

PARTNERING WELL



***HELPFUL HABITS FOR PLANTERS
& SENDING CHURCHES***



SEND Network

PARTNERING WELL

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INTRODUCTION

Partnership is a key to success in church planting. Effective plants have Sending Churches that partner with them in meaningful ways. In turn, church plants seek to partner with their Sending and Supporting Churches to enhance their church health and missionary effectiveness. In this e-book, we will consider some of the most vital aspects of this partnership, starting with the partnering role of the Sending Church and concluding with the partnership from the church plant. Our prayer is that this tool will aid the collaborative efforts of church plants and Sending Churches to saturate North America with the gospel.

CHAPTER 1

PRAY

DANNIE WILLIAMS

Without a doubt, planting a church without prayer is like building a house on bare ground without pouring a concrete footer. If a partnering church family prays, they communicate a clear statement. Calling on God as the source of every need in the life of a church plant indicates that we are convinced the planter is inadequate, and, without supernatural enabling, he will not succeed.

Partnering churches should devote time every week to pray for planters. Presently, our church is involved financially and engaged as much as possible, with 23 church plants. We receive regular updates and prayer concerns from our planters. We read or hand out these prayer concerns to our people and pray specifically for these needs. Normally, these planters have visited our church and preached in a Sunday morning service, sharing their vision, their calling, their difficulties and opportunities related to their ministry. Having this kind of personal connection with the planters endears us to the planter and motivates our hearts to pray.

It is very common for our members to connect by Facebook, email or phone with our planters and their wives. We are also regularly taking teams to assist the planters with evangelism and outreach in their cities. This enhances our prayer strategy. It moves our focus from simply a mission project to a focus on the people who lead in the project and those impacted by the project. Almost weekly, someone in our congregation will ask me to mention a specific prayer concern related to a planter. I wish I had been disciplined enough to record the answers to these prayers. The answered prayers tell the story of how God came through in what seemed to be impossible situations. We commonly call these God stories.

Another way we pray for planters is related to people in the evangelistic pipeline of the plant. This includes people in all stages of discipleship. Some may be atheist, agnostics, Muslims, pantheists, animists or hedonists who need Jesus. When a Sending Church hears of these individuals, they should become the prayer focus of the Sending Church who is praying for them by name. In doing so, we share together in the gospel. One cannot read the book of Acts, or any other book in the New Testament for that matter, without finding prayers related to the lost and those making disciples.

Nothing in life can be more difficult than planting a church. Without the enabling of God, a planter will be overwhelmed. We have had planters lose their facilities in short-order and supporters cut their support without warning. Others have discovered that a child, spouse, or even themselves are facing physical challenges that ensure extreme difficulty for the planter. In times like these, prayer is so essential and Sending and Supporting Churches are vital. Just this

past year a planter who we support found out his son has leukemia and a prayer vigil was launched in their behalf immediately.

I consider it my role as the pastor to make sure our people are aware of the matters which are paramount to the planters and their plants. I try to put myself in the place of the planter and his congregation. I consider that, if I were him, I would need the prayers of whoever would pray for me and my work. I would especially need it from those who send and support me.

For me not to lead this charge would be like an Army General leading his men out to battle with all the arms necessary for war but neglecting to provide the bullets with which to shoot. A gun without a bullet is like a Christian soldier without prayer support. If we truly want church planting to succeed we need the enabling of God, and our God said that if we would call on Him, He would answer us and show us great and mighty things. If we are going to send, let us pray!

CHAPTER 2

PROVIDE

MIKE LAUGHRUN

Jesus gave the Great Commission to the Church. The Church is God's chosen method to spread the gospel and make disciples. We believe everything related to missions comes through the local church, as local churches partner with other organizations and other churches in gospel ministry. So while we work with some great partners to plant churches —such as the North American Mission Board—we also realize it is the local church who raises up, sends out and provides for church planters (see Acts 13:1-4).

A key element of sending from Acts 13 is the affirming of the local church. Church planters need this affirmation not only in a spiritual sense but also in practical ways. In a practical sense, the planter needs to know their Sending Church will care for them and their family. The Sending Church must come alongside church planters and help provide for them. This is non-negotiable as a Sending Church.

Here are seven ways to provide for church planters:

1. PARTNER WITH THEM FINANCIALLY FOR AT LEAST FIVE YEARS.

Sending requires sacrifice. Support them generously. It's that simple. Know that you are in this for the long haul because it takes two to three years for most church plants to begin to see gospel fruit. The planter needs to know you are with him through the early stages and challenges he and his family will face. Reorient your budget toward more direct Great Commission work.

2. HELP BRIDGE THE GAP DURING THE TRANSITION YEAR.

Most planters need transition time to move from their Sending Church to their Send City. Some planters go through a residency or internship as part of their development. The Sending Church can cover their moving expenses and other tangible needs such as health insurance.

3. LEVERAGE YOUR NETWORK TO BRING IN OTHER PARTNER CHURCHES.

Most planters work hard at raising support and recruiting other partner churches. Help him out by doing some of the “asking” for him. This shows him you are committed to planting and willing to challenge other churches to partner financially. Bring other pastors on visions trips to their city and let them hear from the planter.

4. PRACTICE MISSIONARY CARE FOR THEM.

Consider having a team in your church that is responsible to care for those who have been sent. This team should plan to visit the plant-

ers regularly during the first five years with no agenda other than to serve and care for them.

5. ENCOURAGE SMALL GROUPS TO BE INVOLVED.

Whether your church has Sunday school classes or off-campus small groups, develop a structure for them to adopt church planter families. They can send letters of encouragement and gift cards for birthdays and anniversaries, or even take a group trip to visit them.

6. SEND PEOPLE WITH THEM.

We believe that healthy planters need healthy teams because church planting should not be done in isolation. Be willing to let go of some of your best people, including some of your staff and key ministry leaders. Encourage college students to go after they graduate. Challenge families to relocate their jobs to the Send City. Ask retirees to use their retirement years to go serve with a church plant.

7. PRAY FOR THEM.

Church planting is spiritual warfare. Pray regularly as a staff for your planter. Pray for their marriage, their families and their church.

CHAPTER 3

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

SHANE CRITSER

Group projects were the bane of my existence in college. I don't doubt the idea was a good one—while we learned the concepts taught by an assignment, we also learned to work together. One day, we would need to know how to respect time, argue well, compromise, lead others and follow. But, I dreaded these projects nonetheless. Time management, divvying up tasks and good execution were laborious to begin with, but now my grade depended on how well we did these things together—and that one of my partners wouldn't drop the ball.

The truth is, partnering well is just hard. To partner well, everyone must give their best and be willing to compromise. To partner well, some must be willing and able to lead, while others must follow with humility and tenacity. To partner well, everyone involved must sense a common purpose and be willing to do whatever it takes to meet that goal.

Sending Churches partner well by taking responsibility for a church plant until it is self-sustaining, self-governing and self-propagating. Taking responsibility implies more than just finding a church planter and throwing money at him. No doubt, church plants need multiple partners that pray for them, provide financial support and send volunteers. But, every plant also needs a primary partner—a Sending Church—who takes primary responsibility for the plant. This Sending Church partners well by growing a burden for reaching the lost in a particular community and catching a vision for how God might transform people there for His purposes.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE PLANT

We must be clear, partnering well means taking responsibility primarily for the plant, not the planter. If something were to happen to the planter, the Sending Church would remain burdened for the people and committed to the success of the church plant. With or without that planter, the burden remains. The lost in this community still need a local expression of the body of Christ. Though it may start as a burden to the planter alone, the burden is now rooted so deeply in the heart of the Sending Church that they will do whatever it takes to plant a church in that community.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE VISION OF THE PLANT

Partnering well, however, means more than just sharing a burden for the lost. Great sending partners also share a compelling vision for

what God might do among these people and in this place. Again, the planter may be the energy that brings the Sending Church to understand and own this vision, but the conviction supersedes the planter himself. Sending Churches come to own the vision themselves.

Sending church pastor Brian Bloye once said, “Every church planter needs to know there is a church and pastor who has his back.” What an encouragement it is to church planters to know his Sending Church is fully committed to his vision with him. He is not fighting the battle alone. He has an army of Christian brothers and sisters praying for him, walking with him, looking for ways to support him and committed to this kingdom work regardless of what might come.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HEALTH OF THE PLANT

A shared burden and vision helps all other responsibilities fall into their proper place. The church planter will rightly tend to his walk with Jesus, his marriage and family and his tirelessly work to make disciples who make disciples. The Sending Church will come alongside him in these endeavors. Because they are burdened and committed to the vision, they will understand the importance of a healthy planter. They will encourage him, ensure he is well trained and coached and support him in whatever way necessary to help him succeed.

In the end, both partners are ultimately concerned about the long-term health and success of the church plant. If they are to reach these people and see this community transformed by the gospel,

both partners must ensure the church has a healthy leadership structure, reliable financial procedures, adequate funding, etc. Yes, the Sending Church is concerned with the health of the planter, and she is also concerned with the long-term health of the plant. Together, the planter and Sending Church partner well for the health of the plant because of a shared burden and vision for planting this church.

Sure, working in partnership with others is difficult. I know my experience in college is not all that unique. But when we are willing to do the hard work of partnering well, taking responsibility for a common burden and vision, the results are so much better than we could have accomplished alone. Because of God's design, only the church of Jesus Christ—a unique partnership of every kind of people—can produce the beautiful result of a new church plant.

CHAPTER 4

HELP

TIM WOLFE

Partnering is the most amazing thing in the world. It's amazing that God partners with us! So what a great privilege a church planter has to partner with a church and its volunteers. In fact, a church plant needs partners. They need partners to pray, participate and provide in order for our cities, counties, states, our world to hear the gospel.

So what does it mean to partner well with churches? Or how do you partner well with churches? Here are some suggestions.

PRAY

Pray that God would send you the best partners. We are told in Luke 10:2, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Ask God to not only send you partners, but partners that will catch the God-given vision to reach the beautiful people in his neighborhood, city, county and state. Pray so you are ready when God provides the partners and pray you are ready to mobilize the resources.

PREPARE

Get your partners on the mission field. Whether this is in your neighborhood, take them to the streets. Spend some time with these partners and leaders and allow God to use you as they learn the heartbeat of the area. You want them to see, smell and touch that the people in that area matter to God so they can partner with you to reach them. Invest in your partners before they invest into you. Clarify the expectations of this potential partnership, both yours and theirs. During your on-sight visit, talk about and explore the following:

- Housing options
- Food
- The itinerary of the weekend or week
- Plan B's
- The pace of the schedule
- Communicate expectations (yours and theirs)
- Share suggestions on “what’s next”
- Share with your partners about future plans beyond the out-reach event or mission team trip

GO ALL OUT

Be ready to invest into your partners 24/7 when they come to serve shoulder-to-shoulder with you. Please do not look at your partners as a group to be used but as amazing brothers and sisters in Christ who are investing in church planting. Be involved with the partners, be visible, serve shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Listen to them. Don't just share vision with them at the beginning of the week and

then thank them when they leave. See it as an opportunity to serve your partner volunteers as they are serving you. In most cases they will bring youth and college students who learn what God has done in your heart and realign their dreams based on experiencing God.

SAY THANK YOU

While the volunteers are with you, take every opportunity to be gracious and vocally thank them. Follow up with the key leaders and partners with thankfulness of what God did during the project. Send pictures of the volunteers in action. Send a personal video from you thanking the volunteers or bragging on them. Let them know that your church is now ready to take the next steps because of what they were able to accomplish. Ask them to be in prayer for those “next steps.”

Serving with volunteers is really about stewardship. Most church planters want access to as many resources as possible. Church planters, please be thankful that, many times, the best resource God will send you are volunteers. Please be found faithful with these amazing resources. “Much will be required of everyone who has been given much” (Luke 12:48).

CHAPTER 5

CONNECT

JOSEPH VELARDE

I want to introduce you to a church planter that is known for planting 20 churches. These churches had children that had children. This made him a great-grandfather in church planting terms. I think we can say this was one successful church planter who knew the power of multiplication. How did he do this? The answer is found in the word partnership.

He was able to secure partnerships in a variety of ways. As I studied his methods they have been instrumental in my personal church planting journey. Over the last eight years as a church planter, I have seen first hand the value and necessity of partnerships and how we create them.

It starts by understanding that partnership is about collaboration and working together. It says this isn't just about *me* but it's about *we*. We actually care for one another. This is how God has designed His kingdom to advance and how multiplication happens.

In order to do this, you must pray that God would show you what He is asking you to do and to show you people, churches and other organizations you could invite in.

I can't communicate how imperative it is to stay close to your Heavenly Father and get His heart for your plant, so you can share what He has laid on your heart with others. It's during this time that conviction and vision is given.

When we began laying the groundwork of Riverbend in 2008, we started right when the recession happened. Everyone was pulling resources back, understandably so. I got a lot of "we would love to help, but right now we are just barely keeping up with payroll." During that time, God showed me a way I could ask people to join us that was practical and specific, as well as a way to cultivate buy-in on a smaller scale, through a campaign called "Sponsor a Sunday."

At the time, our church met in a hotel ballroom. The focus of the campaign was to raise funds to cover the cost of rent and operating expenses for one Sunday. So rather than sharing monthly or yearly financial needs with potential partners, we were able to provide the "Sponsor a Sunday" option for a smaller, specific amount. Within two months of sharing this campaign with others, God provided partners and we had every Sunday covered for the whole first year. As you work through your partnership process, keep these five steps in mind:

STEP 1: PRAY

Ask God to show you what to ask for, how to formulate a plan around it and who to contact.

STEP 2: PLAN

As you pray, write down what God shows you and put it in an easy-to-read, one-page document you can email. This should include

your specific vision, what God has been doing and how the recipient can specifically help. Keep it simple.

STEP 3: INVEST AND INVITE

Make a list of every person you could contact and ask others to introduce you to key people. Nobody is off limits and don't limit yourself to only churches or Christian organizations. Consider inviting local businesses to partner with you or friends and family who are already invested and believe in you.

Build the relationship by scheduling a meeting and/or phone call. This may need to first start by sending an email conveying what God has shown you. One week later, follow up with a phone call. Don't just to ask for resources but share what God is doing. Take a genuine interest in the people you're reaching out to. You want to build the relationship. One of ways you can do this is by sending photos, videos and email updates.

Ask if they would like be part of what God is doing in your church plant through prayer and becoming a ministry partner through monthly giving. Don't leave any conversation without asking this question. Pray for boldness and don't let the fear of rejection get in your way. The worst thing they can say is no!

STEP 4: FOLLOW UP

Once a month, make contact with everyone you have invited to become a partner. This includes those who say no. This should be a time where you share with them how God has worked over the past month. Look for ways you could help them see how they're helping

to push darkness back. Don't leave them guessing about how you're doing, but be proactive with your communication. After all, they partnered with you and your church. This signifies your gratitude for them.

STEP 5: BE A GOOD PARTNER

It's easy when trying to create partnerships, to get so focused on trying to get others to partner with you to help carry out the vision God has entrusted you with. However, it's essential to be a good partner and look for ways you can serve others during this time. Take time to ask those partnering with you about their world—how God is working and how you can pray for them. Practice gratitude—send a handwritten card, an encouraging text. Be the kind of partner you would like to have.

By the way, the church planter I mentioned at the beginning was the Apostle Paul. Study how he planted and you will conclude he didn't do it alone. His success was given as he partnered with God and others. The same is true for us.

As for Riverbend, we've had the privilege starting three churches here in the Lehigh Valley and we are working with planters to start two more in the future. We couldn't do it without partnerships. This is how movements of multiplication begin.

CHAPTER 6

THANK

TANNER TURLEY

Our new church is in a healthy place by the grace of God and the investment of many individuals, churches and organizations. To put it another way, apart from generous kingdom partnerships, we would not be where we are. Period. We are not smart enough. We are not savvy enough. We are not strategic enough. We desire to be all of that, but it takes more than that. One of the best ways to cultivate and strengthen kingdom partnerships is through extending gratitude. Here are a few suggestions for doing so:

COMMUNICATE FREQUENTLY

One simple way to express thanks is through regular updates to partners. It seems obvious, but every update provides an opportunity to extend gratitude for their partnership, anytime you communicate.

BE SPECIFIC

Tell them why they matter to you personally. Tell them how that one email came at just the right moment when you were at a low point.

Tell them how the Bibles they sent helped lead a new friend to faith in Jesus and another new believer learn to read the Bible for themselves for the first time. Tell them how their financial gifts enabled you to reach 400 people at your last community outreach.

BE TIMELY

Anyone ever sent a thank you note or thank you video, twelve months late? I would never do that, but I'm sure you would, so stop it! Yes, church planter, we all know you're busy, but probably no busier than most of your congregation or the pastor at your partnering church. Get other people to assist you with the logistics necessary, but let's (yes, I admit it, me too) get it done.

BE PERSONAL

You could send a newsletter via MailChimp, but a personal email would be better. You can send an email, but why not a phone call? You make a call, but what about FaceTime or Skype? You can schedule a FaceTime, but how about face-to-face? This is more meaningful and more biblical. Think Jesus. Yes, the incarnation. And He clearly rubbed off on His closest followers. With much fewer communication tools in the first century, the Apostle John penned this, *"Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face."* Why John? *"... so that our joy may be complete."* Drop the mic.

SHOW UP, AND SERVE THEM

At Redemption Hill, we believe true partnership is just that, a partnership. Partnerships involve partners. That's more than one party,

it's a two-way street. Find a way to go serve them. If you're not invited back, ask to come back and share a word of gratitude on a Sunday. And don't worry. God is big enough to keep your church intact for one week.

DO A GREAT JOB

People have prayed hundreds of prayers for you and your church. People have given thousands of dollars to you and your church. Churches have sent dozens of people to serve you and your church. Do your best to honor their investment by how you serve. When we persevere in sharing the news of Jesus with a neighbor, organize another excellent community outreach, preach another sermon to the best of our ability and train another volunteer, not only are we honoring Jesus, we are also honoring those who partner with us in gospel work.

Why not spend five to ten minutes today to communicate a specific, timely and personal word of gratitude to one of your partners? Set a reminder, or do it right now. It will lift them up, strengthen your relationship, serve the mission, clear your conscience, and most importantly, reflect the heart of Jesus.

CHAPTER 7

SERVE

CHRIS CAUSEY

I almost didn't plant, and the reason was money. It's embarrassing but true. I vividly remember touring a major urban city and the sinking feeling in my stomach as I listened to the prices for apartments and the potential cost to plant a church in an urban context. I remember thinking there is no way this can be done—it will simply cost too much. To add insult to injury, I heard from pastors who said they were done with church planting because they felt burned by church planters who just wanted their money. I started noticing there was a perception by existing churches that planters saw partnerships as one-way, transactional relationships. While this perception could be a real barrier for us, our team was committed to overcome it.

In the New Testament letters, we see glimpses of partnerships that were transformational rather than transactional (Philippians 1:4, 4:16; 2 Corinthians 11:8,9). We decided if we were going to step out in faith to plant a church, we were going to develop these kinds of transformational partnerships.

Over the last two years, we have been on a journey to create partnerships that impact both communities well. We have found transformational partnerships are two-way streets flowing with information, inspiration and invitation. Our team has been successful on this journey because of an invaluable team member named Jason Hodges. His passion and leadership have paved the way for the transformational partnerships we are experiencing.

INFORMATION

We stopped thinking in reports and began thinking in relationships. We regularly communicate with our partners through monthly newsletters, phone calls, hand written notes and recorded videos of the stats, stories and struggles present in our lives. In our age of information overload, we have to go beyond the inbox if we are going to communicate effectively. This means we are very intentional about producing high-quality videos, so the leaders in our partnering churches can share what we are seeing here on ground with their congregations. We are not just partnering with a church leader but with the church, so we want to make sure we produce material that is aimed for all—not just the leadership. Finally, Jason regularly makes phone calls to ask our partner churches this one question: How can we invest in and serve you? We have found this attitude sets us up to create dynamic transformational partnerships.

INSPIRATION

Jesus taught that the heart follows the treasure. This is true for institutions as well as individuals. When we ask a church to invest their

time and money in a church plant, we are taking on a holy responsibility of stewarding their heart for the gospel. While the partnering churches are asking stewardship questions around their money and time, we ask stewardship questions around how we are inspiring passion for the gospel mission.

I believe church planting is the kingdom of God's research and development lab (see Acts 15). We have the privilege of pioneering and testing missionary practices for the shifting culture we are all living in. The discoveries we make through our successes and failures need to flow back to our partners. We have found our successes and failures to be a source of inspiration to our partnering churches.

INVITATION

Last year, under Jason's leadership, we saw over 400 people come and serve our community. We love mission teams. We want every person who has ever been a part of fueling God's work here to come and physically walk around. We determined that a mission trip's success isn't just what occurs in our community but what happens in theirs as a result of being in ours. That means we proactively create mission experiences around our community and church's needs with an eye toward how this can benefit our partners as they head home.

Here are some of our best practices to serving your partners:

1. **Proactive planning:** Everyone wins when we are looking ahead to plan the "whens" of mission teams.
2. **Detailed preparation:** While many say, "The devil is in the details," we think it is in fact God who is in the details. We honor Him and our partners by providing clarity.

- 3. Intentional over-communication:** We seek to answer their questions before they even ask them.

Remember church planting is a multiplying kingdom investment that every existing church can make. We as planters have the responsibility to foster that transformational potential by exchanging information, inspiration and invitation.