are grateful to them.

Paul had met this couple in Corinth, later taken them to Ephesus and
now they are working in Rome.

vs. 5. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ
in the province of Asia.

A person converted in Turkey now living in Rome, but still connected.
It is unclear whether he moved there for business or ministry.

vs. 6. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. 7 Greet Andronicus
and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are
outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was...
9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend
Stachys...
12Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the
Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard
in the Lord.

Note the references to people who Paul knows are working hard in
the work of God.

13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a
mother to me, too.
14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the
brothers with them.
15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all
the saints with them.

As Paul finishes his greetings he includes greetings from other
Christians in Corinth to these people in Rome.

21 Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius,
Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.
22 I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.
23 Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you
his greetings.
Erastus, who is the city’s director of public works, and our brother
Quartus send you their greetings.

This is an extraordinary sense of connection and intentional fostering
of relationship between churches and among co-workers in the
network of churches. They were one family.

1 Corinthians:

16:10 If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is
with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. 11 No
one, then, should refuse to accept him...

Paul is aware of coworkers moving between churches and wants to
facilitate this process.

**17** I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you.

So this church had sent a team to Paul.

Vs **19** Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

Here are the couple who were in Corinth and now are involved in ministry in another city because they had accompanied Paul in his move there (Acts 18:18).

**Ephesians:**

6:21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. **22** I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

This is the first of five references to Paul intentionally and strategically sending one person from one church to visit another church. Paul as apostle says “I am sending him to you”. This is about the grace on Paul’s life to bless churches through sending other ministries he knows will benefit them and meet needs they have.

**Philippians:**

The references to others are spread throughout Philippians rather than concentrated at the end. **2:19** I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

Here is a second reference to Paul sending someone.

2:25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, **26** for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. **27** Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. **28** I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. **29** So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, **30** for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Here is a second example of someone who had been sent by a church to support Paul.

4:17 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only: **16** for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. **17** Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. **18** I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Here a church sent people to support Paul’s apostolic ministry – people and money.

4:21 Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. **22** All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.

Here although Paul does not name co-workers he shows how he seeks to establish links through greetings.
Colossians:

4:7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

In vs 8 Paul for a third time speaks of sending someone – “I am sending him to you”- and the church is to receive him as someone sent by Paul. He also sent back with him someone, Onesimus, who had come from that church.

4:10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Again here is an example of someone from that church who is now based with Paul in another church but still praying for the first church. The final statement about “working hard for you” suggests he had been sent from that church to help Paul.

4:14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. Tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord.”

Paul fosters interconnections between churches and sees himself as ministering to a network where letters are exchanged. He also knows the church well enough to have a prophetic word of encouragement for a member there that he knows by name and he obviously knows something of that person’s life and ministry.

1 Thessalonians:

3:2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.

Here is a fourth reference to Paul sending someone to be a blessing to a church he knew.

2 Timothy:

4:19 Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers.

Here Paul requests that Timothy come to him to assist him. Paul has in his thinking a range of coworkers in various locations.

Titus:

3: 12 As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need.
Here is a fifth instance of Paul sending someone – this time moving ministries around strategically – Paul repositions ministries around the churches.

We see a picture of a lot of movement back and forwards between churches. In terms of reflecting on implications, the thing that strikes me is that this was not purely relational and collegial, but Paul exercised a strategic intentional role. He built interconnections between churches and ministries but he also strategically sent people to different locations to help the churches there and churches sent people to assist what Paul was doing.

**New Testament Scholars and a Picture of the Early Church:**

In 1998 a book was published *The Gospel for all Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* edited by Richard Bauckham. It deals with a fairly technical academic issue in New Testament studies about the Gospels and countering the idea that the Gospels were written to address the specific issues of one community. The authors seek to show that the Gospels were actually intended to be circulated to a wider network of churches. What is interesting and relevant on a more general level is the picture they show of the early church as highly networked.

In the introduction Richard Bauckham states: “Of great importance is the extensive evidence that the early Christian movement was not ... a scattering of relatively isolated, introverted communities, but a network of communities in constant, close communication with each other” (2). *Imagine saying that of the Vision network of churches:* “The Vision network is not a scattering of relatively isolated, introverted communities, but a network of communities in constant, close communication with each other”. Constant... and close.... communication. This network thing is far stronger, far more powerful and far more organic than we have realised.

Bauckham then goes on to say “ all the evidence we have for early Christian leaders... shows them to have been typically people who travelled widely and worked in more than one community at different times” (3). Leaders served a network of churches, not just developed their own ministry in one church.

Summarising the communities and the leaders he says “both had a strong, lively and informed sense of participation in a worldwide movement” (3)

They saw themselves not just as part of a local church but as part of a dynamic network of churches all around the Mediterranean. They knew people in other churches, they regularly travelled back and forward between churches, they invested in the development of other churches and people were repositioned around the network for the strategic development of the network.

Bauckham goes on to explain this in terms of the Roman Empire. “The first thing this information tells us is that mobility and communication in first century Roman world were exceptionally high. Unprecedentedly good roads and unprecedentedly safe travel by both land and sea made the Mediterranean world of this time more closely interconnected than any large area of the ancient world had ever been. People travelled on business as merchants, traders and bankers, on pilgrimage to religious festivals, in search of health and healing at the healing shrines and spas, to consult the oracles which flourished in this period, to attend the pan-Hellenic games and the various lesser versions of these all over the empire, as soldiers in the legions, as government personnel of many kinds and even on vacation and as sightseers... It was certainly not only the wealthy who travelled. Quite ordinary people travelled to healing shrines, religious festivals and games.... therefore people quite typical of the members of the early Christian churches regularly travelled.” (32)

Never again has the world been as similar to this as it is again today. We also live in a globally connected world but this time our
sense of connection and our capability for connection is massively increased through technology – 24/7 lives news coverage, skype, email, cellphones, cheap travel, hotels, conferences, multinational companies, international sport, tourism etc etc.

However Bauckham notes another factor for Christians: “But in addition to Christian participation in the ordinary mobility of society, much communication was deliberately fostered between the churches” (32)

There was another dimension of intentional networking above and beyond the everyday movements of a mobile society. Bauckham lists references to early leaders moving around: Polycarp bishop of Smyrna visited Rome, Syria. Abercius bishop of Hierapolis (in Turkey) travelled west to Rome, and east to Syria. Bauckham says “other prominent second century teachers seem almost as a rule, to have taught for a time in more than one major Christian centre” (37)
His summary is: “It seems that leaders who moved from church to church, to a greater or lesser extent, are a constant feature of the early Christian movement in the first century and a half of its existence.” (37)

One author Michael Thompson has a chapter in the book called “The Holy Internet: Communication between Churches in the First Christian Generation”. He uses the picture of the internet to describe how the early church functioned. He first considers the paths of communication: “In the ancient world the closest thing to an information superhighway was the grid of Roman roads and clear shipping lanes that made travel far safer and easier than it had ever been before”(50). He points out that though there was no public postal service the Empire depended on a regular secure system of communication that included staging posts and rest stops when towns were separated by more than one day’s journey.

Secondly he then considers the “archives of information”: “The network ‘servers’ of the holy internet were the churches” (53) and he notes the importance of “hubs”: Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome. These functioned as hubs for the surrounding areas. Paul seems to have focused on establishing new hubs of the network which then networked into the surrounding areas (Now there’s a thought of strategic importance!).

Thirdly he considers the access to the internet. Staying with the internet metaphor, he says communication depended on the “protocol software of hospitality” (55). There is extensive writing in the early church on expectations of hospitality towards travelling Christians and specifically travelling ministry. Comments like in the early Christian writing, the Didache, that visitors were to be freely extended hospitality for two to three days but after that they needed to move on or work and if they asked for an offering they were certainly to be rejected as false prophets! I realise the pendulum has swung to “honouring” visiting ministry and people being worth their labour and churches being stretched to have faith but maybe we need to also rediscover another simpler model of travelling ministries being hosted in homes and ministry as service to the network of churches. Finally Thompson has some interesting analysis of the speed of this “internet”. Remember travel was generally by walking or ship: Jerusalem to Antioch took 8-10 days; on to Ephesus another 14-30 days by sea or 35 days over land. Ephesus to Corinth 6-10 days; Corinth to Rome 10-25 days. From Rome directly back to Jerusalem by sea 16-28 days. In our days of email, cell phones and cheap flights it is mindboggling and an enormous challenge to us that they managed to be so highly networked with these kinds of obstacles and challenges.

How can we be less highly networked than they were? They obviously put a high value on being part of a network of churches. They understood it was about a dynamic network churches.

**Implications:**
What strikes me about this picture? Three points stand out.

Firstly they viewed themselves as part of one network of churches. People knew each other, people regularly travelled back and forth between churches and ministries regularly moved around the network. The focus was on the health and development of the whole network, actually the value and blessing and joy of being part of the whole network.

Secondly there is a sense of intentional networking and even more so, strategic networking, directed by the apostolic leadership i.e. Paul would send a worker to another church because he believed this was significant for the development and health of the receiving church.

Thirdly churches sent people and resources to partner with and support Paul in the initiatives he was undertaking. I suspect they saw him in his apostolic ministry as something of the spearhead or cutting edge of the development of the network. Combining the last two, apostolic leadership was welcomed, received and invested in through sending support (people and money) to what Paul as an apostle was investing in and he in turn deployed people for the development of the network.

Now just to earth all this, without seeking to either copy or react, we can be provoked by the example of Equippers. There is an Equippers church in Christchurch and I notice that every few weeks there seems to be a speaker from another Equippers’ church. After pastoring a small church I must confess I wonder how they do it. When our church was small we had a budget for visiting ministry of maybe $600 per year which meant maybe one out of town visit and a couple of local visits. Even as a medium size church the budget was maybe $1200 which, with the culture of increased payments did not really go much further! One question is how do we make networking viable particularly for smaller churches?

I thought of two practical steps.

Firstly while I can be intentional in developing my connections I understand that there is a dimension to the network of Nick knowing the needs of various churches and making strategic decisions to send ministries to churches. Bearing in mind the financial constraints of some smaller churches I thought one thing I could do would be to say to Nick, “I cannot afford to give a lot of money to the network but I can give my time... so I would like to give two Sundays/weekends per year to you that you could send me wherever you want and there would be no expectation of payment or offering – they can give me a box of chocolates or a cheese board if they want! This would be seen as the network investing in the church and for me this would be part of my service to the network”. If a number of us did something like that, that would empower the network and empower Nick to be strategic in developing the network.

Secondly I thought there could be someone who God has blessed with resources and who has prospered and they might like to create a fund initially of say $5000 per year that allowed Nick to say “We need to invest in Whangarei this year, so Trevor I want to send you there in April and Michael I want to send you there in August and we will cover your airfares”.

These two steps, of people offering time to invest in churches based on an expectation of hospitality and without expecting extra payment and then others offering money to create a fund to cover travel would enable some strategic intentional “sending” above and beyond the collegial or peer relational connections and invitations that continue to develop.

It all starts though when we see that the puzzle is the network and my ministry is one piece of the jigsaw puzzle of a network and even more when we begin to feel how liberating, empowering, safe and exciting it would feel to find where my ministry fits within the network.
Nick and Karen were married in 1978 in New Zealand. They have been leading Churches since 1983 and they have three married sons and 3 grandchildren. In 2008 they handed over their church and moved into an overseeing (apostolic) role to the Vision Churches Network. From 2010 - 2013 they based themselves in Europe to sow the dream of planting churches that plant churches.

“I am more convinced than ever that we need to begin new networks or movements if we are indeed serious about reaching Western Europe for Christ. The dream is to plant churches that plant churches like a virus...an infectious godly virus!”

Nick & Karen
www.visionchurches.com
www.booksbynick.com

Inside:
- The power of starting new churches.
- Why new networks...movements and their strategic importance?
- What is Church?
- How to effectively start new churches
- Article: The power & purpose of networks

Vision Churches International began in July 2007, Hamilton NZ. It is:
“A Relational Network of Pastors, Leaders and Churches Partnering Together For Harvest”. 