

## Why Plant Churches?



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Aren't there enough churches already? Why support church planting when so many existing churches need help?" These and similar questions require answers.

Church planting and encouraging church growth in existing churches are not in competition. That's why Rural Ministries exists.

### Jesus intended churches to be planted

Matthew 16: 18 records Jesus saying to Peter that Jesus will build his church and that it will survive and prosper. Facing the challenge of increasingly militant secularism, where many have little idea of who Jesus Christ is, we must rely on the promises of the Lord. He is committed to seeing churches established and growing.

### The Great Commission requires churches to be planted

As disciples are made in all nations they are to be baptised and taught (Matthew 28:19). Baptism was a sign of belonging to a new community, where people would learn obedience to Christ. The spread of the Christian faith required new disciples to be made and incorporated into a growing number of churches.

### Acts illustrates a church planting movement

In Luke's second book, Acts, he tells of the continuing work of Jesus through his church. Acts provides a geographical outline of the spread of Christianity:

- Commencing in Jerusalem (Acts 1:1-8:3)
- Spreading to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:4-12:25)
- Advancing to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:1-28:31)
- The work continues and we are those involved in Acts 28 and beyond.

Paul's missionary journeys were church planting ventures into predominantly pagan cultures. He was an innovator, unwilling to maintain the status quo and had to deal with considerable opposition from those with established religious mindsets. Paul identified key cities that would not keep the good news of Christ to themselves, but would go on and impact whole regions.

There is a pattern identifiable in Acts consisting of four crucial elements of church growth:



The final stage of expansion involves not only a growth in numbers in one place but spreading into new areas to establish churches. When anyone of the four elements is not in place, church growth slows and new churches are not established.

### **New churches are usually more effective in reaching people**

With the passage of time, established churches tend to spend more time, energy and resources on existing members rather than on the un-churched. New churches cannot afford to do so and keep evangelism as a priority.

### **New churches tend to provide greater leadership development opportunities**

Many, who never become leaders in established churches, where length of tenure and maintaining the status quo are often important values, find their gifts develop in new churches.

### **New churches are more prepared to cross cultural divides**

Church plants can and must seek new ways of being church. The necessities of prayer, faith and sacrificial living come sharply into focus as they seek to reach people where they are.

### **New churches are potentially a blessing to established churches**

Church plants can be a catalyst for renewal, promoting healthy motivation for established churches. They are "research and development centres" for the wider church.

### **New churches are required to meet the challenges**

With twice as many churches closing than opening each year, we need hundreds of new churches to reach the un-reached people in the UK. Many of these people live in the countryside. The people we seek to meet in the name of Jesus deserve that we do not take church planting too lightly. Have you ever considered the possibilities? To those who step out in faith, the Lord promises to go ahead of you, with you and behind you, in the challenging adventure of church planting.

*Declan Flanagan, Rural Ministries October 2009.*