

# The Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba Missions & Church Extension

## Why Daughter a Church?

Why should our churches consider daughtering additional congregations? The answer to this question is really rather simple; planting daughter congregations is the most biblical and effective strategy of evangelism.<sup>1</sup> Let's explain that in a little greater detail.

1. The most Biblical method of evangelism is church planting. In obedience to the great commission the apostles went from town to town planting churches. They didn't start Christian camps, orphanages, hospitals, campus ministries or evangelistic associations. They lead people to Jesus and planted churches.
2. The most effective method of evangelism is church planting. Research has shown that when compared to other outreach strategies, church planting is the most effective method of reaching people. Dollar for dollar, hour for hour, the most effective method of doing evangelism is church planting.
3. The most effective way to plant churches is daughter church planting. Healthy organisms reproduce. The most natural way to birth a church is from another church, not from a mission agency or denomination. Christian Schwartz says, "Hardly anything demonstrates the health of a congregation as much as the willingness—and ability!—to give birth to new congregations. The opposite is true as well. Hardly anything is a more clear indication of illness than structures which by design hinder church multiplication, or at best permit it as an absolute exception."<sup>2</sup>

Tim Keller writes, "The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for 1) the numerical growth of the Body of Christ in any city, and 2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else—not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes—will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting. This is an eyebrow raising statement. But to those who have done any study at all, it is not even controversial."<sup>3</sup>

In spite of these reasons, when the topic of daughtering a new congregation comes up, there normally are a number of questions or objections. The three most common objections I run across are;

1. There are plenty of churches in this area already. Surely we don't need another church!
2. I'm afraid that sending a group of people out of our church will weaken us as a church. There are plenty of struggling churches around. Let's work at strengthening and renewing them before we try to plant more churches.
3. Daughtering a new congregation will cost us too much in terms of dollars and in the people we will lose. The cost is too great!

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<sup>1</sup> The following notes are a summary of information from Dynamic Church Planting International. You can read more at <http://www.dpci.org/NewChurches/Daughtering/default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Christian Schwartz, Natural Church Development (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996) p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, Why Plant Churches <http://www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/why%20plant%202%2011%20Leaders.pdf>

How are we to respond to these objections? Let's look at them one at a time.

First, there are plenty of churches in our area (town, city) already. We don't need another one. The answer to this objection is that new churches are better at reaching the unchurched than are older churches. Dozens of studies by a wide range of denominations confirm that the average new church gains most of its new members (60-80%) from the ranks of the unchurched, while churches over 10-15 years of age gain 80-90% of new members by transfer from other congregations.<sup>4</sup> There are a number of reasons for this, but basically it boils down to the fact that new congregations are forced to focus on the needs of its non-members in order to simply survive while older congregations naturally focus on meeting the needs of their members. The first objection assumes that older congregations can reach the unchurched as well as new congregations. But that is not the case. We need both renewed older churches and lots of new churches to reach the lost.

The second objection is: sending out a group from our church to plant a church will weaken our church. We already have too many struggling congregations. Tied to this objection is the fact that in our church culture we tend to reward churches that grow to be large and honor their pastors rather than rewarding those that grow God's kingdom by sending people out to do evangelism. We need to reward both. The answer to this objection is that planting new churches is one of the best ways to revitalize many older churches and renew the whole denomination.

New congregations often have the freedom to try new ideas that may appear too risky for the older congregation. When these ideas work, the older congregations take note and get the courage to try it themselves. The growth of a new congregation can give hope to the older ones that growth is possible. A new attitude and faith can spread through the churches.

It is true that birthing a congregation is costly. There is the pain of seeing good friends and some leaders go away to form a new church. But usually the mother church experiences a surge of high self-esteem and an influx of new enthusiastic leaders and members.

This second objection often boils down to, will we rejoice over the new people who are coming into God's kingdom or will we object to the possibility of losing families to the new congregation?

The third objection is that daughtering a congregation is too costly. Yes the mother church does pay a price, but daughtering a new church is the most effective way to win new believers. God calls us to costly commitments. In spite of the cost, new church planting is the only way we can be sure we are going to increase the number of believers in Manitoba and one of the best ways to renew the whole Body of Christ.

Gary Rohrmayer, director of church planting for the Midwest Baptist Conference in the US talks about a 1,200-member church that daughtered a church. The new church quickly grew to 200, but in the same period, the 1,200-member church grew to 1,600. Since the established church had actually added more members, the leaders wondered whether they should now put their resources into expanding their own ministry instead of planting another church. Gary asked them how many adult converts they had seen in that period. Their answer was eight, while the new church they started had about 100. Gary's question to them now was, "You tell me whether you should start another church or not."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For a fuller discussion of these points, see Tim Keller, *Why Plant Churches*

<sup>5</sup> Tim Stafford, *Go and Plant Churches of All Peoples*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/september/36.68.html>