

Church Pioneering Suggestions From A Three Time Pioneer

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Dear Present or Future Church Planter:

Below are some pointers that I hope will be a blessing to you.

I WANT YOU TO SUCCEED IN PLANTING YOUR NEW CHURCH! I certainly don't claim to be a subject matter expert, but I hope you can at least glean from some of the pointers. God is madly in love with his local churches and He wants them to flourish!

I have found that there are thousands of struggling little church plants that never really get off the ground and eventually close their doors. I'm sure that some fizzle out because the church was started from a church split or perhaps the pastor wasn't really called to be a pastor. Or perhaps some goats took over the leadership. But often it is the practical areas of leadership and management and people skills that cause a church to remain stunted in its growth. Some of the best preachers in the world pastor tiny little churches. Some of these preachers are the most dynamic communicators I've ever heard yet their churches can't seem to get off the ground numerically or in community influence.

So here are some suggestions for you to prayerfully consider:

1. As quickly as possible after an initial church plant in a city, relocate your family to the city where your new church is. In my latest church plant, we doubled in attendance the precise week my family moved there. People need to know you're there for the long haul. This is both a spiritual phenomenon and a natural one.
2. Always give visitors some kind of information packet about the church so that they have a point of reference that helps to remove the wall of unfamiliarity.
3. Mingle with the people as much as possible before and after the service. People want a pastor, not a pulpiteer. Evangelists and well-known conference speakers may be "swooshed away" immediately after they speak at a large gathering. But PASTORING is different. A shepherd MINGLES among the sheep.
4. Have the physical appearance of the meeting facility as attractive and cleanly and orderly as reasonably possible.
5. Buy quality church chairs with professional grade cushioning IMMEDIATELY. Comfort MATTERS to American Christians. This is one of the smartest things I ever did. Besides the fact that the Designer I or Designer II from ChurchChair.Com are only a few more dollars per chair than you would get bulk from an office store for folding chairs that only have "gesture padding", they are 10 times the quality, beauty, durability, and comfort.
6. Have a person that is a professional interior decorator help you choose colors for the sanctuary or at least an amateur decorator at a reputable paint and decorating store.
7. Build great financial credit and credit limits BEFORE starting the church. This will be needed even if you decide not to go into debt for anything. You will still need the flexibility to move money around FAST!
8. Give all newcomers some kind of redemptive quality gift for coming. Not that you are using the gift as a bribe, but you are wanting to demonstrate that you are a giving church and that you wish to give them something that is memorable and has a redemptive value for their future. Posters, Mugs, Cassette tapes, music tapes, lapel pins, scripture magnets, etc. are great ideas. Even if they don't ever return to your church, you have

placed something in their hands that may eternally impact them. And even if they may never return, they will remember you because of your hospitality and give their own friends a good report about your church and possibly send them your way.

9. Spend quality time giving the children of the church attention with hugs, etc., first because you genuinely care about them and recognize that they are worth as much as the adults, only in a smaller body. And secondly, to set an example of loving parental affection for the adults.

10. Lace your messages with plenty of humor and when the Spirit moves don't be afraid to shed your tears before the people as well as God.

11. It seems people respond better to a stand alone building than a storefront ajointed to other businesses.

12. Have an IRS 501c3 approved covering, either your own, or networked with another. This gives a professional permanent image and makes people feel that the church is valid and accountable as it should be.

13. Constantly exhort people about their giving and tithing without fear. Train the people in this area consistently. Not only teach them what to do but also what to EXPECT in return for their financial obedience.

14. Great looking BIZ cards are important.

15. A quality (can still be economical) sign is important, done by a professional sign company, NEVER done by yourself or an amateur.

16. A professional modern cutting-edge logo. The investment of \$500 to \$1500 for this is well worth the money. First impressions are everything. If people are turned off or neutral about the first exposure to anything about the church, naturally they will never consider it further.

17. Follow up with every visitor with a personal phone call within two days of their visit. Follow up with a personal HANDWRITTEN note to visitors on professional looking church stationery within two days as well.

18. Be alert to the Spirit of God concerning newcomers to use whatever gifts God has given you on their behalf. When a visitor comes and they receive ministry from you through the gifts of the Spirit, BEFORE they get to know you and their needs are met, they know God has ministered to them and they usually want to come back for more. If your gift is healing, the Spirit may reach out to them with healing. If your dominant gift is prophecy, the Spirit may wish to reach out to them with personal prophecy. If your dominant gift is teaching, the Spirit may wish to reach out to them with a study guide you hand out during the service. Etc., etc.

19. The quality and anointing of the music must be high from the very beginning. The worst thing you can do is wait months before you get a good keyboardist, worship leader and drummer. You may have to pay for quality musicians, even if it is a small amount, especially in the Bible Belt of America where it has become tradition to do so. I cannot overemphasize the importance of at least one skilled vocalist with songleading ability, one quality drummer that can play "in the pocket" or "in the groove" (doesn't make the music sound like it is pushing and pulling), one skilled bass guitarist, and one skilled keyboardist. A church that can attract at least this rythm section as stated above VERY QUICKLY has a distinct advantage over one who doesn't or can't. As much as possible you should try to recruit "by-ear musicians" who only need some chord sheets and who do NOT need staff music sheets to play. The Bible says that the singers and musicians went out FIRST before the tribes and troops. Praise & Worship ushers in God's Presence and sets the course and atmosphere of the rest of the service.

20. Provide nursery from the very beginning if possible. Make nursery the priority, then add childrens church, and youth ministry later if you can't have them all from the beginning.

21. Uphold the authority and importance of all the rest of the pastors in the community. Lead the church in praying for other pastors and churches in the community from time to time.
22. Make sure the stage area where people have their eyes focused most the time is pleasing to the sight and tastefully decorated.
23. Determine who the lay patriarchs and matriarchs are quickly (those male and female laymen who seem to have the most influence over the others). Spend quality time with those key people and let them participate in your decisions and internalize your vision. Then THEY, not you, will effortlessly influence the whole congregation to get behind you.
24. People support what they help create. Don't hesitate to ask for volunteers to do certain things and don't hesitate to give them a suspense date. People like to feel they are important and crucial to what is happening.
25. Watch carefully how you talk to your wife and children in public. People are watching and listening carefully.
26. Whenever you set a poor example before one of your members concerning anything about your behaviour, humble yourself and ask their forgiveness.
27. Have a quality graphics-intensive website up and running BEFORE you even start the church. This speaks for itself!
28. Make sure your main web address (domain name) is not some complicated name with slashes between directories in the URL address. People should be able to go to a concise easy-to-remember website address like www.LifeChurchTulahoma.Com or www.life-church.net. This is worth the miniscule investment of time and money. Having your own domain name portrays the air of permanence, quality and excellence.
29. Don't be too "charismaniac." Be willing to visit people in their homes from time to time like a Baptist pastor would!
30. Dress neatly. Keep yourself groomed precisely. Smell good in your breath and your body. Don't underestimate the power and image of a fresh haircut. Throw away old clothing even if it is your favorite! Keep your wife and children dressed sharply. Keep your shoes shined.
31. Smile, smile, smile, laugh, laugh, laugh!
32. Eye contact, eye contact, eye contact!
33. Compliment, compliment, compliment! Encourage, encourage, encourage!
34. In your sermons, "love on" individual people out in the congregation by calling out their names from time to time during and in context with your message.
35. Memorize, memorize, memorize... names, names, names!
36. Become a THANK YOU PERSON. Say thank you often. Express your gratitude to individuals who help you in any way. People LONG TO KNOW that their presence, their participation, and their help is SINCERELY APPRECIATED. So say "thank you" all the time, in every way... in person with eye contact and emotion, by e-mail, even in your messages, by letter, by telephone! "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Can't make it without you! Couldn't have done it without you!" People gravitate towards anyone who appreciates

them and their help. People will lay down their lives for the leader who knows on which side his bread is buttered. People are repelled by a leader who is self-centered, unthankful, and prideful. "Thank you" is a sure sign of at least some measure of humility in a leader! The leader who fails to express his gratitude is at least rude, and at worst, full of pride!

37. Broadcast Email Lists: Get a website that has the feature of broadcasting email to multiple lists. (Faithsite.com has this feature.) Have a Church Family list of email addresses. Church Visitors list. Church Friends list. Personal Friend list. Etc. In this manner you can broadcast a weekly email devotional to all lists. You can inform all your local lists of upcoming speaker events. When you have great reports to share with the church family, you can also email it to the Church Visitor list and some of those people who visited but never returned may read the good report and visit again. Broadcast email lists are also a speedy way to say thanks to the whole membership after they have just successfully participated in some special project, ministry, or special offering. As far as guest speakers and upcoming events go, repetitive emails right up till the time of the event are the key.

38. NEVER BECOME INTERNALLY DOWN on your people. GIVE THEM TIME! Keep sharing your vision with them. Keep believing in them. They will eventually step up to the table if they feel you believe in them.

39. When it comes to church financial needs, like the famous preacher of old, Charles Finney, suggested, "PRAY TO GOD AND SHARE THE NEED WITH THE PEOPLE."

40. Answer emails PROMPTLY! Very important! Answer phone messages promptly!

41. Give credit to where credit is due... often... publicly.

42. Make people feel like they are important team players... because they really are!

43. Develop good telephone skills. A warm voice. Enthusiastic inflection and intonation. Feedback that is empathetic but also points people to the Word and prayer. Close most phone conversations with a BRIEF word of prayer. Not only does God hear prayer and respond appropriately, but the one being prayed for is better able to feel God's love and release their own faith in agreement with you if they hear the words you are praying aloud. When Paul wrote letters to churches, he always recited to them the words that he had been praying for them. This enabled the prayees' faith to connect with the prayer's faith!

44. Being a pastor in a community, BE SURE that you tip waiters and waitresses VERY GRACIOUSLY! Minimum accepted standard for very nice restaurants is 20%. Steakhouses and Buffets - 15%. Consider doing your business cards with a witness section on the reverse side with a space to write a note as well. Then leave waiters and waitresses a big tip with a thank you note and they will often read the witness section.

45. Tell your congregation often who your own pastor is and occasionally invite your own pastor to speak in your pulpit. Also tell your people often whose books you are reading and what other ministries are enriching you personally. Let them feel part of a bigger picture, a larger network of leaders, and that you yourself are submitting to the influence of other leaders as well.

46. As a church pioneer you must desire the multi-facted responsibilities of praying, projecting the vision, exuding an aura of excitement, feeding the flock, leading the congregation where it needs to go, organizing responsibilities in the church, weighing cost trade-offs, fundraising projects, correcting troublemakers, mediating conflicts that may arise from time to time, exhorting the people in their tithing and giving, and many more responsibilities. Is this is not your cup of tea, you should NOT be senior pastor nor should you attempt to start a church from the ground-up.

47. You MUST have a strong YELLOW PAGES presence, at least in the Real Yellow Pages and preferably in

both the directories used in your community. The number one way people find a church is by word of mouth. But the number two way people find a church is in the yellow pages. You **MUST** be willing to **PAY** for a reasonably expensive yellow page ad in your phone book. **MUST, MUST, MUST!** Think of it in this way... How many tithing families would it take to automatically offset the monthly expense for the ad? Have an ad designed that is attractive and preferably colorful. Your add must be more than just a yellow page listing, but a true ad. Also list your church under **EVERY CATEGORY** that your type of church could be considered, like "Charismatic, Full Gospel, Interdenominational, Evangelical, Non-Denominational, Spirit-Filled." Make sure your web address is also included in your ad. Hav the ad contain a picture of people and possibly even of you and your wife or family. Make sure a map to your location is included in the add. **THIS AD WILL BE THE FIRST IMPRESSION THAT PEOPLE HAVE OF YOUR CHURCH. THIS AD MUST STAND OUT AS MORE PROFESSIONAL THAN THE OTHERS.**