

VOL. 10 • NO.2 SPRING 2019

## FINDING THE CHURCH PLANTING MODEL FOR OUR CHURCH: HOW EXISTING CHURCHES CAN BE PART OF THE CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT

---

*Seungsoo "RJ" Jun*

### *Abstract*

Church planting has become an effective method for revitalizing denominations. In many cases, however, church planting is limited to one or two charismatic leaders or a large church's multi-site movement. This article attempts to present a roadmap to categorize the models of church planting. After understanding pathways for church planting, it suggests a method that enables existing churches to be part of this exciting movement of God.

### INTRODUCTION

What is the next stage of the church? As a pastor in a mainline denomination, the United Methodist Church, this question always lingers in my thoughts. Mainline churches in the United States are confronted with the reality of a group in decline. The trend of decline continues from the 1950s, as the group has lost roughly 20 million people in membership during that time. Now, the mainline group of churches constitutes only

one-fifth of Protestant Churches in America.<sup>1</sup> Will we see the downfall of mainline churches, or will a miracle of dry bones returning to life (Ezekiel 37) happen in the life of the mainline group?

Despite the surging interest among mainline denominational leaders in church planting as a way for denominations to turn around this downward trend, the effect is minimal, compared to the rate of decline. Most existing churches that are saddled with the burden to repair and maintain their buildings are living in survival mode, which prevents them from fulfilling their missional call.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, despite the emerging interest in church planting on the part of denominational leadership, the existing churches are only passively participating in this movement. However, without the active participation of the existing churches in church planting, the resurrection of the mainline denominations will be a daunting task.

How can the existing churches become a part of the current church planting movement? In order to answer this question, understanding church planting as one effort to revitalize the declining denominations is required. This article will present the limitations of the church planting efforts led by a denomination, while also attempting to present a model that presents an underutilized option that gives existing churches an active role in the initiative of revitalizing existing denominations through church planting.

### **Brief Overview of the Church's Response to the Decline in Membership**

Churches have sought to answer the question of how to bring new life to the churches. According to Gary McIntosh, "In response to the decline of churches first observed in the 1960s, four movements (so far) developed and influenced churches in North America during the last half century."<sup>3</sup>

---

1 Barna Group, "Report Examines the State of Mainline Protestant Churches," research released in *Leaders & Pastors*, December 7, 2009, accessed April 6, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/report-examines-the-state-of-mainline-protestant-churches/>.

2 Ezra Earl Jones and Robert L. Wilson, *What's Ahead for Old First Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 5.

3 Gary L. McIntosh, *Church Movements of the Last Fifty Years in North America*, Great Commission Research Journal, Vol. 2, Issue 1, (Summer 2010), 43.

The series of movements started with the “Church Renewal Movement,” and continued with the “Church Growth Movement,” which was pioneered by Donald A. McGavran. McGavran, a former missionary to India, saw the state of the church and developed demographic research methods and strategies to reach the unchurched. Despite the sound principles of the Church Growth Movement, Ed Stetzer said that the movement was criticized for its emphasis on methodology and numerical growth.<sup>4</sup>

Christopher DiVietro claimed that the focus on methodology had isolated churches from their context and ultimately disabled the churches for reaching out to their communities.<sup>5</sup> DiVietro also indicated the Church Growth Movement had morphed into the Church Health Movement. This movement, led by many megachurch pastors, emphasized church health, which, it was believed, would ultimately bring numerical growth. McIntosh, however, viewed the Church Health Movement as a subset of the Church Growth Movement. He claimed that the third movement of churches to respond to decline was the Emergent Church Movement. The Emergent Church Movement, a response to the changing post-modern culture, soon developed into the fourth movement, the Missional Church Movement.<sup>6</sup>

All four movements were a genuine response to a rapidly changing culture in America. According to McIntosh, each movement recorded a lifespan of an average of fifteen years. When a new church movement emerged, the former model was quickly eclipsed.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon proved that the church was intentionally responding to the rapidly changing culture.

If the Church Growth Movement and the Church Health Movement responded to the membership decline through presenting methodological approaches, the Emerging Church Movement and the Missional Church Movement focused on reclaiming the *missio Dei* (mission of God) in the

---

4 Ed Stetzer, “The Evolution of Church Growth, Church Health, and the Missional Church: An Overview of the Church Growth Movement from, and back to, Its Missional Roots,” (Paper Presented at the American Society for Church Growth Annual Conference, 2008), 8, accessed February 4, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/assets/10231.pdf>.

5 Christopher DiVietro, “Understanding Diversification in the Church Growth Movement,” *Great Commission Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 58.

6 McIntosh, 48-50.

7 Ibid, 42.

church. While the previous two movements were based on an “attractional model,” the latter two movements focused more on participation in God’s mission in the world. A distinct shift from an attractional to an incarnational church model occurred.

While the Church Growth Movement and Church Health Movement started as attempts to renew the churches’ missional call, they devolved into strategic methodologies to prevent the decline of the churches. When churches become too inwardly focused, they can lose track of the balance between ecclesiology and missiology. Too much emphasis on the churches’ ecclesiology made the churches lose sight of the mission outside their walls, and the Missional Church Movement responded to that imbalance.

### **The Missional Church Movement and Church Planting**

The Missional Church Movement, as a response to the Church Growth Movement, is in the process of developing its definition and form. Alan Hirsch defines a missional church as “a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world.”<sup>8</sup> The churches’ active participation in the mission of God is a new form of renewal.<sup>9</sup> When God’s people focus on the mission of God, the shape of the churches and their ministries will be molded according to their surrounding communities. Instead of the previous practice of inviting people into the church buildings to become the Kingdom of God, the churches are sending people to build the Kingdom of God in their communities.

A wave of church planting initiatives emerged as a response to the Missional Movement. Church planting has always been an essential part of the mission of the church. Paul was a church planter, and church planting always played a critical role in the multiplication of the church. The recent church planting emphasis, however, became more of an intentional attempt

---

8 Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 82.

9 Hirsch sees the possibility of renewal: “Paradoxically, while holy rebellion represents a real (and perceived) challenge to established forms of church, it is also the key to its renewal. New movements are the source of much of its ongoing vitality because they are the wellspring of new ways of experiencing God and participating in his mission.” *Ibid.*, 56.

of the church to reclaim its missiology.

Church planting was viewed as the center of the Missional Movement due to its claim of bringing balance between ecclesiology and missiology. Church planting tends to fulfill the urge for the church to actively be involved in the mission of the church while it builds a community of faith through planting. In *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication*, Craig Ott and Gene Wilson say that church planting is the best-known method to reclaim the biblical meaning of multiplication, due to its balance between missiology and ecclesiology:

Church planting is where missiology and ecclesiology intersect. Unfortunately, many missiologists and mission practitioners have a weak ecclesiology, as if mission could exist without the church or as if the church were a practical but imperfect and bothersome necessity. On the other hand, many standard systematic theologies and ecclesiologies devote few pages, if any, to the topic of mission. A missionless church is no church, and a churchless mission is not biblical mission.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, through church planting, not only can the church reclaim its missiological call, but it can also restore its ecclesiology.

### **Recent Trends in Church Planting**

Church planting as a practice of the church has existed ever since Christ ascended to heaven. However, the trend of church planting has been to change its focus. To understand the recent change, an understanding of church types is essential.

In 1978, Ezra Earl Jones wrote *Strategies for New Churches*. He wrote this book about church planting to assist the Renewal Movement. He said that understanding the types of churches is important because “Experiences of the past are to be built upon to construct more adequate institutions

---

<sup>10</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), Kindle location 634-638.

for today.”<sup>11</sup> Not only are his insights from forty years ago still applicable, but they also will enable us to understand the changing trends in church planting. He described these types of churches:

1. “Old First Church Downtown” – This type of church is associated with the history of the city, and it should have experienced growth as the city expanded. However, it could have also experienced a rapid decline as the residents of the city moved out to the suburbs, and the church no longer is able to reflect the different residents in the city.
2. “Neighborhood Church” – This church was established on the outskirts of the city or in the suburbs. It might have served the community as the center of all activities. The church experienced decline as the culture changed and its members moved away to other parts of the city.
3. “Metropolitan-Regional Church” – This church is located strategically in the area of growth. It is highly visible and accessible. The church experiences rapid growth as its resources can provide programs to attend to the needs of a larger population.
4. “Special Purpose Church” – This church is established to meet the needs of a particular group. The church’s ability to serve a unique population attracts people to this church. For example, a particular ethnic group forming a church that worships in that ethnic language can be called a Special Purpose church.
5. “Small Town Church” – This church is established in a small-town area. It might be the only church of its denomination in the town. This church is similar to a Downtown Church, but smaller in scale.
6. “Open Country Church” – This type of church serves a rural community. It is often served by one pastor who leads several churches.<sup>12</sup>

---

11 Ezra Earl Jones, *Strategies for New Churches* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1976), 34.

12 Ibid, 37-43.

The main point of Jones's categorization of churches is to show that a church will experience a transition as the surrounding community of the church changes. Jones suggested that church planters need to choose a particular type of model that they are envisioning for the new church. He said, "New church developers, therefore, must define the community to be served, determine the type of church to be created, decide the appropriate form for it, and proceed accordingly."<sup>13</sup>

Church planting, in the past decade, normally started as a plan with a goal to grow into a Metropolitan-Regional church, a goal derived from the Church Health Movement. As a result, many of the churches serving as beacons of this movement started as church plants and grew into large Metropolitan-Regional Churches. The movement also influenced many Neighborhood Churches to apply methods of growth, making the Neighborhood Churches seek to become smaller versions of Metropolitan-Regional Churches. However, the smaller versions of Metropolitan-Regional Churches could never compete with megachurches.

Recently, the planting of small Neighborhood Churches has been a noticeable trend. Many churches in the United States which started as Neighborhood Churches became Ex-Neighborhood Churches. The reason they should be called Ex-Neighborhood Churches is that the members of the churches no longer reflected the people of the neighborhoods. Many of the members once lived in the area. They remember the days when they were able to walk to the church. That memory is another reason why many Ex-Neighborhood Churches do not have adequate parking or have been pushed to purchase an additional parking lot. The members outgrew the neighborhoods but decided not to leave the churches. They still commute to their churches every Sunday, projecting high loyalty to their churches, but they are blind to their disconnection with their communities. When they lived in the neighborhood they were in the community and were incarnational, both intentionally and unintentionally. However, after moving away from the community, not only did they lose the opportunity to witness in the community that surrounds the church, but they also missed the opportunity to see how God worked through their witness.

Asking a neighbor to join a church that is twenty minutes away is not

---

13 Ibid, 44.

easy. Why would that neighbor come to that particular church when there are several other churches on the way? Also, when most of the members live away from the neighborhood, they create a notion that the church is “living above” the neighborhood, existing as an island.

Therefore, many of the recent church plants intentionally started with the focus of becoming a Neighborhood Church. Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen in *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community*, introduce the disconnection between churches and communities by saying, “Living above place names the tendency to develop structures that keep cause-and-effect relationships far apart in space and time, where we cannot have firsthand experience of them.”<sup>14</sup> If the churches were “living above” and disconnected from the community, the recent trend to plant churches with an intention to become or reclaim their identity as Neighborhood Churches is a positive sign. Being incarnational in the community should be a theological foundation of church planting, and it will bring new life to many Ex-Neighborhood churches.

### **Theological Framework for Church Planting**

Church Planting helps churches to reclaim their biblical mandate to balance the inward and outward calls. The inward call, based on the Great Commandment, is a call to build a community that loves God and neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40). The inward call is to create an *ekklesia*, an assembly. Churches should assemble and build the Kingdom of God in this world. However, the inward call should not restrict the church from being sent out into the world.

The outward call, on the other hand, comes from the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The churches must make a continual effort to share the Good News with people who are unreached. When the church reclaims its role to be part of the Mission of God, the church will be sent into the world. As Jesus was sent to this world, the church is called to

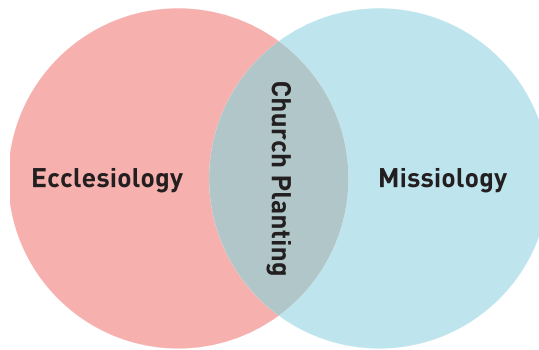
---

<sup>14</sup> Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community* (Downers Grove, IL, IVP Books, 2014), 24.



be “incarnated in the world.” The Word became flesh, and God dwelled among His creation. In the same way, the church needs to dwell among the unreached. Phil Stevenson says, “Recognizing that the church is the presence of God in a community, there will be a desire to establish God’s presence where it is lacking.”<sup>15</sup> Church planting becomes the most effective method to transform the community. J. D. Payne says, “I prefer to say that church planting can be found where missiology and ecclesiology converge.”<sup>16</sup> (See figure 1.)

**FIGURE 1 (Used by Permission).<sup>17</sup>**



The call to be faithful to both our inward and outward mandates might be calling the church to continue its efforts to plant. In some cases, through church planting, a renewal of a church’s vision occurs as an already-existing church is inspired by a church plant.

Churches can be transformed to be part of God’s mission in the world through a renewed vision of mission. Both Church Replanting and Revitalization are efforts to reclaim the mission of God’s church. A clear definition that will differentiate Church Replanting from Church

15 Phil Stevenson, “A Theology of Church Planting,” *Great Commission Research Journal* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 256.

16 J. D. Payne, “Mission and Church Planting,” in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011): 201.

17 J. D. Payne, “Figure 14.1. Church Planting: A Theological Framework,” in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011): 201. This figure is used by permission from the B&H Publishing Group.

Revitalization is needed.

One way to differentiate the two concepts is based on changes in location or leadership structure. Both replanting and revitalization involve the renewal of vision of churches. When both the location and leadership structure are changed, the process could be called a replant, but when the change is in vision alone, the process could be called revitalization.

### **Growing Church Planting Efforts**

Many denominations are jumping on the bandwagon of church planting. Ott and Wilson say, “Denominations have come to recognize that church planting is essential to the long-term growth and health of a movement.”<sup>18</sup> The observable fruit of church planting proves that it is one of the effective ways to reach the lost. For a denomination, church planting can be conceived as one viable way to bounce back from membership decline. A 2015 online survey, given to “well over 12,000 church planters . . . across 17 different denominational and church planting network organizations” in America and conducted by LifeWay Christian Resources, showed that the average worship attendance of a four-year-old church plant is 124 worshipers.<sup>19</sup> While the majority of the Protestant Churches (59 percent) have an average worship attendance of 7-99 people per week, the growth rate of a church plant is phenomenal.<sup>20</sup> Not only are the new church plants reaching new people, but they also are building up the church.

The effort, however, to revitalize the denomination through church planting is not powerful enough to overcome the trend of decline. Because many of the church planting initiatives are limited to a certain department of the denomination or to particular large churches, the movement is not powerful enough to turn the tide. To turn the tide of decline, churches should use multiple models to plant, institute multisite systems, replant,

---

18 Ott and Wilson, Kindle Edition: Locations 493-494.

19 Ed Stetzer, Micah Fries, and Daniel Im, *The State of Church Planting in the U.S., New Churches, 2015 Exclusive Report*, (Nashville: LifeWay Research, 2015), 2-3. They also state, “About 1,200 church planters completed this survey, of which a reduced number of 843 fit the criteria of being planted since 2007 and still operating today.” Ibid., 3.

20 Hartford Institute for Religion Research, “Fast Facts about American Religion,” accessed March 6, 2019, [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast\\_facts.html#sizecong](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#sizecong).

or revitalize.

Denominations sponsor many church planting initiatives. For example, the conference of which this author is a part, The Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, launched a church planting initiative called “All Things New: Fruitful and Multiplying – The Virginia Conference.” This initiative was passed in 2007 to cultivate a culture of revitalization through starting 250 new faith communities in the next thirty years.

“All Things New” is a commitment to revitalize the denomination through church planting. With a goal to plant and launch ten new faith communities each year, the Office of Congregational Development of the Virginia Annual Conference offers steps and methods to start a new church. Along with the commitment to plant new faith communities, the conference is also committed to revitalizing existing churches. The main goal is to provide leadership training for the existing churches to transform into a “culture of fruitfulness.”<sup>21</sup> Overall, the goal of this plan is to plant thriving new churches while the existing churches reform their practice of ministry.<sup>22</sup>

The “All Things New” plan approaches the vitality of the church in two different ways: starting new faith communities and renewing the direction of the church. In Revelation 21:5 (ESV), God said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” The “All Things New” plan provided a direction for the churches to participate in God’s plan. The approach to “pour new wine into new wineskins” (Matthew 9:17, NIV) through starting new faith communities seems to be an ideal goal.

“All Things New” will be approaching its tenth anniversary in 2018, and that anniversary will be a good time to check the progress of the initiative. According to the 2016 annual conference report, 41 new faith communities have started since 2008.<sup>23</sup> The data showed that there were 4-5 new faith communities launched annually. However, for the plan to

---

21 250 Task Force, *Comprehensive 250 Task Force Report: All Things New Report*, presented and approved at the 226th Virginia Annual Conference, United Methodist Church, June 2008, 2.

22 Ibid., 6-10.

23 Center of Congregational Excellence, *New Faith Communities 2008-2016*, (Richmond, VA: Virginia Annual Conference, 2017).

meet its goal, there needed to have been an average of eight new faith communities launching every year. Ed Stetzer indicates that even this goal presented by the All Things New plan will not be adequate to generate an engine for revitalization: “According to easumbandy.com: ‘Studies show that if a denomination wishes to reach more people, the number of new churches it begins each year must equal at least 3% of the denomination’s existing churches. Based on this formula, mainline denominations are failing to plant enough churches to offset their decline.’”<sup>24</sup> Approximately a thousand congregations form the Virginia Annual Conference, and the conference would need to start thirty new faith communities a year to offset its decline.

Most of the church plants that occurred in the past eight years were heavily dependent on denominational initiatives or large and vital congregations starting satellite campuses (73 percent). Many of the new faith communities started were an outcome of planting a “Special Purpose Church.” Fourteen churches out of 41 recent start-ups (over 34 percent) were new congregations that intentionally reached out to ethnic and multiethnic populations as well as young adults and college students.

The other portion of the recent launches were geared toward multi-site or satellite congregations initiated by large or mid-size vital congregations. Two recent launches were products of church plants starting other church plants. According to a LifeWay survey of multiple denominational groups in 2015, 22 percent of recent church starts had launched a second plant within the first five years; however, only 13 percent of United Methodist Church plants launched a second plant within the first five years.<sup>25</sup> So, having two that started a new campus within the first five years is exciting news.<sup>26</sup>

The recent report shows progress in this initiative, but the focus of starting new churches was limited to special churches or multi-site plants

---

24 Easumbandy.com cited in Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN, B&H Publishing, 2006), 5.

25 Candace M. Lewis, Douglas Ruffle, Philip J. Brooks, eds., *The State of United Methodist Church Planting in the United States* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Ministries, 2015), 16-25.

26 Center of Congregational Excellence, *New Faith Communities 2008-2016*.

instead of traditional church planting, which indicates that the main engines of this movement were the denominational office and certain large churches. The initiative was not adequate to mobilize and inspire the existing midsize and small churches to take a path toward revitalization through church planting.

Mobilization of existing churches toward a revitalization path through church planting is difficult when their understanding of church planting is limited to denominational initiatives or certain large churches. To increase the number of new faith communities being launched, the denomination should provide a clear pathway for midsize and small churches to participate in the movement.

A new faith community launch should be initiated in a multifaceted approach. The denominational office or districts and the large churches should not be the only promoters of this plan. The existing small and midsize churches need to find ways to become active participants in the church planting initiatives. The question is how to encourage these other churches to be a part of this movement.

### **Narrowing the Concept of Church Planting**

The range of church planting encompasses a wide variety of concepts and styles. When considering church planting, there are many factors to consider. According to Stuart Murray, four “determining factors”—context, resources, motive, and expectation—are to be considered to plant a church.<sup>27</sup> These integral variables create a dynamic that leads to various types of church planting. What if too many choices prohibit an existing average-sized church to dive into the realm of church planting? What if there were a specific model that would help the church narrow down its options, fit its context and experience, and present a clear pathway with success stories? Would that model influence more churches to be involved in church planting?

A couple of years ago, I attended a family reunion at a resort in Mexico.

---

<sup>27</sup> Stuart Murray, *Planting Churches in the 21st Century: A Guide for Those Who Want Fresh Perspectives and New Ideas for Creating Congregations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010), Kindle Edition: location 888.

Many activities were included in our package. Having too many options, however, made us hesitant to do anything. The resort provided a consultant who helped us choose our activities for the duration of our stay. A map helped us make our choices based on our interests. Family members who were interested in outdoor activities had a schedule presented to them, while family members who were interested in sightseeing had an option to enjoy the tours. In the same way, perhaps the churches are lost without understanding the various ways to be part of the church planting emphasis that would suit their needs and context. Questions worth asking are the following ones: What if churches had models presenting some pathways for churches? Would the models appeal to some churches that had never dreamed about church planting?

### **Developing a Model for Church Planting and Revitalization**

Using a model as a pathway to categorize church planting and revitalization strategies was inspired by Stephen Bevan's *Models of Contextual Theology*. Bevan uses the definition of a model from Avery Dulles. Dulles says that a model "is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated."<sup>28</sup> If the model can illuminate and inspire churches to be more active in church planting by presenting it in a simplified way, more churches will become involved in church planting. My article presents a model developed from the point of view of the churches to inspire an existing church to have a role in church planting. What would be the key factors to consider for narrowing church planting options for the existing church?

The first factor is the target group. Typically, a church plant will be targeting unchurched people. However, while a church plant gains traction in its growth, it also attracts church members to its core team. On the other hand, some church plants start with building up a missional mindset among existing church members, who will eventually become vessels to reach out to the unchurched. Therefore, one key factor, which

---

28 Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 30, cited in Stephan Bevan, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Culture* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), Kindle Edition: Locations 813-815.

will constitute one axis of the model, will be “members.”

The other key factor will be “location.” From the point of view of an existing church, it has two options for selecting a location for church planting. Will the church seek a strategic location where a particular unchurched group lives, or will the church remain in its current location because of ties to its history or other factors? Location can refer to the physical building of the existing church. The other axis of the model will be based on how much the present congregation has an attachment to the physical location (High location), versus a model which strategically reaches a potential group (Low Location).

By combining these two essential factors, the model is comprised of four quadrants.

### **1. Low Location/Low Member**

The first category can be understood as the traditional type of church planting. This category expresses the common characteristic of church planting to start something new, and it is clearly focused on reaching unchurched people. The church plant is not bound by a particular building, but it is strategically planted in an area that is central to a particular group. It can be started by an individual or team that has the mission to reach a particular population. Most of the time, however, the plan is initiated by a denomination or a sizable congregation that has the vision to reach the unreached.

Examples of This Category:

21<sup>st</sup> Century: Denomination-Involved Planting: Pioneer Planter, Mission Team.<sup>29</sup>

Path One: Classic Missionary Strategy, House Church Strategy, Intentional Communities, The Surprise Birth, Integrated Multi-Ethnic Projects.<sup>30</sup>

---

29 Murray.

30 Path 1, *Church Development Strategy* (Nashville, TN: General Board of Discipleship). See UMC Discipleship Ministries, “Church Planting Strategies,” accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/strategies>.

## **2. Low Location/High Member**

The second category of church planting can be categorized as a strategic plan to meet the needs of the existing members as a foundation to reach potential members. The location will be based on a strategic plan for a newly developing area, or where a significant proportion of the church members are located. Therefore, this church plant serves more as a satellite congregation or as a multi-site. The fundamental relationship will be a mother-daughter relationship, where one church nurtures and supports the growth of the church plant to be independent or interdependent. Larger churches initiate this type of church planting. Often, an existing church may open a location for an ethnic congregation to start.

Examples of This Category:

21<sup>st</sup> Century: Multiple Sites, Accidental Parenthood, Mother-Daughter, Satellite Congregation.

Path One: Multi-Site Expansion Strategy, Partner Church/Multiple “Parent” Strategy, Vital Merger Strategy.<sup>31</sup>

## **3. High Location/Low Member**

In this category, a church plant happens within an existing location, continuing to use the physical location of an existing church. Sometimes a declining congregation, which is overburdened by its cost to maintain the building, will partner with a growing church plant, or the denomination can initiate a partnership to renew the church to continue its mission. Some degree of merger is happening in the pathway of this category.

Examples of This Category:

21<sup>st</sup> Century: Adoption, Multiple Congregations.

Path One: Closed/Reopened Facility Strategy, The “Elijah/Elisha” Strategy, Church-Within-a-Church Strategy.<sup>32</sup>

---

31 “Church Planting Strategies.”

32 Ibid.



#### 4. High Location/High Member

This category is more appropriate to define a declining church. When the church becomes bound to its location or physical building and focuses on its own members instead of the people outside the walls of the church, it can be categorized as a plateaued or a declining congregation. Sadly, the statistics show that 80 percent of Protestant churches can be defined in this category.<sup>33</sup> However, there is an interest among these churches to “turn around” this phenomenon. The energy needed to turn around a declining congregation and the challenges it faces will be similar to that needed to plant a church. A “turnaround” church will require a revitalization pastor, a renewal of its mission and vision, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Despite the challenges, the turnaround effort is an efficient use of resources, unless the property is in a state of serious disrepair.

Examples of This Category:

Turnaround Pastor Bootcamps.<sup>34</sup>

#### Analysis of the Model

Two strategies of church planting were presented as an example of the four categories above. The first list of church planting examples was introduced by Stuart Murray in his book, *Planting Churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. His list was focused more on the traditional model of church planting (Low Location/Low Member), with a combination of Low Location/High Member. Murray’s approach can be identified with the overarching trend of considering church planting as a way to renew the missional call of the church. The other list used was a comparison formulated by Path One of the United Methodist Church. Path One is a denominational church-planting emphasis sponsored by the United Methodist Church. Because of the ties to the denomination, not only does the list have traditional models of church planting, but it also has an important strategy for church planting in the third model (High Location/Low Member) category. The attempts to cultivate pathways of utilizing church planting as a method to

---

33 Dan Eymann, “Turnaround Church Ministry: Causes of Decline and Changes Needed for Turnaround,” *Great Commission Research Journal* 3, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 147.

34 See [www.turnaroundpastors.com](http://www.turnaroundpastors.com).

revitalize the existing churches seems to be a unique characteristic of this list.

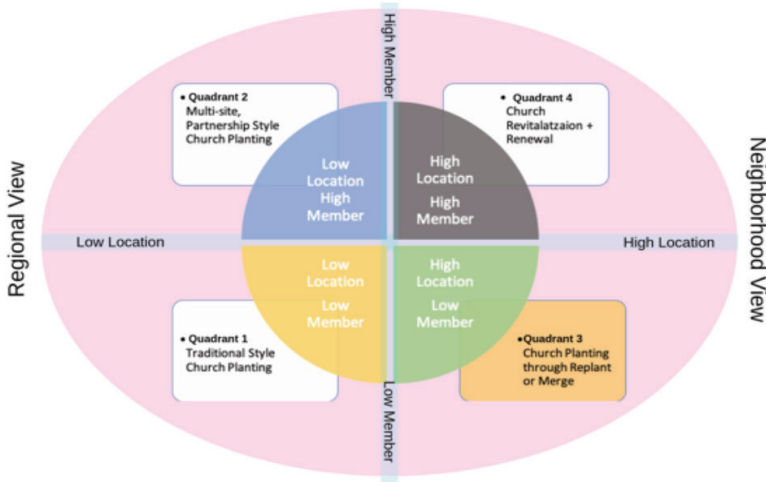
The traditional type of church planting (category 1) and multi-site church planting (category 2) have limitations due to their goal of becoming Regional Churches rather than Neighborhood Churches. As mentioned earlier, there is a trend to revitalize the Ex-Neighborhood churches through church planting. Denominational initiatives helped many struggling Ex-Neighborhood churches.

The above efforts (categories 1 and 2) by Protestant churches may continue to thrive, but a new interest in category 3 (High Location/Low Member) led by small and mid-size churches is noticeable. Mark Clifton, in *Reclaiming Glory*, introduces a concept called “replanting.” Replanting is a church plant done in an existing church, which corresponds to category 3. Clifton uses the parable of the fig tree, and how the unfruitful fig tree has to be cut down.<sup>35</sup> The emerging interest in replanting is an effort to change the old wineskin into a new wineskin to receive the new wine. If the churches succeed in the transformation of their missional approach, the call of the church will be rekindled as a Neighborhood Church. When a church becomes more involved in the life of the community as a Neighborhood Church, the dying church will be able to reclaim the glory of our Lord. (See figure 2.)

---

<sup>35</sup> Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Creating a Gospel Legacy throughout North America* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), Kindle Edition: Locations 204.

FIGURE 2.



### Denominational and Local Church Initiatives

A clear pathway for existing churches to partake in the revitalization movement through church planting is necessary. The denomination must lay down a clear pathway to transform the Ex-Neighborhood churches into vital-missional Neighborhood Churches. Through understanding the changing trends of church planting and seeing specific examples of existing churches being revitalized through the category 3 approach, more churches will become engaged in this movement. Now is the time for existing churches to develop and implement a type of church planting which is influenced by traditional church planting. The traditional church planting fundamentals can be implemented for the transformation of existing churches.

When God unveiled His plan to extend the covenant to all nations, Paul was used as a vessel to share the Gospel with the Gentiles. His approach to fulfill his mission was accomplished through his incarnational strategy. Roland Allen introduced Paul’s approach to reaching the Gentiles as a church planter.<sup>36</sup> Through his efforts, there was a movement of Gentile

36 Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (GLH Publishing, 2011), Kindle Edition:

believers into the community of faith. The early church had to respond to this movement, so they came together in Jerusalem to discuss the emerging conflict between these new proselytes and Jewish converts. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) came to a resolution to ease the tension. Even though there was no evidence of a creed announcing their decision,<sup>37</sup> it can be assumed that there was a significant change in the dynamic of the church.

In a similar way, the recent church planting emphasis will influence the existing churches. As Paul's initiative to invite the Gentiles into God's plan led to the assembly of the early church to come up with ways to implement the change, we see how the denominations are responding to this call to reclaim the glory. However, the effort to renew our missional call cannot be accomplished only through the drive of denominational offices and a handful of large churches.

### **Examples of Category 3 Church Renewal Planting**

#### **1. Church Mergers**

A church merger can be one of the most difficult paths of church planting. That difficulty is probably why we don't see many churches merging. The energy to convince the existing members to let go of their church identity and form a new identity can be overburdening for any capable leader. If the merging churches leave their existing locations and start fresh in a neutral location, the merge will be easier. However, when one church loses its identity and becomes a part of another existing church, the effort to truly create something new in an old wineskin can be difficult. Without neutral leadership from a higher level of the denomination, merging two existing congregations is still a challenge.

#### **2. Strategic Partnership**

North Point Partners ([northpointpartners.org](http://northpointpartners.org)) saw the need for local church pastors to be connected and equipped to reach people in different communities. With the brand power of North Point Ministries, one of the most successful megachurch ministries in recent years, they are inviting

---

locations 92-93.

37 Ibid, location 1285.

churches to commit to a partnership to enhance their ministry. For a monthly service fee, the partner churches receive “content, curricula, best practices, systems, and consulting” provided by North Point Ministries.<sup>38</sup> The pastor will be invited to various training opportunities to be equipped and network with other leaders. The church will also be listed on the partner page, so when people search for a church that has a ministry approach similar to that of North Point Ministries, they could be led to that particular partner church.

This approach could be translated into the existing structure of the United Methodist Church. Many of the partner benefits emulate what churches should be receiving from a denominational body. If the denominational body can effectively utilize technology to accommodate the need of individual churches, this approach might provide energy for church renewal to churches of any size.

### 3. Family Church

Family Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, started a unique type of church networking. The goal of Family Church is to empower local small and mid-size churches through networking and a clear direction. So far, they have thirteen churches merged under this goal and have “a vision to plant 100 neighborhood churches.”<sup>39</sup>

The feature that makes their approach unique is the preaching style. Each local church will still maintain their campus pastor as their teaching pastor. However, each campus pastor will gather for a monthly preaching meeting, where they receive an orientation to the sermon series and outlines. All campus pastors have the freedom to contextualize the sermon to fit the needs of their communities within the bounds of the outline. Family Church emphasizes a one-church, multiple location philosophy which helps the locations to share staff and events, benefitting both the larger church body and the individual neighborhood bodies.

With the existing denominational structure, in particular, United Methodist Churches can easily adopt this philosophy. If the denomination

---

38 Northpoint Partners, “Explore Partnership,” accessed March 5, 2019, <https://northpointpartners.org/partnership>.

39 Family Church, “Our Story,” accessed March 5, 2019, <https://gofamilychurch.org/story/>.

structured a cluster of churches under the same strategic network, the churches would only be required to form a combined leadership structure and budget because the name and doctrine is already unified.

#### 4. Revitalization Leadership Development

At the denominational level, efforts are being made to develop leaders who can renew the vision of the churches so that congregations can be revitalized. Because of their seminary education, many pastors are equipped with the technical skills of preaching, teaching, and shepherding. However, these competent pastors might not have been prepared to navigate and lead in the changing culture to help the church renew its missiological understanding. Therefore, denominations need to provide revitalization training, coaching, and support for leaders.

### Conclusion

The denomination should present the framework to invite average-sized churches to experience revitalization through the category 3 approach (High Location/Low Member) or category 4 approach (High Location/High Member). In the resources released by Path One, the District Superintendent is to be a “chief missional strategist” by the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church. However, at the same time, Path One points out that the notion of the District Superintendent as a chief missional strategist is not explicitly introduced or implemented.<sup>40</sup> If clear pathways existed to present the concept of replanting churches, vital mergers, vital partnerships, and church revitalization as various means of revitalizing Neighborhood Churches, we could anticipate that the District Superintendents could fulfill their role with more competence. Therefore, the judicatory offices need to develop a plan, and when they do so, it should be done with the focus on category 3 and other types of church planting.

The shift, however, cannot be accomplished without the initiatives of the leaders of the local church. During an interview with Mark Ogren, Director of Congregational Excellence, which oversees the effort of the

---

40 Path 1, *DS as Chief Missional Strategist* (Nashville: General Board of Discipleship): 1.

“All Things New” plan, he continually referred to the need for “Vital Leaders.” Despite many concepts and theories, he says that “without vital leadership, they all sound good in theory.”<sup>41</sup> Not only should the churches identify those vital leaders, but they should also find ways to nurture these leaders.

When the leadership of the denomination and the leadership of the local churches are aligned in a unified vision of church planting, the existing churches will reclaim their missiological and ecclesiological call. When Ex-Neighborhood churches transform into vital-missional Neighborhood Churches through the efforts of church revitalization and church planting, the churches will be used for the mission of God once again. This united effort of all churches will turn into a powerful movement to change the tide of declining churches.

## **Bibliography**

Allen, Roland. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* GLH Publishing, 2011.

Barna Group, “Report Examines the State of Mainline Protestant Churches.” Research released in *Leaders & Pastors*, December 7, 2009. Accessed April 6, 2017. <https://www.barna.com/research/report-examines-the-state-of-mainline-protestant-churches/>.

Bevan, Stephan. *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Culture*. New York: Orbis Books, 2004.

Center of Congregational Excellence, *New Faith Communities 2008-2016*. Richmond, VA, Virginia Annual Conference, 2017.

Clifton, Mark. *Reclaiming Glory: Creating a Gospel Legacy throughout North America*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016.

DiVietro, Christopher. “Understanding Diversification in the Church

---

<sup>41</sup> Mark Ogren, interview with the author. April 26, 2017.

Growth Movement.” *Great Commission Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2016).

Dulles, Avery. *Models of Revelation*. New York: Orbis Books, 2001.

Eymann, Dan. “Turnaround Church Ministry: Causes of Decline and Changes Needed for Turnaround.” *Great Commission Research Journal* 3, no. 2 (Winter 2012).

Family Church. “Our Story.” Accessed March 5, 2019. <https://gofamilychurch.org/story/>.

Hartford Institute for Religion Research. “Fast Facts about American Religion.” Accessed March 6, 2019. [http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast\\_facts.html#sizecong](http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#sizecong).

Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2006.

Jones, Ezra Earl. *Strategies for New Churches*. San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1972.

Jones, Ezra Earl, and Robert L. Wilson. *What’s Ahead for Old First Church*. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

Lewis, Candace M., Douglas Ruffle, Philip J. Brooks, eds. *The State of United Methodist Church Planting, in the United States*. Nashville: Discipleship Ministries, 2015.

McIntosh, Gary L. “Church Movements of the Last Fifty Years in North America.” *Great Commission Research Journal* 2, no. 1 (Summer 2010).

Murray, Stewart. *Planting Churches in the 21st Century: A Guide for Those Who Want Fresh Perspectives and New Ideas for Creating*



*Congregations*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010.

Northpoint Partners. "Explore Partnership." Accessed March 5, 2019, <https://northpointpartners.org/partnership>.

Ogren, Mark. Interview with the author. April 26, 2017.

Ott, Craig, and Gene Wilson. *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010.

Path 1, "*Church Development Strategy*." Nashville, TN: General Board of Discipleship.

\_\_\_\_\_. "*DS as Chief Missional Strategist*." Nashville: General Board of Discipleship.

Payne, J. D. "Mission and Church Planting." In *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford, 200-210. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011.

Sparks, Paul, Time Soerens and Dwight J. Friesen. *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014.

Stetzer, Ed. "The Evolution of Church Growth, Church Health, and the Missional Church: An Overview of the Church Growth Movement from, and back to, Its Missional Roots." Paper Presented at the American Society for Church Growth Annual Conference, 2008. Accessed February 4, 2019. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/assets/10231.pdf>.

Stetzer, Ed. *Planting Missional Churches*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006.

Stetzer, Ed, Micah Fries, and Daniel Im. *The State of Church Planting in the U.S., New Churches 2015 Exclusive Report*. Nashville: LifeWay Research, 2015.

Stevenson, Phil. "A Theology of Church Planting." *Great Commission Research Journal* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2011).

250 Task Force. "Comprehensive 250 Task Force Report: All Things New Report." Presented and approved at the 226th Virginia Annual Conference, United Methodist Church, June 2008.

UMC Discipleship Ministries. "Church Planting Strategies." Accessed March 5, 2019. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts/strategies>.

### **About the Author**

Seungsoo "RJ" Jun is the son of a church planter, and he is the senior pastor of Raleigh Court United Methodist Church in Roanoke, Virginia. Seungsoo dreams of how God's light will continue to shine in this world. Happily married to Woori Kown, with two sons (Jin and Peter), the family is honored to be part of God's mission. He holds an M.Div. from Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, and a Th.M in Intercultural Studies from Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky. Email: [junssoo@gmail.com](mailto:junssoo@gmail.com).