

Simple Churches – An Overview

(articles compiled by David Allis)

Organic Church Planting - Ancient Principles for a Postmodern World

Paul Kaak and Neil Cole

Word on the street is that people out there are fed up with organized religion. Rather, they are longing for a genuine connection with "the supernatural" and with a community of friends.

The typical answer provided by the church falls short among most people in our postmodern culture. The church says, "OK...come to our religious building. We'll give you a religious program and you'll get to hear a religious person talk in religious language about religious topics. After it's all over, you can go home."

"No thanks," comes back the beleaguered response, "I'd rather stay home..."

In light of this, maybe we ought to think about taking church to the people instead of bringing people to the church. Maybe we ought to think about planting churches where people live and then cooperate with God as he brings about the growth.

The organic church is an attempt to do just that. It's based in the belief that living things grow naturally. It's based in the conviction that "kingdom" things are organic things -- they start small and eventually reproduce. Organic church planters don't think about planting a church. They think more like the Apostle Paul - about churching a region. While churches following organic principles often meet in homes, they are not - by definition - about a building, whether the building has a steeple on the roof...or a chimney.

Organic church planters see it as good news that the fields are white for harvest! So, rather than starting "in the barn" they get to work where lost people are. They sow the gospel seed in the soil of the surrounding community. And, just like an organic farmer with a variety of crops, they may start a number of churches at once. In fact, when organic church planting is happening, things can be expected to multiply at every level: from disciples to leaders; from churches to movements.

Leading an organic church planting project is not for everyone. It is for those more interested in empowering others than being employed. It is for those willing to give up their pulpit in order to prepare indigenous leaders. It is for people who are willing to take disciples to where lost people are instead of organizing an event that attracts lost people to come to them. It is for leaders who will listen to God, find out what he's doing and join him vs. making plans and asking God to bless those plans. It is for leaders who will lovingly look after a cluster of churches instead of pastoring a single congregation.

On the other hand, planting an organic church can be for everyone. As the body of Christ is activated and released into the harvest, the simplicity and freedom found in letting Jesus build his church is one of life's greatest thrills! It builds trust, deepens compassion, normalizes evangelism, enlivens prayer, and results in a powerful integration of life and faith. When ordinary believers participate on an organic church planting team, the potential for a fruitful ministry skyrockets.

The organic church is as old as the early church meeting from house to house. But for many of us it's a new thing. These days we are seeing global shifts of massive proportions and it has become very appropriate to get back to our roots as believers. Missionaries and martyrs have shown us the way in China and India, for example. But it can happen, it should happen, here in North America - and beyond - for the glory of God and the gladness of all peoples!

How simple can church be?

by Sheryl Montgomery Wingerd

http://www.dawnministries.org/regions/nam/simplechurch/archive/articles/apr2003/how_simple.html

There's a new phenomenon sprouting up all over America today. It goes by different names: house church, open church, organic church. A favorite term of many is "simple church." After all, that's what it is: Church, or the fellowship of believers, in its simplest form. It could be summed up by the words of Jesus: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

The significance of these simple gatherings of believers goes way beyond just being a new way to "do church." Many believe that these miniature expressions of the body of Christ have the potential to revitalize and rapidly expand the Church of Jesus Christ in America.

This is what Mike Steele of Dawn Ministries has come to believe over the last few years. "My mandate as a coordinator for Dawn Ministries," he says, "was to find a way that I believed God would see a multiplication and a re-igniting of the Church in North America. While there are many models today - a traditional model, a cell church model and many variations on the theme - none of them are multiplying rapidly. There is some addition growth and slow growth, but it's not even keeping up with the number of churches being closed.

"I was praying for something that would speak to this vast multiplication, the saturation of this country, for something that would reverse the trend of the decline of the Church in North America."

What Steele found was a growing number of Christians, many who had been leaders in the traditional-style church, who had turned to starting simple churches of ten to 15 people meeting in homes. It was happening all over the country.

There's a reason why these churches are beginning to multiply exponentially. It's because these small, family-like gatherings are so easy to start. In fact, almost any believer, after hearing what it takes to start and lead a simple church would respond by saying, "I could do that!"

Neil Cole, in *Cultivating a Life for God*, says "Simplicity is the key to the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this generation.... The more complex the process, the greater the giftedness needed to keep it going."

But do these churches, in their simplicity, sacrifice quality? John White, who started a network of house churches in Littleton, Colorado says that, on the contrary, "the small, participatory, family-like environment of a simple church is ideally suited to the goal of helping people become passionate disciples of Jesus Christ."

Although there are many variations, Steele has identified three strands to the simple church DNA that are valued by these emerging networks: 1) the Word of God - listening to God through prayer and reading the Scriptures, following him and obeying his commands, 2) relationship - community; caring for each other on a daily basis, and 3) mission - extending that love and care to neighbors and others in their *oikos*, or sphere of influence.

Small in size, the simple church contains in kernel form the necessary ingredients of the body of Christ. Like sprouts, packed with the nutrition that will cause a tiny seedling to become a full-sized plant. The power-packed life of a simple church has the tendency to multiply into other simple churches.

Neil Cole, who started doing organic church planting four years ago, has seen it happen. "That first year there were 10 churches started. The second year there were 18, the third year there were 52, and this year we're already up to 95. It is increasing quite rapidly, more so than we ever dreamed possible."

Figuring out how to respond to this new movement in the U.S. isn't always easy. Dan Mayhew of Portland, Oregon, says that, "the emerging house church networks are nudging our complacency and challenging our presuppositions."

And then Mayhew adds, "this is good. God is on the move and He is taking his church with him

Ten Years in a House Church

by Jim Mellon <http://www.house2house.tv/issues/issue7/tenyearsinahousechurch.shtml>

From mega church to home church -- find out how and why this couple made the switch.

Ten years ago, I asked the Lord a question: "What is the church?" I asked the question partly because of a stirring in my spirit, but also because of the fact that I was part of the leadership of a thousand plus member church with a million dollar a year budget. Although our church and Christian school generated a million a year in income, money was tight. When we didn't have the money to help a member family through a rough time at Christmas (the husband out of work) I said to myself, "There is something wrong with this picture!" Hence the question!

I read the New Testament again, especially the book of Acts, with new eyes. I read scriptures such as these:

- *Acts 4:34a* – "There were no needy persons among them."
- *Romans 16:5* – "Greet also the church that meets at their house" (Priscilla and Aquilla).
- *Philemon 2b* – "To the church that meets in your home" (Philemon).
- *2 Thessalonians 3:7-9* – "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this not because we do not have a right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow."
- *1 Corinthians 9:18* – "What then is my reward? Just this, that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge and so not make use of my rights in preaching it."
- *Acts 10:33-34* – "I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. For you yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions."

Reading these and many other verses led us to resign our leadership position and embark on a journey called "house church."

Instead of "going to church," we started to "be the church" that meets in a home. As time went on, we realized that a house church movement was appearing on a national level. This seemed to us to be confirmation that God is doing something with this model of church on a larger scale. In America, this modern day model of house church is only in its first generation.

"Instead of 'going to church,' we started to 'be the church' that meets in a home."

A short time later, we started networking with house churches in different parts of Texas. We read books like "Open Church" by Jim Rutz and "Where Do We Go From Here" by Ralph Neighbor. I went to a house church conference in California. On my flight home, we were flying across the desert and the Lord spoke to me. He said the pioneers had to travel across the desert and over the mountains to discover and settle beautiful California. He said, "That's how it will be with the pioneers of the modern house church movement." It will be exciting, but a tough trip: exhilarating, but sometimes confusing. Sometimes we may get lost on our journey, but we will get there.

Ten years later, we still travel the road. We have a network of home churches in central Texas. Because we use 80% of our income for benevolence and missions, we support 10 local ministries and have planted 220 churches in India. Not bad for a small band of about 100 pioneers! The book of Acts ends with the apostle Paul preaching and teaching in his own rented house (Acts 28:30-31). Could we now be picking up where the book ended 2000 years ago?

Jim and Cathy Mellon founded the Association of Home Churches in Killeen, Texas in 1992. Jim is a businessman and on the editorial board of H2H magazine. Cathy is the director of a local crisis pregnancy center. They can be reached at (254) 690-5856 or by e-mail at jimmellon46@hotmail.com

The dramatic lack of attention given to leadership in the NT

Frank viola http://www.house2house.tv/issues/issue4/lack_of_attention-issue4.shtml

The NT makes a lot of noise about exemplary action. But it shows no interest in official positions and gives little attention to leadership—including the role of elders.

Consider this. Every time Paul wrote to a church in crisis, he always addressed the church itself rather than its leaders. This is consistent from Paul's first letter to his last. (Note that the "Pastoral Epistles"—1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus—were written to Paul's apostolic co-workers, not to churches.)

Let me repeat that. Every time Paul wrote a letter to a church, he addressed the whole church. He never wrote it to a leader or leaders!

- Galatians 1:1-2: Paul, an apostle . . . to the churches in Galatia.
- 1 Thessalonians 1:1: Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians . . .
- 2 Thessalonians 1:2: Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 1:1-2: Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God . . . to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours.
- 2 Corinthians 1:1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia.
- Romans 1:1,7: Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God . . . to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.
- Colossians 1:1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse.
- Ephesians 1:1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.
- Philippians 1:1: Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and servants.

More striking, every church that Paul wrote to was in a crisis (excepting the Ephesians). Yet Paul never appeals to the elders in any of them!

Take, for instance, Corinth, the most troubled church mentioned in the NT. Throughout the entire Corinthian correspondence, Paul never appeals to the elders. He never chastises them. He never commends obedience to them. In fact, he does not even mention them!

Instead, Paul appeals to the whole church. He shows that it is her responsibility to deal with her own (the church's) self-inflicted wounds. Paul charges and implores "the brethren" over thirty times in 1 Corinthians. He writes as if no officers exist. This is true for all of his other letters to churches in crisis.

If church officers did exist in Corinth, surely Paul would have addressed them to solve its woes. But he never does. At the end of the book, Paul tells the Corinthians to subject themselves to the self-giving Stephanas and his household. But he widens this group to others saying, "and to everyone who does likewise."

Notice that Paul's stress is on function, not on position. His stress is also placed upon the whole church. For the entire book of Corinthians is a plea to the entire assembly to handle its own problems.

Probably the most acute example of the absence of officers/elders in Corinth is found in 1 Corinthians 5.

There Paul summons the whole church to discipline a fallen member by handing him over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:1ff.). Paul's exhortation clearly runs against the grain of current thinking. In today's thinking, only those possessing "ecclesiastical clout" are regarded as qualified for such weighty tasks.

The difference in the way Paul thinks of elders and the way that most modern churches think of them could hardly be more striking. Paul does not utter a whisper about elders in any of his nine letters to the churches! This includes his ultra-corrective treatise to the Galatians. Instead, Paul persistently entreats "the brethren" to action.

In his last letter to a church, Paul finally mentions the overseers in his opening greeting. But he does so in a very fleeting way. And he greets the overseers only after he greets the whole church (Phil. 1:1).

His letter opens with: "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons" (NASB). This is a rather strange order if Paul held to the notion of church officers. Following this greeting, Paul talks to the church about its present problems.

This trend is highlighted in the book of Hebrews. Throughout the entire epistle the writer addresses the entire church. Only at the very end of the letter does he off-handedly ask the saints to greet their overseers (Hebrews 13:24).

In sum, the deafening lack of attention that Paul gives to elders demonstrates that he rejected the idea that certain people in the church possessed formal rights over others. It also underscores the fact that Paul did not believe in church officers.

Peter's letters make similar music. Like Paul, Peter writes his letters to the churches, and never to its leaders. He also gives minimal airtime to elders. When he does, he warns them against adopting the spirit of the Gentiles. He makes the specific point that the elders are among the flock, not lords over it (1 Peter 5:1-2).

The elders, says Peter, are not to "lord it over" (katakuriuo) the flock (1 Pet. 5:3). Interestingly, Peter uses the same word that Jesus used in His discussion on authority. His exact words were: "... the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over (katakuriuo) them . . . but it shall not be so among you" (Matt. 20:25).

This same emphasis is found in Acts. There Luke tells the story of how Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders to "be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers..." (Acts 20:28, NASB). Notice that the elders are "among" and not "over" the flock.

James, John, and Jude write in the same strain. They address their letters to the churches and not to leadership. They all have very little to say about leadership. And they have nothing to say about official eldership.

It is quite clear, then. The NT consistently rejects the notion of ecclesiastical officers in the church. It also greatly downplays the role of elders.

Eldership vs. Brotherhood

It would do us well to ask why the NT gives so little airtime to the elders of the churches. The oft-ignored reason is surprising to institutional ears. It is simply this: The bulk of responsibility for pastoral care, teaching, and ministry in the ekklesia rests squarely upon the shoulders of all the brothers and sisters! The richness of Paul's vision of the Body of Christ stems from his continual emphasis that every member is gifted, has ministry, and is a "responsible believer" in the Body (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:1ff; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). As a consequence, ministerial responsibility is never to be closeted among a few. This explains why the word adelphoi, translated "brethren," appears 346 times in the NT. It appears 134 times in Paul's epistles alone. In most places, this word is Paul's shorthand way of referring to all the believers in the church—both men and women. By contrast, the word "elders" only appears five times in Paul's letters. "Overseers" only appears four times. And "pastors" only appears once!

The stress of the NT, then, is upon corporate responsibility. It is the believing community that is called to carry out pastoral functions. The brothers and the sisters (=the whole church) are called to:

- **Organize their own affairs** (1 Cor 11:33-34; 14:39-40; 16:2-3)
- **Discipline fallen members** (1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 6:1-6)
- **Warn the unruly** (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- **Comfort the feeble** (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- **Support the weak** (1 Thessalonians 5:21)
- **Abound in the work of the Lord** (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- **Admonish one another** (Romans 15:14)
- **Teach one another** (Colossians 3:16)
- **Prophecy one by one** (1 Corinthians 14:31)
- **Serve one another** (Galatians 5:13)
- **Bear one another's burdens** (Galatians 6:2)
- **Care for one another** (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- **Love one another** (Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9)
- **Be devoted to one another** (Romans 12:10)
- **Show kindness and compassion to one another** (Eph 4:32)
- **Edify one another** (Romans 14:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:11b)
- **Bear with one another** (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
- **Exhort one another** (Hebrews 3:13, 10:25)
- **Incite one another to love and good works** (Hebrews 10:24)
- **Encourage one another** (1 Thessalonians 5:11a)
- **Pray for one another** (James 5:16)
- **Offer hospitality to one another** (1 Peter 4:9)
- **Fellowship with one another** (1 John 1:7);
- **Confess sins to one another** (James 5:16).

With dramatic clarity, all of these "one-another" exhortations give substance to the decisive reality that every member of the church is to bear the responsibility for pastoral care. Leadership is a corporate affair, not a

solo one. It is to be shouldered by the entire Body.

Stated simply, the NT knows nothing of an elder-ruled, elder-governed, or elder-directed church! And it knows even less about a pastor-led church! The first century church was in the hands of the brotherhood and the sisterhood. Plain and simple.

In summary, the testimony of the NT denouncing positional/hierarchical authority is unmistakably clear. And it is in direct harmony with the teaching of Jesus. As such, the final word to the Christian regarding Gentile and Jewish leadership structures is incarnated in our Lord's piercing phrase: "But it shall not be so among you" (Matt. 20:26). That is the linchpin of the whole matter!

Excerpted from *Who Is Your Covering?*

By Frank Viola www.ptmin.org

The Servant As Leader

by John White

Leadership in the context of house church offers both a challenge and an opportunity.

The challenge is that many of us who are leading house churches have learned our leadership skills in the traditional church. We have developed a way of leading, a leadership style that is generally seen as necessary for work within organizations (like traditional churches). Endless decisions must be made...attendance must be maintained (or increased!)...programs must be run...budgets must be met. (Perhaps only those who have served on a church or para-church staff, on the "inside", can fully appreciate the pressure that the organizational leader feels.)

Working within the organizational church seems to require "strong" leadership. There is a concern for being sensitive to people along the way, but the bottom line is that there is a bottom line! There are objectives to be accomplished, and time is of the essence! People must be motivated and "moved" from point A to point B. This is the required leadership style for "church as organization," and the challenge is that we may bring it with us into "church as organism", into the house church.

The house church offers the opportunity to recapture the style of leadership modeled and taught by Jesus. There is no building to finance and no committee to which to report. We no longer have to "make it happen". We are genuinely free to learn to lead like Jesus led.

However, we must be aware that even in Jesus' day there was the temptation to copy the leadership style of the world. (Isn't that the way to "get things done"?). Jesus sees his disciples leaning that way and He decisively puts an end to that leaning. "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you! Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45)

Gayle Erwin, in his excellent book, *The Jesus Style* (Yahshua Publishing), made the following comments: "It amazes me how many of our church and religious systems break apart when analyzed in terms of this command, and yet we continue claiming our structure to be Biblical and authorized by God."

Power Pyramid Reversed - "The principle of being servant of all is devastating to chains of command and to systems where submission is upward. Many religious structures are carbon copies of giant corporation flow-charts (i.e., pyramid shaped). In the kingdom of God, the power pyramid is reversed, upended, so that the authority is on the bottom, not the top."

Submitting Downward - "When Jesus alluded to submission, it is always directed toward leaders, or the ones who want to be great in the kingdom, and they are always ordered to submit downward, not upward... Jesus put no pressure on the masses to submit to the leader, but instead put the pressure on leaders to be slaves of all."

"This downward submission of the greatest seems to be a natural outgrowth of the way Jesus viewed people. He served them because he knew their value. We lord it over others because we don't recognize their value and don't view them in the way Jesus does (We have often been trained to be more interested in reaching objectives than in loving people)."

What Is a Servant? - "The job of a servant is to do all he can to make life better for others - to free them to be everything they can be" (p. 50, *The Jesus Style*). Another way of saying this is that a servant is committed to making others successful.

Servant Leadership- "One who leads in the style of Jesus does not use forms of coercion, nor does he depend on institutional position for authority. Instead, by serving people, he leads as they recognize his ability and choose voluntarily to follow. And those who follow, by whatever means, will become like their leader for better or worse" (p. 59, *The Jesus Style*).

Examples of Servant Leadership

- A servant leader understands that it's about the other person - making them successful. Here are some examples:

1. A servant leader blesses others. This is the principle of catching people in your house church doing something right. Many people are using spiritual gifts without realizing it. The servant leader is always affirming people and their gifts - both in private and in public.

“Grandma Helen, you are better at delighting in Jesus than anyone I know. I want to be like you when I grow up!”

“Nan, the meals you prepare for the church are such an important ministry. I think Jesus takes great pleasure in your work in the kitchen!”

“Lenny, your vulnerability and transparency sets the tone for our whole group. You are a vital part of this church!”

2. A servant leader imparts vision to others. This is vision for what they can be and how God can use them.

“Greg, I can see your house church out in Byers being a powerful force for the kingdom of God in that area.”

“Donna, not only are you gifted in prophecy, but I believe the Lord could also use you to equip others to prophesy.”

“Elaine, here are some articles on women planting churches in India. See if you think that’s something you would be interested in learning how to do.”

3. A servant leader asks questions and listens well. Asking is often more important than telling. Thoughtful questions have the potential for powerfully impacting a person’s life (notice the many questions Jesus asked!). And attentive listening is one of the greatest expressions of love to another person.

“What is the Lord doing in your life? Have you had any ‘God sightings’ recently? What did you learn about leadership in our last house church meeting? What do you see God doing in our group? If you could change one thing about our group, what would it be? What are your personal goals for the next couple of months? Is there any way I can be of help to you with those goals? etc.”

John Eldredge, in his challenging new book, *Wild at Heart*, reminds us that to lead in this way requires that we recognize and put to death our natural tendency to derive a sense of value and power from positions of leadership.

“Jesus warns us against anything that gives a false sense of power. When you walk into a company dinner or a church function, He said, take a backseat. Choose the path of humility; don’t be a self-promoter, a glad-hander, a poser. Climb down the ladder; have the mail clerk over for dinner; treat your secretary like she’s more important than you. Look to be the servant of all. Where am I deriving my sense of strength and power? is a good question to ask yourself...often.”

So, let’s pray for our brothers and sisters who are in positions of leadership in the churches that are highly organizational, because the temptation to lead as the world leads is great in that context. But, at the same time, let’s recognize that the same temptation exists in the house church. May there be a million house churches across North America and may they be led by people who have adopted the Jesus style of leadership.

John White is part of the leadership team of a network of home churches in Denver, Colorado. He and his wife, Tamela, are frequent contributors to online discussions on home churches. They can be contacted at DenverWH@aol.com

House Church DNA

Felicity Dale

<http://www.house2house.tv/issues/issue7/housechurchdna.shtml>

Build on these principles and you will start dynamic house churches.

What then are the values on which house church Christianity is built? If we are to see a rapid multiplication of churches across this nation, what is the essential DNA that needs to permeate every cell of the body? Here are some of the core values that I believe should be a part of every house church's DNA:

1. Prayer

Psalms 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." There is a great need for intercessors to undergird and sustain this present move of God. I believe this move has been birthed in prayer (e.g. by the current prayer movement), but if it is not nurtured on our knees it could rapidly go off course or just fizzle into nothing. We cannot expect a move of God cheaply—let's be a people who will pay the price.

2. Following the Holy Spirit

Experiencing God, a Bible study produced by Henry Blackaby and Claude V. King, encourages us to look and see what God is doing and then join Him in it. We need to learn to recognize the hand of God at work. Let's expect God to do something big, worthy of a supernatural God! Why shouldn't there be a church (or several!) in every neighborhood, retirement home, school, office block, hospital and factory in our city?

3. Commitment to evangelism and growth

In this country, we in the house churches have a reputation, sadly well earned, of being insular and inward looking. We focus on certain aspects of the Christian life, emphasizing, for example, home schooling, or close fellowship while other things tend to get forgotten. We pay lip service to the great commission and pray half-heartedly for the conversion of our neighbors. Yet most of us have no meaningful relationships with non-Christians.

"Let's expect God to do something big, worthy of a supernatural God! Why shouldn't there be a church (or several!) in every neighborhood, retirement home, school, office block, hospital and factory in our city?"

After Stephen's death, Acts 8 tells us that a great persecution arose against the church and they were all scattered. Verse 4 states, "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word."

Without aggressive and purposeful evangelism, we are unlikely to see the magnitude of growth for which we long.

4. Intentional and strategic church planting

One of the things that David Garrison stresses in his book, "Church Planting Movements" (see his article on page 20) is that in all the church planting movements he investigated, churches planting churches was an actively planned strategy. Part of what each house church should be praying and planning around, right from its inception, is where it should be planting the next church.

5. Reproducible models

There are a number of things that prevent a church from being quickly reproduced. As house churches, we have already dealt with the primary financial hurdles, in that we use homes or other centers of life rather than special buildings, and we would not normally expect or need paid leadership.

However, we do have other more subtle hindrances. For example, how often do we delay starting a church or "multiplying" one that is getting too big because we have no one to teach or lead, or no musician available?

If we found a way of getting past these issues we could start churches more rapidly.

Here in Austin we are simplifying our meetings so that even young believers can take a lead. We are basing our times together on Acts 2 where "they met together for the apostles' teaching, for fellowship, for breaking of bread and prayers." We come together for a simple potluck meal. We share what is going on in our lives.

We read aloud a chapter of Scripture, stopping for discussion whenever anyone has a question or comment.

And we pray for one another.

If the meetings are brought down to their simpler elements, they can be facilitated by anyone, anywhere, and thus they can be rapidly reproduced.

The concepts in this article are expounded upon in a notebook manual that Felicity Dale has compiled as a guide to house church planting called ["Getting Started."](#)

Felicity Dale lives in Austin, Texas with her husband, Tony. They helped plant Austin Fellowship of Home Churches.

Church Planting Movements

From the book by David Garrison

<http://www.house2house.tv/issues/issue7/churchplantingmovements.shtml>

Churches planting churches -- this revolutionary idea is transforming communities all around the world! The International Mission Board gives us a report, and identifies some common elements.

From every corner of the globe the reports are coming in. Only a few at first, but now more and more frequently, reinforcing one another with their startling accounts of hundreds, thousands, even tens of thousands coming to faith in Christ, forming into churches and spreading their new-found faith.

Southeast Asia

When a strategy coordinator began his assignment in 1993, there were only three churches and 85 believers among a population of more than 7 million lost souls. Four years later there were more than 550 churches and nearly 55,000 believers.

India

One elderly man who came to Christ in a Church Planting Movement planted 42 churches in his first year as a believer.

North Africa

In his weekly Friday sermon, an Arab Muslim cleric complained that more than 10,000 Muslims living in the surrounding mountains had apostatized from Islam and become Christians.

City in China

Over a four-year period (1993-1997), more than 20,000 people came to faith in Christ, resulting in more than 500 new churches.

Western Europe

A missionary in Europe reports, "Last year (1998), my wife and I started 15 new church cell groups. As we left for a six-month stateside assignment last July, we wondered what we'd find when we returned. It's wild! We can verify at least 30 churches now, but I believe that it could be two or even three times that many."

Ethiopia

A missionary strategist commentated, "It took us 30 years to plant four churches in this country. We've started 65 cell churches in the last nine months."

Every region of the world now pulsates with some kind of Church Planting Movement.

A simple, concise definition of a Church Planting Movement is a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment.

There are several key components to this definition. The first is rapid. As a movement, a Church Planting Movement occurs with rapid increases in new church starts. Saturation church planting over decades and even centuries is good, but doesn't qualify as a Church Planting Movement.

Secondly, there is multiplicative increase. This means that the increase in churches is not simply incremental growth—adding a few churches every year or so. Instead, it compounds with two churches becoming four, four churches becoming eight to ten and so forth. Multiplicative increase is only possible when new churches are being started by the churches themselves—rather than by professional church planters or missionaries.

Finally, they are indigenous churches. This means they are generated from within rather than from without. This is not to say that the gospel is able to spring up intuitively within a people group. The gospel always enters a people group from the outside; this is the task of the missionary. However, in a church planting movement, the momentum quickly becomes indigenous, so that the initiative and drive of the movement comes from within the people group rather than from outsiders.

So why is a Church Planting Movement so special? Because it seems to hold forth the greatest potential for the largest number of lost individuals glorifying God by coming into new life in Christ and entering into communities of faith.

Ten Universal Elements

After surveying Church Planting Movements around the world, we found at least 10 elements present in every one of them. While it may be possible to have a Church Planting Movement without them, we have yet to see this occur. Any missionary intent on seeing a Church Planting Movement should consider these 10 elements.

1. Prayer

Prayer has been fundamental to every Church Planting Movement we have observed. However, it is the

vitality of prayer in the missionary's personal life that leads to its imitation in the life of the new church and its leaders. By revealing from the beginning the source of his power in prayer, the missionary effectively gives away the greatest resource he brings to the assignment.

2. Abundant gospel sowing

We have yet to see a Church Planting Movement emerge where evangelism is rare or absent. Every Church Planting Movement is accompanied by abundant sowing of the gospel. The law of the harvest applies well: "If you sow abundantly you will also reap abundantly." In Church Planting Movements, hundreds and even thousands of individuals are hearing the claims that Jesus Christ has on their lives. Wherever governments or societal forces have managed to intimidate and stifle Christian witness, Church Planting Movements have been effectively eliminated.

3. Intentional Church Planting

In every Church Planting Movement, someone implemented a strategy of deliberate church planting before the movement got under way. There are several instances in which all the contextual elements were in place, but the missionaries lacked either the skill or the vision to lead a Church Planting Movement. However, once this ingredient was added to the mix, the results were remarkable. Churches don't just happen.

4. Scriptural authority

Even among non-literate people groups, the Bible has been the guiding source for doctrine, church polity, and life itself. While Church Planting Movements have occurred among peoples without the Bible translated into their own language, the majority had the Bible (either orally or in written form) in their heart language. In every instance, Scripture provided the rudder for the church's life, and its authority was unquestioned.

5. Local leadership

Missionaries involved in Church Planting Movements often speak of the self-discipline required to mentor church planters rather than do the job of church planting themselves. Once a missionary has established his identity as the primary church planter or pastor, it's difficult for him ever to assume a back-seat profile again. This is not to say that missionaries have no role in church planting. On the contrary, local church planters receive their best training by watching how the missionary leads participative Bible studies with non-Christian seekers.

6. Lay leadership

Church Planting Movements are driven by lay leaders. These lay leaders are typically bi-vocational and come from the general profile of the people group being reached. In other words, if the people group is primarily illiterate, then the leadership shares this characteristic. If the people are primarily fishermen, so too are their lay leaders. As the movement unfolds, paid clergy often emerge. However, the majority—and growth edge of the movement—continue to be led by lay or bi-vocational leaders.

7. Cell or house churches

Church buildings do appear in Church Planting Movements. However, the vast majority of the churches continue to be small, reproducible cell churches of 10-30 members meeting in homes or storefronts. There is a distinction between cell churches and house churches. Cell churches are linked to one another in some type of structured network. Often this network is linked to a larger, single church identity. House churches may look the same as cell churches, but they generally are not organized under a single authority or hierarchy of authorities. As autonomous units, house churches may lack the unifying structure of cell churches, but they are typically more dynamic.

8. Churches planting churches

In most Church Planting Movements, the first churches were planted by missionaries or missionary-trained church planters. At some point, however, as the movements entered a multiplicative phase of reproduction, the churches themselves began planting new churches. In order for this to occur, church members have to believe that reproduction is natural and that no external aids are needed to start a new church. In Church Planting Movements, nothing deters the local believers from winning the lost and planting new cell churches themselves.

9. Rapid reproduction

Some have challenged the necessity of rapid reproduction for the life of the Church Planting Movement, but no one has questioned its evidence in every CPM. Most church planters involved in these movements contend that rapid reproduction is vital to the movement itself. They report that when reproduction rates slow down, the Church Planting Movement falters. Rapid reproduction communicates the urgency and importance of coming to faith in Christ. When rapid reproduction is taking place, you can be assured that the churches are unencumbered by nonessential elements and the laity are fully empowered to participate in this work of God.

10. Healthy churches

Church growth experts have written extensively in recent years about the marks of a church. Most agree that healthy churches should carry out the following five purposes: 1) worship, 2) evangelistic and missionary outreach, 3) education and discipleship, 4) ministry and 5) fellowship. In each of the Church Planting Movements we studied, these five core functions were evident.

Over the past five years, in as few as five Church Planting Movements, nearly a quarter of a million lost souls have come to faith in Jesus Christ. Imagine 50 Church Planting Movements—or 500!

The book “Church Planting Movements” can be ordered from the [International Mission Board website](#).

Starting Churches That Reproduce

From a Book being written on Organic Church Planting by Neil Cole & Paul Kaak
<http://www.house2house.tv/issues/issue7/startingchurchesthatreproduce.shtml>

Having trouble bringing people to church? Let's go and bring the church to the people!

Most churches today are trying to figure out how to get lost people to come to church. The key to starting churches that reproduce spontaneously is to bring the church to the lost people. We're not interested in starting a regional church, but rather in churching a whole region.

The house church, more than any other model, is best prepared to do just that because it is informal, relational, mobile, not financially encumbered with overhead costs, and is easily planted in a variety of settings. It also reproduces faster and spreads farther because it can be a decentralized approach to a region, nation or people group and is not dependent upon heavily trained clergy.

We have taken our cues on how to start churches from two almost identical sermons delivered by Jesus. One, when he taught the twelve apostles how to reach the lost (Matt. 10), and the other when He instructed the seventy (Luke 10). When Jesus decides to repeat Himself in more than one of the gospel accounts, perhaps we should pay close attention to what He is saying. Nowhere else does Jesus get more specific in delineating outreach principles.

“We have a saying that goes like this: ‘The church is conceived in heaven before it is born on earth. Pray first, pray last, and in between pray hard!’”

We have uncovered five principles to help us in starting churches that reproduce:

1. Practice of Prayer

In both sermons Jesus begins with the same familiar words, “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest.” We believe that church is a spiritual entity before it is a physical reality. We have a saying that goes like this: “The church is conceived in heaven before it is born on earth. Pray first, pray last, and in between pray hard!”

2. Pockets of People

Jesus instructs His disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but specifically to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He sends the disciples out in pairs to various cities and villages looking for a pocket of people, a community of lost people that are receptive to the message of peace.

When looking for a pocket of people, we have another saying, “Bad people make good soil.” Why is it that a majority of churches in America today are all trying to reach middle class suburbs? This has to be one of the most difficult and hardest soils to reach, yet all seem to try. We have come to see the poor as the heirs of the Kingdom of God (James 2:5). We find that it isn't those who are well who need a physician, but the sick. In our experience, coffeehouses have proven to be fertile soil for the gospel. Now, however, we have expanded our vision to other arenas as well. We have churches that reach out to 12-step recovery groups, neighborhood gangs, homosexuals, occult groups, high school, college and university campuses, the homeless, and local bars. Besides homes and apartments, we've had churches that meet in parks, beaches, storefronts, restaurants, faculty lounges, student unions, locker rooms and even church classrooms (aghast!).

3. Power of Presence

Jesus told the disciples as He sent them out that they had authority to do the works of God. They were to announce that the Kingdom of God has come near – whether they were received or not. Where we go, the King goes... and that is POWERFUL!

Jesus, in the Great Commission, said these words, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me...I am with you.” We must not forget this. The enemy is hoping that we will not realize this important truth, because he is vulnerable to us when we learn it.

Someone once asked Rob Ferris, my partner in the start of Awakening Chapels, what the secret is to our seeing so many people come to Christ. He answered, “Two words: Show up.” Non-Christians aren't fretting trying to figure out ways to get into church. Church is not something that they feel they need, want or are even curious about. Jesus said to the church, “Go.” To the lost He said, “Come to Me,” not “come to church.”

“All the resources needed for a great harvest are already found in the harvest itself, including finances, facilities and future leaders. All we need is to get out there and reap! There is much power in showing up.” Jesus also noted that the disciples were not to import resources into the harvest, but to find all the resources they needed in the harvest itself. His instructions were to bring no extra clothes, food or money to sustain the ministry. This is key.

All the resources needed for a great harvest are already found in the harvest itself, including finances, facilities and future leaders. All we need is to get out there and reap! There is much power in showing up.

4. Person of Peace

This fourth principle is one that we are indebted to our dear friend and mentor, Thom Wolf, for uncovering for us. This simple concept has led to many churches being born around the world. Jesus said to look for and even inquire about someone who would be receptive to our message of peace. When we find such a person we are to stay there and reach their entire household (oikos). We are to eat what they eat and stay where they stay. When a person of peace is discovered, the birth of a new church is assumed. When someone comes to Christ in a new pocket of people, we keep digging until we see the person of peace emerge and a new church born.

Three things characterize a person of peace:

- *Receptivity.*

They are open to the message of the person and the peace of Christ.

- *Relational connections.*

They know many people and are an important part of the community, for better or worse.

- *Reputation.*

They are people of reputation, whether it is a good reputation (like Cornelius or the Ethiopian eunuch) or bad reputation (like the Samaritan woman or the Gergesene demoniac).

The person of peace becomes the conduit for the passing of the message of the Kingdom to an entire community of lost people. This person's reputation gives credence to the message and becomes a magnet for a new church.

5. People of Purpose

When the moths are drawn to the light and the person of peace brings several to Christ... a church is born.

This is the formation of a people of purpose, born in the harvest, born for the harvest of the nations. Often, though not exclusively, the person of peace has the church meet in their home and may even be the new leader of the emerging church.

A church that starts this way is unique in that it is born out of the harvest, found among the harvest, and bent on a mission to continue to reach the lost. This missional element will be the important drive to reach out and reproduce spontaneously.

Neil Cole is executive Director for Church Multiplication Associates and also the founding leader of the Awakening Chapels. CMA has been a vibrant ministry for ten years now, and Awakening Chapels started in 1998. He is also the author of Cultivating a Life for God: Multiplying Disciples Through Life Transformation Groups and co-author of Raising Leaders for the Harvest (both available through [CMA Resources](#) and/or [ChurchSmart Resources](#))

Watch Out – A Tidal Wave is Coming

By Tony Dale <http://www.house2house.tv/issues/issue7/watchoutatidalwave.shtml>

This move of the Holy Spirit will not destroy or replace previous ones. It will add to the momentum, piling up to create a wave that lifts and carries the entire church body!

In the early 70's, Arthur Wallis, who became known as the father of the British house church movement, wrote a lengthy forward to a best-selling book about the Azusa Street revival called *Another Wave Rolls In*. In this forward, he explained how each successive wave of the Holy Spirit's work was like "another wave rolling in": slowly, but inexorably lifting the church to the place that it should be in the purposes of God. In 1999, Felicity and I were sharing at a conference for medical people in the UK. While seeking the Lord one morning over what things to share at the conference, we felt the Lord speaking to us in a clear way that we would find ourselves in the privileged position of again being a part of a powerful move of the Holy Spirit, somewhat like the British house church movement of the 60's and 70's. Little did we realize that just a couple of years later, the whole concept of "house churches" would again grip the western Christian world. House churches are no new phenomena. From the book of Acts, to the growth of the church in China over the past 50 years, house churches have been at the center of church growth in each succeeding generation. Whether to escape the persecution of communism, the close scrutiny of a Moslem dictatorship, or just to try to recapture the simplicity of church life that seems to be so lacking in most western churches, house churches are again making a comeback. We need to ask why the Holy Spirit is allowing this resurgence of an old idea in a new generation.

Church history is replete with examples of revival movements that capture a portion, a "wave" of God's truth. But in God's economy, wave after wave of His reviving power enables the church to actually become more than just the sum of its parts. Two plus two mathematically may equal four, but it is still true that while "one can put a thousand to flight, two can put ten thousand to flight" (Deut. 32:30)! The synergistic effect of each previous move of the Holy Spirit can enable those that follow to take giant leaps forward in the life and quality of the church, rather than just add in the benefit of the one "new doctrine" that has been recovered. When a "charismatic movement" impacts a local Episcopal or Presbyterian church, it does not just mean that some believers are now speaking in tongues, but that a whole congregation is having its faith lifted to be able to take Scripture at face value.

It has frequently been noted that a rising tide lifts every ship in the harbor. When the charismatic movement hit Britain in the late 60's and early 70's, it was not just the churches that chose to accept the charismatic dimension that were helped. Across the whole of British evangelicalism there was a resurgence of faith and expectation that we could expect God to move in our day and in ways that implied that the God of the Bible was still actively at work in His people. One did not have to accept the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" to also begin to believe that maybe God really does heal people today.

"From the book of Acts, to the growth of the church in China over the past 50 years, house churches have been at the center of church growth in each succeeding generation."

When I went to a conference at St. Helen's, Bishopsgate in London in 1968 for medical and allied students at London University, I was surrounded by a thousand eager Christians wanting to learn from 3 of the foremost evangelical leaders of the day, each one a household name within British evangelicalism. Yet, I found myself profoundly disappointed. Listening to them, we understood that although God can heal and intervene actively in the daily affairs of men, we should not be surprised when, in this day and age, He rarely does this in practice. Now, over a period of 30 years, the whole climate has changed. Although there has been no great healing movement in Britain, now virtually all evangelicals would agree that God not only could, but does actively intervene in supernatural ways in the affairs of those who reach out to Him. Stories from China to Mozambique, from the Roman Catholic cathedral to the Pentecostal mud hut (or the Pentecostal cathedral to the Catholic mud hut!) have lifted the tide for everyone to a place of genuine expectation of the active presence and power of God in the life of believing Christians.

Similar things are now beginning to transform our understanding, not only of Biblical doctrine, but also of church practice. Up until this time, in spite of repeated waves of the Holy Spirit's activity, even such momentous events as the Protestant reformation did little to affect church life, even while making significant in-roads into restoring Biblical theology. Currently this is all changing. Suddenly, the focus for many who take the Bible as their guide is centering on life rather than doctrine, on relationships rather than creeds. Does this mean that the doctrine is not important? No! It means that relationships and life are more important.

Jesus said to the Bible-believing folk of His day, the self-righteous Pharisees, “You search the Scriptures because you believe they give you eternal life, but the Scriptures point to Me!” (John 5:39) Similarly today, many are hearing Him say that it is more important to share Him and His life with others who also love Him with all of their hearts, even if you do disagree with them on such “vital” matters as infant baptism and the terminology surrounding the “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Events from the current crisis over pedophiles in the Catholic priesthood to the sexual profligacy of Charismatic televangelism of the 80’s, from division within Baptist circles over issues of defining “inerrancy” to equally tragic division within groups such as Vineyard over what they accept as true workings of the Holy Spirit, say to us that it is our common life in Christ that is paramount, not our mutual understanding of theology. “That in all things He may have the preeminence”(Col. 1:18).

While each “wave” of the Holy Spirit’s working has helped the church at large to re-capture such clearly Biblical truths as salvation by faith, the priesthood of all believers, the reality of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, etc., the impression one gets from studying each of these movements is that while theology has changed, “ecclesiology” has not. Our beliefs may have grown and matured, but how we practice those beliefs has not led to much change in the actual structure (ecclesiology) of the churches.

Now that is all beginning to change. From March for Jesus to Mission America the cry is not what divides us, but what is it that unites us. In the 1960’s I was being thrown out of groups such as Inter-Varsity for daring to believe that a group of students meeting in a university cafeteria were a legitimate expression of “church.” In the 1990’s you have Inter-Varsity Press publishing such books as Inner Healing, where evangelicals and charismatics are happily collaborating in writing a book that looks at the power of God to heal today! Times have changed.

“Suddenly, the focus for many who take the Bible as their guide is centering on life rather than doctrine, on relationships rather than creeds.”

Part of that change is in what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing to His people all over the world. Now we see that it is more important to love one another than to be “right”(see John 13:35 where Jesus teaches us that through this “the world will know that you are My disciples” and Mark 12:3 on the greatest commandment)! It is more important to “confess your faults to one another and pray for one another that you might be healed” (James 5:14) than to argue over whether or not God heals today. Today we know that it is more important to “in honor prefer one another”(Rom 12:10) than to make sure we have all the issues of authority types in the church straightened out. After all, aren’t we all commanded to “submit to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph. 5:21)?

As the emphasis comes onto the “one anothers” of the New Testament, onto practice rather than theory, we all of a sudden see that this must lead to a changing of the structures. How can I live “bearing one another’s burdens”(Gal. 6:2) when I don’t even know your name, let alone your burdens? How can I “in honor prefer you” when in practice I’ve never even shaken your hand, let alone greeted you with a holy kiss (Rom 12:10)? If my relationship with God is demonstrated by my relationships with His children (see I John 4:20: “How can you say you love God whom you cannot see, if you do not love your brother whom you see all of the time?”) then the setting for those relationships becomes vital. All of a sudden the large alone just won’t do the trick. How can I love like this with hundreds or thousands? I need to be in a small context, I need to have “church” in a way that emphasizes what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing.

“I love the large. What is better than to worship the Lord with thousands? But is this church in the normal, everyday usage of the word in the New Testament?”

I love the large. What is better than to worship the Lord with thousands? But is this church in the normal, everyday usage of the word in the New Testament? It might represent the church in a city. But it could never take the place of “church in their house” (I Cor. 16:19). Everywhere you look, you see the Holy Spirit bringing a similar emphasis. From the life of Jesus, as modeled with the twelve disciples, to the church planting patterns of Paul, we see the focus is on the small group. Yes, 3000 found the Lord on the day of Pentecost, but this was expressed by meeting house to house.

Every “wave” that has come in has been a blessing to the church at large. You don’t need to be a Lutheran to appreciate the value of recovering “salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone.” You don’t need to be a Presbyterian to value the role of plurality in leadership. There are many who have never even heard of the Quakers (Friends) who have learned to value the place of waiting on the Holy Spirit in the leading of a meeting. Catholics who are finding Jesus as a reality in adult life are being baptized without becoming Baptist! Episcopalians are learning to prophesy without feeling the need to be Pentecostals. You might never have heard of Watchman Nee and the Little Flock and still value the role of apostles in laying the foundation of the church. John Alexander Dowie or A. B. Simpson may never have even impinged on your

consciousness, yet we all value the reality of the healing power of Christ that they help recapture for the church at large. However, none of these changed the structures on their own.

Theology experienced deepens individual lives. But when the whole body begins to experience the life of Christ together, when relationships with each other begin to deepen and a longing for the life and practice of the early church grips your heart, you inevitably begin to look at the structures.

A cursory look at church history shows that nearly all revivals begin as people experience the life of God together. Small groups naturally form. Spontaneous prayer times flourish. People gather to share meals and swap stories. Confession of sin and mutual accountability are accepted as the norm. Sharing possessions, cars, homes, finances seems natural and normal. Meeting with Christians who have other denominational labels is common. It is our life in Jesus that holds us together.

This is church! This is church in the home or the office or the school or the retirement home. This is the church in "Lydia's house" (Acts 16:40).

This is the tidal wave that is even now beginning to lift up the whole of the body of Christ worldwide!

Tony Dale lives in Austin, Texas with his wife, Felicity. They helped plant Austin Fellowship of Home Churches.

Simple Church in the USA

House 2 House taps into a new phenomenon

Tony and Felicity Dale started the House 2 House magazine-and found themselves in the middle of something far bigger than they had imagined.

"Hardly a day goes by," says Tony Dale, "that we don't receive a phone call or e-mail from someone saying, 'Wow! Someone gave me House 2 House and it's been such an encouragement. We've been thinking of starting a house church' or 'This is what we've been doing for the last six months.'" In fact, after adding up the numbers from calls and e-mails and the networks they know, the Dales believe that well over a thousand house-style churches have started in the U.S. in the last year.

What is astounding is the spontaneous nature of these new church plants. "It's incredible!" says Dale. "There are similar things starting all over the place without anybody orchestrating it. I think this indicates that the Holy Spirit is at work."

The magazine's first issue went out in March 2001, a brief 15 months ago. According to Dale, it was "a stab in the dark to see what would happen."

"We had been talking with two other networks of home churches here in Texas. The leaders of these groups felt that a magazine that explained house churches could have a real impact in the country. I agreed to give it a try."

The Dales contacted people they knew in home church networks and compiled a list of around 3,500 names and addresses of people who might be interested. Since then, the list has grown, and the last issue of House 2 House went out to 40,000 people, not only in the U.S., but in other countries as well.

Through all the contacts that have arisen from the magazine, the Dales are beginning to get a picture of what is happening in the U. S. "A different kind of house church is emerging from what we saw five to ten years ago. Most of the new ones have a very strong evangelistic edge. They are falling into house church patterns because they see that those are Biblical, and they are an effective way to bring a Kingdom impact into their sphere of influence."

Those earlier houses churches, Dale explains, were "theologically sound, but kind of reactionary against the institutional church. What's happening now is that people are saying, 'Look, the old methods just aren't reaching people and we're longing to be effective and to see the Kingdom spread. Here are some Biblical principles about simple churches that seem to be the key to evangelism. Let's go out and do this simple thing, because it's a better way to reach people for Christ.'"

It's not just individuals and families that are getting involved. "One of the things that so thrilled us," says Dale, "is the denominational entities that have been very solidly supportive of what the magazine represents. At least three denominations have told us they are getting this out to their church planters." Missionaries are another group that the Dales are hearing from. "From around the world, they're saying, 'Your articles are giving us food to help feed people with what the Lord is leading us into.'"

When asked what he believed was their specific role in the movement, Dale answered, "The magazine is a confirmation to people that they're on the right track. People already know this is what God is asking them to do, many are already doing it, but they're wondering if they're somehow neglecting the traditional, or if what they are doing is O.K. They're hearing the magazine tell them that they have permission to do it, that it's alright."

In spite of the overwhelming response, Dale believes this is just the tip of the iceberg. Most of those involved in this burgeoning movement are not well-known. "I love it," says Dale. "The Lord is doing something with nameless, faceless people all over. Felicity often sums it up saying, 'no control, no empire-building, no glory.' "This is something the Holy Spirit is controlling, and we need to make very, very sure that we keep out of his way.

Home churches find support in the Northwest

A concern often expressed about house churches is that they can be very isolated from other parts of the body of Christ. The good news from the Northwest is that it doesn't have to be that way.

Dan Mayhew, from Portland, Oregon describes a variety of resources in his region that have come into being in order to encourage home churches.

"Here in the Northwest," he reports, "there is a growing network of home-based churches. Some groups have evolved from traditional congregations. In Vancouver, for example, Lake Shore Community Church recently started renting their facility to other churches so they can concentrate on meeting as a network of home fellowships. A non-denominational congregation in Milwaukee is moving in the same direction.

"Furthermore, an infrastructure is emerging to encourage home churches locally. There is an online discussion list called HCPDX that provides an Internet forum for home fellowships in the metro area.

Staff members at Western Seminary have developed a support program called SURGE (Small, Unique, Reproducible Group Enterprises) where representatives of home churches gather monthly to discuss issues relevant to effective small group ministry.

In the fall, the house church network in Portland will offer a series of in-depth training weekends for aspiring home church planters as well as introductory seminars for the curious."

Apex team discovers a church can start anywhere

When Joe Boyd and some friends started their first three house churches, they didn't know what house church was. What they did know was that they wanted to see "a church within walking distance of everyone in Las Vegas."

Their plan was simple- "we'll start, and figure it out as we go." That was three years ago. Since then, those first three churches have disappeared, but 30 more have taken their place, and the Apex team is making many discoveries about the nature of the church and how it grows.

In 1997, Boyd and others were leading a thriving Generation X-oriented congregation in connection with a large church. Then they sensed God telling them to do something different-to go smaller instead of bigger. Their weekly service has now become mostly a gathering of people in house churches. The total attendance is smaller right now, but the growth potential is tremendous.

There are continually new lessons to learn in this early stage of their network. "We are on an exponential learning curve," says Boyd.

One discovery was how much simpler it was to start a new church than they had realized. "When I was in regular church world," says Boyd, "I thought the best-case scenario would be that I would lead my waitress to Jesus and then bring her to church.

Now, every time I meet a new person this is my quick prayer to God, 'Is this a church-planter? Is this a person of peace?' Three or four of us have started praying that way and we've seen churches start in airplanes and in coffee shops and with waitresses. Just in the last year, I started believing God may want to use me to start a church anywhere I go."

Another discovery was that genuine disciples of Jesus are the key ingredient for a new church. When mentoring potential house church leaders, two questions have become crucial for them. "The first question we are asking is, 'before you do anything else, before you say you want to start a church or before you say that you're going to become a Christian, do you really want to be a disciple? Do you want to follow Jesus at all costs?'

Their second question, "Are you ready to make disciples?" It comes from Jesus final instructions to his disciples. "There's only one action verb in the Great Commission." says Boyd. "It's make disciples."

"If we are truly asking honestly those two questions and trying to live it out, then we will start churches. If we're making disciples, then churches will accidentally start, because once you make two disciples, you've got a church. That's what church planting is to us now."

It's happened recently. At their weekly gathering of house churches, Shawn, a long-bearded professional actor "with a Shakespearean look about him" felt like God was calling him to leave everything and follow Jesus. In the following five weeks Shawn's parents were baptized and a church started in their home on Sunday mornings. At the baptism, Shawn's cousins pulled him aside and said, "we think we want to get baptized and start a church." Shawn and Jeremy from Apex have started this church with extended family in another part of Las Vegas.

At the same baptism event, Shawn's aunt, who had driven four hours to attend, asked, "Could you come visit me? I'll invite my friends and we can tell them what's going on here. I'd like to start a church in Palm Springs."

In the meantime, Shawn is also explaining what God is doing to his community of fellow actors. "Last Sunday we baptized one of the girls, named Heather. Now Heather and Shawn together have this passion to start a church within this community of their friends."

Through this and many other experiences, Boyd and his team have made another discovery. "Definitely, the best churches we've started have been with pagans," Boyd says. "Across the board. It's not a generalization. It is true. It just is. If you start with five people that aren't Christians yet or have just come out of a baptism, they're going to be starting churches with their friends within a matter of months."

And that kind of growth is beginning to have an exponential effect. When the Apex team sat down a week ago to draw out their family tree, they realized that in 2000 they started 2 churches, in 2001 they started 9. So far this year there are 19 new churches. Some of those churches are a third generation, "where a church started a church that started a church."

Southern Baptists Consider Shift in Church-Planting Concept

While the Southern Baptists have always had a major emphasis on planting churches," Rev. Kenny Moore told us in a recent DAWN REPORT interview, "the time has come for a shift in gears. The question we are now exploring goes something like this: What would it take for everybody on the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains to hear the gospel, have an opportunity to respond, be drawn into a biblical community, be disciplined and have an opportunity to worship God?"

To answer this question for the Denver area alone, argues Moore, requires a major paradigm shift in thinking. "Where we have shifted gears in the last few years is to really think in terms not just of adding a few churches, but to think how we can literally multiply churches.

"The truth is," Moore says, "that the traditional church with its event, building and professional clergy orientation simply cannot accomplish this goal. Yet that is where most of our material and energy resources are directed."

Moore affirms the idea that the Southern Baptists will continue to add to its large store of what could be called "traditional" churches, but what they are wrestling with is what he refers to as being more organic.

"You see," he says, "50% of the population in Metro Denver live in multi-family housing, but only 3% come to a traditional campus-based church. We've got to think of churches we can start that will utilize men and women to be shepherds in the market place and in the neighborhoods. Gatherings can be in schools, in parks, at Starbucks and apartment complexes. We must develop relation-based churches which do all the functions of fellowship, worship, Bible study, prayer and ministry."

Moore indicates that this really describes the house-church model, but emphasizes that thinking organically includes all kinds of relationship-based churches.

Breaking out of the mold has its difficulties says Moore. "One of the biggest barriers we find denominationally is the idea that size counts. So we have to make it clear that we have nothing against mega-churches but that there needs to be an equal emphasis on small, simple, participatory-type churches. We need to communicate the value that it might be much better to penetrate the lostness that is around us with 100 churches with ten members each rather than one church with 1,000."

With this in mind, Moore desires to see an intentional strategy that carries out the vision of a church within walking distance of every person on the Front Range. To accomplish this, he says they are trying to put an emphasis on the mentality that every believer is a church planter, every home is a church and every church a training center.

Moore and some associates have been intentional about promoting this paradigm of church multiplication for only about 18 months, but it has been more than just an intellectual exercise. In that span, somewhere around 20 to 30 organic-type churches have been planted. "There might well be more," he states, "but record keeping in this atmosphere does not fit the normal parameters, nor is it a major issue with us.

"My personal goal as a strategist, rather, is to see a congregational perspective expression everywhere so that we are penetrating total lostness and not just a portion of it. Right now we see a cloud the size of a man's hand. But if this really becomes a movement where there is a spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit, there's not going to be any control on it.

"In my mind the vision of a million simple, organic churches for America is very doable."

Rev. Kenny Moore is Urban Church Planter Strategist and Ethnic coordinator for the Denver Baptist Association.

Church Multiplication Movements

Church Multiplication—how does it happen? What does it look like? A recent 'key word' search on the Internet came up with over 24,000 hits-and almost as many opinions. It seems this is a hot topic and everybody is interested in and talking about the subject.

Neil Cole, the director of Church Multiplication Associates in Long Beach California, has some definitive and enlightening viewpoints that can help us understand exactly what we're dealing with when we talk about church multiplication movements.

Q: How can we tell the difference between a true church multiplication movement and something that just carries that label?

A: Church multiplication is church planting with multi-generational reproduction. In other words, it is where daughter churches have granddaughters who have great granddaughters who have great great granddaughters and so on. If all you do is spin off daughter churches, if those daughter churches don't have daughters, no matter how many times you do it, it's not multiplication.

It is not multiplication to gather together Christians from other churches to form new churches. I don't even think that's church planting; it's reshuffling the deck. Yet many times that is called church planting and church multiplication.

Big revival meetings and evangelistic crusades are not church multiplication movements, and never will be, even if everybody in the stadium comes to know Jesus.

Seminaries, leadership development centers or church multiplication training centers that send out many church planters and start lots of churches are not church multiplication movements. That's actually a church addition movement.

In order for it to be a multiplication movement the churches themselves must produce the leaders and the churches.

I'm not against anything that adds churches to the kingdom of God, but I am saying that multiplication is more powerful than addition. It starts slow, but gains exponential speed.

Q: Where does a multiplication movement begin?

A: Jesus asks his disciples a question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13-18), Peter answers him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus responds, "Blessed are you Simon Bar Jonah because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you." Then he goes on in verse 18 to tell us more about the church than we can imagine.

Do you notice that it all starts with Jesus?

A spontaneous church multiplication movement must begin with the question, 'who is Jesus for me?'

Spontaneous reproduction is like a spreading virus, it's contagious. If Jesus hasn't changed my life, I'm never going to be able to change someone else.

It doesn't start with whether you're a seeker-oriented service, or a cell-based church plant or even a house church. If it starts with a discussion of your model or your method or your form of church, you are starting in the wrong place. It starts with, who is Jesus to you?

In the same conversation with Peter, Jesus says, "I will build my church." He doesn't say to Peter, you will build my church, and he doesn't say, I will build your church. The church is his, he owns it - it's his passion. You are not responsible for a church multiplication movement. That's something only Jesus can do.

Jesus died and rose from the dead; he's given his Spirit to us; we have the word of God itself. We shouldn't be removing ourselves from the world thinking it's going to contaminate us. We should contaminate the world.

Q: What will hinder a movement like this?

A: Three roadblocks to multiplication are buildings, budgets and big shots.

Buildings are a problem because they don't multiply. They are inorganic, don't reproduce, are expensive and require man-hours and resources for upkeep.

Budgets are a problem. If money is the key to start a church there is not going to be a church multiplication movement. The more money it costs, the less likely it will be to reproduce.

When I talk about "big shots" I'm talking about clergy. By requiring people to have degrees before they can be in leadership, you are hampering the kingdom work that could be done by very capable people. We want people who are learners for life, not just ones who have gone to the right institution.

Q: What are the identifying marks of a genuine movement?

A: Basically, it is made up of simple and reproducible strategies that release the common Christian for the uncommon work.

For us, we use Life Transformation Groups, house churches and simple systems to accomplish this. Above all, we try to keep it as simple as possible.

A second characteristic of a movement like this is evangelism and reproduction that is natural and spontaneous. It's not forced; it's something that everybody does, not just the few.

When you see a true movement, everybody in the movement is involved. Everybody is a living agent for the kingdom of God. Every part reproduces, and that occurs at every level and in every unit of church life. We want to see the reproduction of disciples, then leaders, then churches and then movements. It begins from the micro to the macro.

So the place to start is with disciples. That's why we use Life Transformation Groups; they're simple groups of two or three. If you can't multiply a group of two or three, what can you multiply? We made it so simple all you have to do is add one more person and you've now got two groups of two. It's that easy.

Another characteristic of a true movement is the interdependence that exists among the churches within the network. We want churches that bring weaknesses and strengths to one another and all grow together. They don't need each other, yet they don't want to be alone and apart from each other.

A group of interdependent churches have to be self-perpetuating. By that I mean that the individual church doesn't need someone to infuse it with money, resources, people or music. It's healthy in and of itself. It's self-contained.

This group also has churches that are self-propagating—they are giving birth to other self-contained units.

In order to see a movement take off, these points need to be reached rapidly, and this mindset should be in place from the beginning.

Church Planting Movements

By David Garrison, IMB Resource Center

<http://www.missionspokane.org/plantingmovements.html>

Ten Universal Elements

After surveying Church Planting Movements around the world, we found at least 10 elements present in every one of them. While it may be possible to have a Church Planting Movement without them, we have yet to see this occur. Any missionary intent on seeing a Church Planting Movement should consider these 10 elements.

-
1. Prayer
 2. Abundant gospel sowing
 3. Intentional church planting
 4. Scriptural authority
 5. Local leadership
 6. Lay leadership
 7. Cell or house churches
 8. Churches planting churches
 9. Rapid reproduction
 10. Healthy churches
-

1. Prayer

Prayer has been fundamental to every Church Planting Movement we have observed. Prayer typically provides the first pillar in a strategy coordinator's master plan for reaching his or her people group. However, it is the vitality of prayer in the missionary's personal life that leads to its imitation in the life of the new church and its leaders. By revealing from the beginning the source of his power in prayer, the missionary effectively gives away the greatest resource he brings to the assignment. This sharing of the power source is critical to the transfer of vision and momentum from the missionary to the new local Christian leadership.

2. Abundant gospel sowing

We have yet to see a Church Planting Movement emerge where evangelism is rare or absent. Every Church Planting Movement is accompanied by abundant sowing of the gospel. The law of the harvest applies well. "If you sow abundantly you will also reap abundantly." In Church Planting Movements, hundreds and even thousands of individuals are hearing the claims that Jesus Christ has on their lives. This sowing often relies heavily upon mass media evangelism, but it always includes personal evangelism with vivid testimonies to the life-changing power of the gospel. The converse to the law of the harvest is also true. Wherever governments or societal forces have managed to intimidate and stifle Christian witness. Church Planting Movements have been effectively eliminated.

3. Intentional church planting

In every Church Planting Movement someone implemented a strategy of deliberate church planting before the movement got under way. There are several instances in which all the contextual elements were in place, but the missionaries lacked either the skill or the vision to lead a Church Planting Movement. However, once this ingredient was added to the mix, the results were remarkable. Churches don't just happen. There is evidence around the world of many thousands coming to Christ through a variety of means without the resulting development of multiple churches. In these situations, an intentional church-planting strategy might transform these evangelistic awakenings into full-blown Church Planting Movements.

4. Scriptural authority

Even among non-literate people groups, the Bible has been the guiding source for doctrine, church polity and life itself. While Church Planting Movements have occurred among peoples without the Bible either orally or in written form in their heart language. In every instance, Scripture provided the rudder for the church's life, and its authority was unquestioned.

5. Local leadership

Missionaries involved in Church Planting Movements often speak of the self-discipline required to mentor church planters rather than do the job of church planting themselves. Once a missionary has established his identity as the primary church planter or pastor, it's difficult for him ever to assume a back-seat profile again. This is not to say that missionaries have no role in church planting. On the contrary, local church planters receive their best training by watching how the missionary models participative Bible studies with non-

Christian seekers. Walking alongside local church planters is the first step in cultivating and establishing local leadership.

6. Lay leadership

Church Planting Movements are driven by lay leaders. These lay leaders are typically bi-vocational and come from the general profile of the people group being reached. In other words, if the people group is primarily non-literate, then the leadership shares this characteristic. If the people are primarily fishermen, so too are their lay leaders. As the movement unfolds, paid clergy often emerge. However, the majority--and growth edge of the movement--continue to be led by lay or bi-vocational leaders. This reliance upon lay leadership ensures the largest possible pool of potential church planters and cell church leaders. Dependence upon seminary-trained--or in non-literate societies, even educated--pastoral leaders means that the work will always face a leadership deficit.

7. Cell or house churches

Church buildings do appear in Church Planting Movements. However, the vast majority of the churches continue to be small, reproducible cell churches of 10-30 members meeting in homes or storefronts. There is a distinction between cell churches and house churches. Cell churches are linked to one another in some type of structured network. Often this network is linked to a larger single church identity. The Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, South Korea, is perhaps the most famous example of the cell-church model with more than 50,000 individual cells. House churches may look the same as cell churches, but they generally are not organized under a single authority or hierarchy of authorities. As autonomous units, house churches may lack the unifying structure of cell churches, but they are typically more dynamic. Each has its advantages. Cell groups are easier to shape and guide toward doctrinal conformity, while house churches are less vulnerable to suppression by a hostile government. Both types of churches are common in Church Planting Movements, often appearing in the same movement.

8. Churches planting churches

In most Church Planting Movements, the first churches were planted by missionaries or by missionary-trained church planters. At some point, however, as the movements entered an exponential phase of reproduction, the churches themselves began planting new churches. In order for this to occur, church members have to believe that reproduction is natural and that no external aids are needed to start a new church. In Church Planting Movements, nothing deters the local believers from winning the lost and planting new cell churches themselves.

9. Rapid reproduction

Some have challenged the necessity of rapid reproduction for the life of the Church Planting Movement, but no one has questioned its evidence in every CPM. Most church planters involved in these movements contend that rapid reproduction is vital to the movement itself. They report that when reproduction rates slow down, the Church Planting Movement falters. Rapid reproduction communicates the urgency and importance of coming to faith in Christ. When rapid reproduction is taking place, you can be assured that the churches are unencumbered by nonessential elements and the laity are fully empowered to participate in this work of God.

10. Healthy churches

Church growth experts have written extensively in recent years about the marks of a church. Most agree that healthy churches should carry out the following five purposes: 1) worship, 2) evangelistic and missionary outreach, 3) education and discipleship, 4) ministry and 5) fellowship. In each of the Church Planting Movements we studied, these five core functions were evident. A number of church planters have pointed out that when these five health indicators are strong, the church can't help but grow. More could be said about each of these healthy church indicators, but the most significant one, from a missionary vantage point, is the churches missionary outreach. This impulse within these CPM-oriented churches is extending the gospel into remote people groups and overcoming barriers that have long resisted Western missionary efforts

Let's Stop Planting Sterile Churches! By Carol Davis

'Growth' vs. 'reproduction'

I want to show you the difference between what I call a "growth culture" in which we've all been trained and a "reproduction model." Because I believe to plant a church is a different animal than to plant a church-planting church. In fact, I'm convinced that the skill sets we learned in ministry training will actually insure that things don't reproduce. In our growth culture we've learned to focus on individual conversions, while a reproduction model focuses on group conversions.

We've started on believer's turf. But in order to reproduce, we must start on unbeliever's turf. If we want group conversions of family members, co-workers, neighbors and friends, those people are not going to come to a stranger's house or into the strange setting of a church. They will come to turf where they are always involved. In our culture we teach Scripture for information. With the reproductive model it is taught for application, so that people are watching the power of God.

We've begun by finding Christians. But if you want a really powerful church start, find people of peace. Bar the Christians; don't let them in. They mess things up in the early stages.

We've begun in facilities. This takes money and expertise, which are not readily available. If you begin in homes or front porches or yards or parks, there are always more of them.

We've tended to start with celebration in a large group. For reproduction you start with a small group. Very few people actually have the ability and gifts to do a large group well. It takes more expertise, more preparation, more everything. A lot of people can facilitate small groups. They were already doing it in their own natural network before they were saved.

We build programs and buildings. To reproduce, you build leaders.

Leadership is also different. Traditionally we import professional clergy. But what we need for reproduction is to have indigenous and convert-emerging clergy. Where are the future pastors for this setting? They are in the streets, they are beating their wives, they are ripping off their employers.

Also, the leader tends to see himself as the leader for all the participants. In a reproducing church, the leader is the equipper for the emerging leaders. That is how they see themselves, and that is how they stay focused.

We are used to funding the church starter. But for churches that will start other churches, you need to have bi-vocational church starters. If we are going to see the cities reached, it is going to be with bi-vocational people. Otherwise, it takes too long to actually fund.

In my own experience, every time we got ready to plant a church we felt like we couldn't afford to lose those people, their tithes and all that. But every time we did, we actually didn't skip a beat. God supplied. I found the most powerful thing is that connection with another church who cares.

In fact, in every church that I see planting churches, I find that some of their own issues begin to dissolve. I don't know what it is. They are giving themselves away. I am convinced you cannot out-give God. The more you give, the more God does.

Growth culture	Reproductive model
Focus on individual conversions	Focus on group conversions
Start on believer's turf	Start on unbeliever's turf
Teach Scripture for information	Teach Scripture for application
Begin by finding Christians	Begin by finding "people of peace"
Begin in facilities	Begin in homes, front porches, yards, parks
Start with celebration in a large group	Start with a small group
Build programs and buildings	Build leaders
Import professional clergy	Have indigenous and convert-emerging clergy
Leader leads all the participants	Leader equips the emerging leaders
Fund the church starter	Start churches with bi-vocational people