



PLANTING PAPERS

(Summer/Autumn 1992)

The magazine of the '1:3:6 Group' for the network of Baptist Church Planters

A word in season - a starter from the 1:3:6 (formerly 'BACUP') editors for discussion and comment by Baptists in England and Wales.

“2001 by 2001” - The Mathematics! Editorial

Many cries have gone out recently for prayer targets, (or ‘faith goals’ or ‘a vision’ depending on your theology), to be set within the Baptist Union for church planting. On the one hand, this idea is enthusiastically welcomed, but it has also met with some suspicion and cries for caution, arising out of the legitimate concern to preserve the independence of the local

churches which, it is said, should not be encroached upon by dictates from Didcot.

However, it is the conviction of the 1:3:6 editors that, as a union of churches, it would be good and right to set ourselves acceptable and agreed on mission targets for church planting - part of a fresh impetus to recover our radical roots. Clearly, these should evolve from

Planting Papers is the magazine of the newly named ‘1:3:6 Group’ - the network of Baptist Church Planters, (formerly BACUP). The 1:3:6 Group aims to promote all aspects of church planting within the Baptist Union and beyond, based on 1 Corinthians 3:6. All contributors, in sympathy with this aim, have full freedom of expression, and views cannot be said necessarily to represent those of the 1:3:6 executive or editors.

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what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches, but to encourage and coordinate them we need to organise our Associational and Union structures primarily to enable the task of mission. Hence we would arrive at a joint vision worked out and originated in local churches, but encouraged, inspired and enabled by an enhanced inter-relating in mission initiatives.

If this is to happen effectively, then some 'landscape gardeners' are required. If church plants are seen as flourishing and fruitful works of the Holy Spirit in God's harvest fields, then each church planter is someone who is labouring to cultivate or water a plant in one part of the field, but others are required to have a wider 'landscape' vision. We need some landscape gardeners to take the initiative and begin the process of bringing together, verbalising and cementing the vision that the Holy Spirit appears to be already clarifying in many of our churches. This is our contribution to that process, freshly inspired by the Challenge 2000 DAWN Conference and from the standpoint of being in touch with many churches and church planters through the 1:3:6 (BACUP) network.

We believe that it is a realistic possibility for the Baptist churches in England to see 2001 new congregations started by the year 2001.

Many may think this target is far too high to aim for and will only result in disappointment. However, we believe and can show that '2001 by 2001' is a realistic possibility from within our existing Union churches alone. It is a grand goal and requires explanation.

(1) This is not 2001 new, autonomous B.U. churches necessarily, but 2001 new worshipping and witnessing congregations planted out from existing Baptist churches. Some of these plants may become independent, others will remain daughter churches, and realistically still others might become autonomous without choosing to join the B.U. Some might be 'Associational Plants' or resurrections of dying causes. The important thing is that, whatever the method, 2001 new, living, Baptist *congregations* can be established.

(2) Our potential mother churches can be separated into 'planting stock' and 'operational churches'. *'Planting stock'* are those churches

who have recent church planting (or 'planted') experience or who have immediate church planting potential due to their size. '*Operational churches*' are all the others without that obvious identity but who may nonetheless have church planting in mind. Although they are not quantifiable precisely, they can be included by making conservative estimates.

2.1 Planting Stock - with recent church planting experience:

This category includes churches that have recently been planted (daughters) or churches that have themselves planted out (mothers).

Since 1980, Baptists have definitely been involved in the establishment of 183 'new churches'. There may have been others, but these are the only ones recorded by the B.U. Mission Office.

37	Autonomous and now in the B.U.
29	Autonomous and not in the B.U.
51	Daughter congregations, still not autonomous
23	Local Ecumenical Projects
34	'Resurrections'
9	Splits/Divisions
<u>183</u>	Total

From these, the only daughter churches who we can reasonably assume have church planting as an active policy for future growth will be those in the first three categories above. That gives us:

$$37 + 29 + 51 = 117 \text{ daughter churches.}$$

Add to this the 'mother' churches from which these daughters have been planted. No doubt some mothers will have planted more than one daughter, so we may assume these 117 daughters have come from only 75 mother churches.

Thus, churches with recent 'planted' or 'planting' experience is:

$$117 + 75 = 192 \text{ 'planting stock' churches.}$$

2.2 Planting stock - with immediate church planting potential

Many other churches within the B.U. have experienced growth to the point where they have the potential for church planting almost immediately. We can reasonably define this as **any church with over 100 active members - approximately 450 Baptist churches in England.**

Most of the 75 'mothers' from the last decade (included in section 2.1 above) are from this group of 100+ membership churches. Assuming that all 75 are, the remaining planting stock with immediate church planting potential is:

$$450 - 75 = 375 \text{ 'planting stock' churches.}$$

2.3 "Operational Churches" - other church planting potential

Three other factors can be considered here.

- (i) Those churches of less than 100 members who nonetheless share in the present vision and who intend to play a full and active part in church planting despite smaller beginnings;
- (ii) New churches formed by individual Baptist pioneers;
- (iii) Associational initiatives in planting.

We can conservatively estimate that these will add another 100 'churches' or causes to our planting stock as operational churches.

Thus, **TOTAL PLANTING POTENTIAL:**

$$192 + 375 + 100 = 667 \text{ churches}$$

(3) It is fair to assume that the initial phase of reproduction from these 667 churches will take on average another 5 years. This gives sufficient time for the planting stock to be envisioned and prepared for its first (or next) church plant by 1997. (For many, it will come much sooner than this!) This gives us a potential **667 new churches by 1997.**

However, it is not unreasonable to assume that both the initial stock of 667 mother churches and the 667 newly planted daughters by 1997 will want to plant again, and the second time round should be quicker than the first by at least a year (with church planting so much in their blood and a more positive atmosphere generally, this is perhaps not too optimistic). Hence in another 4 years, by 2001, planting will again occur, adding another 1334 new churches, (ie. twice 667).

This is a total of:

$$667 \text{ (1997)} + 1334 \text{ (2001)} = 2001 \text{ new churches established by 2001}$$

Hence, "2001 by 2001" is not only a good slogan but a realistic potential for Baptist churches in this Decade of Evangelism.

If we set no targets we can be sure to meet them - we need them to help spur us on forward with ever greater vigour under God. Clearly the above calculations are partly based on estimates and assumptions, but they go to show the aim is realistic. We are aware of many Baptist churches with plans for church planting in this coming decade that far exceed the above expectations. If they were reproduced elsewhere, this could make even '2001 by 2001' seem a very modest target!

Strategy

But the setting of denominational, national or Associational targets is not the end of the matter. We also need to devise and adopt strategies which will enable Associations and churches to realise these goals. The questions that will immediately spring to mind are as follows:

(1) **Mapping:** Is there room for this many new Baptist churches in England, and, if so, where?

Are any areas really 'over-churched' compared to the numbers of unchurched people? Where are the new towns or developing areas that need particular targetting? How do we motivate church planters to enter the vast inner-city harvest fields?

(2) **Man-power:** Have we enough people who can lead such ventures? Have we the facilities or on-the-job opportunities to train people in time for service this decade? How can we best train and mobilise lay church planters?

(3) **Money:** How do we afford such an ambitious programme, especially with Home Missions in such a bad way? How can we encourage tent-making planters, planting without church buildings, or sharing resources between congregations?

(4) **Models:** How can we ensure that new Baptist churches will be culturally relevant? What new definitions and models of church do we need to adopt? How do we ensure we do not reproduce the same kind of churches which

Quote:

"Church planting is not just an issue for the church up the road but for my church as well, even if I cannot be involved directly at this stage"

- Steve Ibbotson

attract the same kind of people as we've always done? What about cross-cultural church planting or churches for the 'unchurched'?

These key strategy questions will be addressed in future editions of "1:3:6 Planting Papers". Why not write to the editors with your ideas or experiences?

Hard questions and tough decisions need to be faced in the denomination, in our Associations and in all our churches if we are to see "2001 by 2001" becoming a reality. The 90% of people outside our churches demands that we face these issues soon.

The Decade of Evangelism has already come under fire from other faiths. How then can Christians justify planting more churches in a multi-faith society already too divided? Nigel Wright explores this crucial issue.

Evangelism and Religious Liberty by Nigel Wright

Religious liberty means not only the right to hold certain beliefs but also the right to seek to persuade and convert others to hold those beliefs with us. Anything less than this is not true religious liberty.

This statement needs to be made. Only yesterday I heard on the radio that Moslems have declared their own 'decade of evangelism'. Immediately this was taken to suggest that Moslems and Christians are in competition. The ensuing dialogue contained the following elements: should Christians and Moslems attempt to convert each other, or should they leave each other alone as people who at least believe in something sincerely and attempt instead to win their own nominal adherents to true observance? Are there not enough secularised non-believers to be seeking to convert without proselytising other religious believers? Does the attempt to convert someone in this way not imply the 'superiority' of one religion over another and therefore a lack of proper respect? Isn't the attempt to convert someone of another religious tradition really an intolerant approach which fails to respect their religious freedom?

The same issues were confronted in the petition of some 2000 clergy presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury objecting to multi-faith acts of worship in English cathedrals. The Archbishop was plainly embarrassed (although for political rather than theological reasons) by such a strong body of opinion. The petition insisted that Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and humanity, therefore apparently syncretistic acts of worship should be avoided

for the sake of the integrity of all those involved.

'In-house' Christianity?

The problem the Christian faces in this debate is that he or she cannot adopt the attitude of virtually every other world religion in saying that it matters not which path they follow, so long as it brings them into communion with the absolute. Neither can the Christian rest content with the apparent tolerance of our society which relegates religion to the realm of private opinion and works on the 'live and let live' principle. The Christian faith is a faith to proclaim, a missionary religion which loses itself and becomes something other when it loses the will to convert. Claims that Christians should go 'in-house' and confine their evangelism to the already nominally Christian ignore the fact that were it not for the burning evangelistic passion of apostles, saints and martyrs, Christianity would never have gotten beyond Palestine and there would be no nominal Christians to convert. One suspects concerning some religious leaders that their Christianity is almost accidental. Whatever the mainstream religious traditions of their nation had been, Christian or otherwise, they would have embraced them as the means to social and professional advancement rather than out of profound (and offensive) Christian conviction.

The pressure is definitely on to play down the claims of the Christian faith to finality and fulfilment in the religious quest for humanity. This is particularly true of the established

church. In a multi-cultural, pluralist society the need is for an established religion which will unite across the social and cultural divides rather than accentuate the differences. Once upon a time, when people foolishly believed in the English cultural superiority, the idea that our religion was better than anybody else's was convenient. Exclusivity was the order of the day. Now in reaction against imperialism and in the altered situation, established religion is required to reinforce another, inclusive ideology. Traditional claims about Christ must be reinterpreted to meet the new political situation. Both of these approaches illustrate the ultimate folly of a state religion. What we need is a better understanding of the nature of religious liberty.

Sceptical Tolerance

In this field we might say that there are two kinds of tolerance. There is a brand which is in abundant supply in the contemporary world and we might call it **sceptical tolerance**. It is a tolerance founded on the view that all religious claims are ultimately relative, private opinions in a world where there is no access to final or ultimate truth. What other social view can therefore be taken other than the live and let live view? Everybody is theoretically tolerated because nobody can be right. But such a tolerance breaks down. The one thing it cannot tolerate is the claim that its fundamental axiom is wrong. It proves to be excessively intolerant when it encounters those who claim that the story they tell is not only true for them but true for everybody else. Such people are labelled as 'fundamentalist' and shown to be deviants from the norm. They are branded as weird and eccentric and in this way the intolerance of the supposedly tolerant is exposed.

Productive Tolerance

An alternative approach we might label **productive tolerance**. This is not rooted in scepticism but in the belief that there is truth of which we may be sure. Yet for the sake of that truth, because truth may only be discovered and not imposed or forced upon people against their will, the religious freedom of all people is to be respected. This freedom is not only that of believing or not believing but of seeking to convert and persuade others to my opinion also. This kind of tolerance can embrace not only the

person who is unsure about their beliefs but even those who believe profoundly that they have seen things as they really are. If somebody does not believe in something sufficiently to want to persuade others to see things the same way then their belief does not amount to a can of beans. A test of true Christianity will always be whether it has the power to convert or has merely become a religious point of view. Neither should we object when others attempt to convert us to their viewpoint. We should only object if the right not to be so converted is taken away from us or from others or if beliefs which deviate from the cultural norm are penalised.

Of course, the right to persuade others is taken for granted in every other sphere of life in a Western democracy including the political and the commercial. It is only when we are dealing with religion that it is portrayed as intolerance. Religious perspectives on social and ethical issues are continually being met with the question, 'what right have you to impose your views upon others?', when no such imposition is intended but the right is simply being exercised to persuade others to hold that viewpoint also.

Humbug

Productive tolerance is 'productive' because it realises that in the interface and interaction between different convictions there is something good taking place. The socialist regimes of Eastern Europe doomed themselves to extinction because they did not allow healthy debate or dissent. They ended up talking humbug because they would not allow their doctrines to be tested. All religious beliefs benefit from being tested in the crucible of opposing convictions.

I am in this article arguing that the right to evangelise is crucial for the fostering of religious liberty. A society which wants to stifle evangelism is on its way to becoming intolerant. The actual fact of evangelism helps therefore to preserve a society's freedoms. The crucial issue for Christians is to acknowledge wholeheartedly that our right to convert others goes hand in hand with the right of others to convert us. We should welcome the fact that other people have sufficiently strong convictions to motivate them in this way. It is apathy which is the great enemy. We should protect the rights of others even more zealously than we guard our own.

But we should also insist to ourselves and others that the more profound issue is not the fact of evangelism but the style and manner in which we engage in it. Because I believe strongly means that I can understand and respect those who also believe strongly but in something else. We seek to win others for Christ because we respect and love them in their otherness and their individuality. Evangelism is not about winning others so that we can possess them in

our empire but about bearing witness to them so that the potential which is within them may be fulfilled in Christ. It is concerned not only with the quantity of Christians in the world but with the quality of our relationships with believers, non-believers and other-believers alike.

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“From the Sharp End” Planting Shrublands by John Maile

Graham Woolgar and I have been asked to look at the recently planted Shrublands Christian Fellowship from the two perspectives of mother and daughter. We have deliberately not colluded over our two parts of this article, and we have both tried to be as objective, or descriptive, as possible, leaving the reader to draw any conclusions. I am quite sure that our experience of planting the Shrublands Christian Fellowship is in no way unique, and if this article enables others to prepare more thoroughly, or to avoid some of the pitfalls in mother/daughter relationships it will have more than served its purpose. One more caution: while we have tried to represent the feelings of the two fellowships we represent, they are themselves diverse, and not everyone would see things in quite the way that Graham and I do - which is, of course, one reason some of the problems we have encountered have arisen in the first place!

(1) The View from West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church (The “Mother”)

by John Maile

Perhaps the real problem is that there is no such thing as the view from WWSBC! Like so many evangelical Baptist churches the membership represents a very broad spectrum of views from the almost die-hard traditionalists to the firmly and enthusiastically committed charismatics, with the majority taking up various positions between the two extremes. (Incidentally, I dislike these labels intensely; they are usually misleading and divisive, but they are a con-

venient shorthand for this article.)

When I arrived on the scene in 1988 it quickly became clear to me that as far as Shrublands was concerned the church had a number of different approaches. There were those who were doing the work - obviously keen and committed. Then there were those who, while not actually involved practically, took a lively interest and supported in prayer; a third group knew little about the work and took, apparently, little interest. A final group, not large but significant, seemed somehow almost to resent Shrublands, or were uneasy or even suspicious, although these views were rarely if ever openly expressed. Looking back, we can see now that this was fertile ground for the growth of misunderstanding.

The Deacons Conference in January 1990 was remarkably united in feeling that it was the right time for the planting of a fellowship which would meet much more regularly, would have its own leadership team, and would eventually become independent, having its own membership, rules, etc. This unity was itself misleading, however. For many it was a positive evangelistic outreach, but for some, I sensed, it was a good way to get rid of an element in the church who were somehow threatening. If they went to Shrublands the rest of the church could settle down again.

Things moved very quickly - perhaps on reflection too quickly, in that the church as a whole probably needed more time to assimilate

the prospect of change and to be able to grasp the thinking behind it and catch the vision. Because at that time we had been through the painful experience of losing some of our deacons ostensibly over the charismatic issue the link was formed in many people's minds between these issues and the founding of Shrublands, this in spite of repeated assurances to the contrary.

It has not been easy for some to avoid the idea of rivalry entering their thinking, especially when they have seen some of the church's young people, for example, being drawn into the work on Shrublands rather than becoming involved in service in the main church, or when Shrublands have arranged meetings or events that clash with events at WWSBC. Inevitably the decision by about thirty folk to make Shrublands their spiritual home has left a noticeable gap in the congregation which some have found hard to accept, even though they recognise the importance of Shrublands having such a nucleus to begin the work. Because the new work has grown far more quickly than was anticipated, with evening celebrations being added to the morning services, we see less and less of the Shrublands folk and the original vision of a daughter church slowly growing over several years towards independence has been replaced by the reality of a virtually independent fellowship after only eighteen months. Yet at the same time the Shrublands Fellowship is still heavily dependent financially on WWSBC and will probably be so for some years. That, for some, is not an easy pill to swallow.

The decision not to include the word 'Baptist' in the name of the Fellowship was a problem for some in our church, and now we are working through the issues related to membership and leadership, constitution and statement of faith in preparation for independence. For some Christians on Shrublands the link with WWSBC was a problem: they wanted to be part of the new Fellowship but not if it was going to be, in some shape or form, a Baptist church.

I am glad to say that Graham and I still meet once a week to share news and pray together, and I continue to share with the Shrublands leadership as they plan their future. It is vital that these lines of communication remain open, and we encourage one of the

Shrublands leaders to attend the first part of our deacons meetings to share what is happening on Shrublands, and roughly once every two months they take our Sunday evening service. The vision we both share for the future is one of partnership between the two fellowships: we need one another, and we need to be seen to be working together for the sake of the gospel.

One final personal reflection. The release of four deacons and some thirty members to Shrublands is inevitably a loss for us at WWSBC which I feel keenly. Without implying any criticism of all those who have stayed with us, those who are involved in Shrublands are, I think inevitably, the outgoing, gifted, committed Christians with a sense of adventure and vision and their 'going' leaves more than just physical gaps in the congregation. They are not easily replaced, and we are the poorer so that Shrublands can have the resources it needs. But rather than bemoan our lot we need to capture that sense of vision which has led them out to their new work, so that God can do new things for us where we are.

There are, of course, many other things that could be said, but space does not permit. Let me emphasise in conclusion that I have spoken personally and would not expect every member of WWSBC to concur with everything I have said.

(2) The View from Shrublands (The "Daughter")

by Graham Woolgar

Lessons to be learned.....

Looking back, I believe the main problem was in the areas of education and information. We were entering into a venture with no experience of church planting, and so learned by our mistakes as we progressed. Some, at least, of these mistakes could have been avoided if we and the mother church had understood better the processes involved.

In an attempt, which I am sure was for the right reasons, to make sure that those being released to be deacons in the new work did not feel isolated, too much pressure was put on them to remain involved with the parent church. We should have prepared the parent church better for what all parents find hard - letting go. But this is essential if the daughter church is to

thrive; massive input is needed and total commitment, especially from the leaders.

A second problem area was that of misunderstanding and rumour. 'Did you know that this new fellowship is the result of a split over the charismatic issue?' Well, no; neither did I or John Maile until the rumour got back to us from some members, and from other churches! Again, I believe better education of the fellowship on our part would have been the answer.

It is sad that the immediate reaction of many people to the starting of a new fellowship is to assume there must have been a split somewhere. I praise God that Shrublands Christian Fellowship was a positive church plant, the ground having been prepared for over forty years.

We are still learning (by our mistakes!). We are now viewing the relationship between the two fellowships as a partnership. There will always be a special relationship between us, and I pray that everyone involved, in both groups, will do all they can to quash rumours and pull together.

John Maile is Minister at West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church, East Surrey and Graham Woolgar is the Pastoral Assistant, leading Shrublands Christian Fellowship.

ASSOCIATIONAL DAY CONFERENCES ON CHURCH PLANTING

Here's your chance to get church planting on the agenda of Your Association.

The 1:3:6 (BACUP) group is encouraging everyone to write to their Associational Secretary to request a local day conference on church planting. All the Secretaries have already received information and resources about this from the 1:3:6 group. Speakers with experience and expertise can be provided. But your Associational Secretary needs to know there's a demand for such a day.

Don't delay - write straight away!

Let's see every Association getting to grips with the necessary challenges of church planting.

B.I.C.E.C. Conference Review

(Baptist International Conference on Establishing Churches)

at Swanwick, Derbyshire, March 1992

by Mike Hooton

It was a great privilege to represent the East Midlands Baptist Association at the conference.

Others are leading the way

Church planting is coming on the agenda in this country and in the USA. But elsewhere in the world, it is not so much 'on the agenda' - it is simply happening, and has been for many years! Whilst we in the west talk about it, others do it! There were many encouraging and fascinating stories of church planting shared in the week, and space prevents listing them all.

In Bangladesh, in 1980, there were 27 Baptist churches; between 1980 and 1990, 224

new churches were planted. In Zaire, in the last 20 years, 342 new churches have been planted, 69 in Kinshasa alone. In Brazil, the number of Baptist churches has doubled every 5 years since 1965. In Romania, since the revolution 2 years ago, there have been 320 new churches planted.

We need to receive as much help as possible from churches that are bearing fruit, rather than from committees theorising about viticulture!

Church planting is one of the best forms of evangelism

Amongst the British delegation there was a widespread, indeed unanimous, feeling that

church planting needs urgently to occupy our local churches, our Associations and our national Union. I took a number of challenges away from the conference.

First, challenges to local churches

How much is church planting occupying our vision? Are we seeking opportunities to plant new congregations in localities where there is no evangelical witness? The conference issued a statement called 'The Derbyshire Declaration'. The last clause states that

'we challenge every Baptist church in the world to plant at least one new congregation by the year 2000.'

We need to receive that challenge and beware of dismissing it as 'not for us' or 'unrealistic'.

Second, challenges to our Association

When are we going to appoint a full-time church planting officer (a practitioner, not a theorist) to be a resource, consultant and facilitator of local churches contemplating church planting? Are we going to make resources of people and money available for church planting? How are we going to set about envisioning all the churches in our Association?

Church planting is on the agenda. It needs to be not only on all our agendas, but to move out of our committees to become a reality on our housing estates, in our villages and our unreached communities.

Reproduced by kind permission from 'On the Move' - the newsletter of the EMBA

The Derbyshire Declaration

A call to establish new churches

Called by the Holy Spirit, under the leadership of Jesus Christ, 250 Baptists from 45 nations met together at Derbyshire, England in March 1992, in a conference convened by the Evangelism and Education Division of the Baptist World Alliance.

We, the delegates commit ourselves anew to the task of world evangelisation and specifically to the establishment of new churches. We direct the following message to the family of Baptists throughout the world:

1. We give thanks to God that throughout the world there is a mighty movement of the Holy Spirit and in many countries, countless new congregations are being established in urban, suburban and rural areas, among various ethnic and sociological groups and in areas where the Gospel has not been previously preached.
2. We believe that a powerful means for growth at the disposal of the Christian Church, and a most effective means to fulfil the Great Commission, is the establishing of new congregations.
3. We resolve to establish churches that enable the character and teaching of Jesus to become incarnate within particular communities.
4. We call on those engaged in new church development to be committed to prayer, creative in thinking, thorough in preparation and innovative in methodology while always seeking to

develop communities of faith consistent with Biblical models, guided by God the Holy Spirit.

5. We challenge Baptist leaders and pastors to use the gifts, skills and enthusiasm of all laity, women, men and young people, in developing new patterns of church planting.

6. We recognise with joy new congregations everywhere that are bringing life and vitality to Baptist unions and conventions. We urge congregations who to date may not have had the joy and stimulus of establishing new congregations to prayerfully consider the call of God to engage in this ministry.

7. We encourage new churches both to disciple and nurture new converts to inspire their people to maintain a spirit of love in a holistic way to all in need, being witnessing communities that oppose injustice and work for peace.

8. We acknowledge that our preoccupation with the needs in our own areas, including establishing new churches, may blind us to the urgent need to proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel in areas of the world who have not heard of the love of God in Jesus Christ and realise that

churches need to be planted in these unevangelised regions.

9. We commit ourselves to promote new church planting so that more and more people gain the opportunity of hearing the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.

10. We invite every Baptist congregation in the world to establish, or to explore the possibility of joining with other churches in establishing, at least one new congregation by 2000 AD.

Seven Reasons to Start New Churches by Arnell Arn

'There are a myriad of reasons why new churches need to be started if we are to effectively be about the mission of Jesus' - Arnell Arn speaking at the B.I.C.E.C. Conference earlier this year. 'Why not simply fill up some of the half-empty church buildings we have now?' These are the seven reasons she gave for church planting.

1. More Effective Evangelism

Perhaps the most compelling reason is that new congregations are more effective in reaching unchurched people than older churches. One recent study, conducted in the United States, indicated that in the average church of 50 years or older, it took 49 members for every one new baptism. But, in churches ten years old or less, it took only nine members for each new Christian baptism.

Or, are you aware that approximately 60-80% of the members in new congregations are persons who were not previously active in any local church? Older churches tend to grow primarily through transfer growth. The newer church is more efficient in evangelism.

Why? There is a tendency for most established churches to focus an increasing amount of time and energy on themselves, giving a lower priority to the needs of the unchurched.

2. Greater Involvement

New churches create an opportunity for involvement in the work and ministry of the church that might not have been available to newcomers in an older, established congregation. Numerous studies have been conducted which show that if a person is given a role or task in a local church, they are more likely to become regular and involved members.

3. Welcoming Atmosphere

New congregations can help to create an atmosphere of welcome, as well as providing a sense of belonging to the new believer. Estab-

lished churches, like established small groups, tend to inherently close themselves off to newcomers. There has been a sense of shared history developed, and a comfortableness with familiar faces. Trying to break into a contented group of people can be threatening and difficult. Most Christians find it hard... a non-Christian probably wouldn't even try. New churches provide a situation for new believers to create their own place of belonging.

4. Cross-Cultural Evangelism

Another significant reason new churches need to be started is in order to effectively bring the Gospel to new cultures and new generations.

Throughout its history, the Church has struggled against allowing the cultural norms of a particular time or group of people to become the standard for 'true' Christian behaviour and action.

Today, many churches and denominations in America, and probably in other parts of the world as well, have become entangled in the same trap... allowing one set of cultural norms to dictate their approach to and acceptance of other people and cultures.

This struggle of 'form and essence' can be seen playing itself out in several areas today. One is the area of generational cultures. The most important group is the Baby Boom generation - those individuals who were born following World War II between 1946 and 1964. This massive population increase seems to have happened in numerous countries around the globe. In the United States, by the year 2000,

this generation will represent one-half of the entire population.

Yet, the established Church has been tragically unsuccessful in reaching this generation with the Gospel. Only around 12% of America's 76 million Baby Boomers are in any kind of worship Sunday morning. Baby Boomers are interested in finding spiritual meaning. But they don't seem interested in attending most American churches. Their lack of interest in most churches has nothing to do with a lack of interest in God. They like the contents of the Gospel. They just don't like the 'container' - the cultural clothing - in which many churches 'package' Christianity.

Most congregations continued to sing the same hymns their parents and grandparents had sung - inattentive to changing music styles and preferences. Ministers preached of values and behaviour moulded in the clarity of pre-war certainties - while Baby Boomers wrestled with the meaning of life as it was being extended artificially; or the meaning of 'love your enemies' in the realities of the Cold War. There appeared to them to be a 'relevance gap' between their world and the church. And the gap seems only to have widened.

Perhaps more than any other group of people, this generation is interested in finding spiritual meaning, but won't reject their culture and replace it with the foreign time-bound culture of many churches. For some Baby Boomers, walking into today's churches is like stepping into a time machine set for 1955 - and they don't do it. Jesus said that new wine needs new wineskins. Unless we formulate new clusterings - new churches - literally millions of this generation will not find Christ, and we will have failed.

5. Reaching the Unreached

Another and perhaps more obvious reason new churches are needed is in order to make disciples in culture groupings where there is currently no or minimal witness.

Across the globe and within our own countries and communities there are people groups who have not heard the message. Unless new churches are started within those communities they will not hear the Good News. The reasons they have not heard are as varied as

language, cultural orientation, immigration, geography or simply the fact that no one has taken the time to communicate with them.

Established churches are not currently reaching and incorporating these groups of people into their congregations. And might even fail if they tried. Trying to incorporate people who speak a different language, or who have to travel many miles to attend worship doesn't easily happen. And by expecting such we would be demanding of the new believer something that even few mature believers are willing to do.

Our mandate in spreading the word is to remove barriers that inhibit people from hearing the good news and to build bridges of clear communication. New indigenous churches must be established if we are to be about the mission of Christ - bringing the Gospel to these unchurched peoples and welcome the dawning of the 'year of the Lord' in their midst.

6. Turning the World Upside-Down

Still another reason for starting new churches is what some missiologists call 'redemption and lift'. The principle states that when individuals become Christians, they become more responsible with themselves, their time and money. As a result, they and the next generations naturally move upward economically. While this is helpful in making that individual's life less stressful and physically harsh, the tendency is for these people to move away both socially and geographically from the poorer communities.

Many churches have actually moved their entire congregations and facilities out from these economically disadvantaged areas. Which leaves the poorest of the poor without a witness. Without commenting on whether this pattern is good or bad, it does appear to be a pattern. Yet, our accountability to God is to spread the word, make disciples, and gather groups of believers in all communities and in all conditions.

The poor, whether in cities or countryside, have been forgotten and abandoned by many, many of our established churches. And, I'm sorry to say, most of them are not taking seriously the example of Christ when it comes to reaching the poor, contesting injustices done against them, and turning the world's order upside-down.

7. Freedom to Experiment

And finally, new churches are vital to the health and strength of both a denomination and the Church worldwide. They act as corrective agents in organizations that can easily become too complacent and self-righteous.

Throughout Church history individuals and groups of believers have performed an important role as they have worked in opposition to the established order and created new entities that propted their philosophies and theologies.

While certainly not all new churches are in opposition to the establishment, there is a creativeness and freedom to experiment and try new ideas, something that is not always easily embraced, and gets harder and harder to do in the established order.

Our charge... our biblical mandate... is to begin new churches that will manifest the

character, mission and glory of Christ. New churches that will love the unlovable... bring justice to unjust situations... carry good news to the poor, offer freedom to the captive and sight to the blind. Our directive is to make disciples and together with these new believers usher in the 'year of the Lord's favour'.

By planting new churches, by encouraging clusters of new believers to come together, we become partners with Christ. Together bringing about the new order, bringing transformation to one city, to one community, to one individual.

The mandate is clear... go and make disciples.

The Rev. Arnell Arn is from the American Baptist Church. She is Director of New Church Planting Regional Strategies and Resources Development.

Church Planting in Eastern Europe by Clive Doubleday

Over the past three years Eastern Europe has undergone major surgery as the cancer of communism has been rooted out. Tyrannical and dictatorial leaders like Ceausescu, Zhivkov and Jakes have been overthrown, along with the suppression and persecution of the Christian Church. No area of East European life has been unaffected by these shifts in power and political changes. With the fall of the Berlin Wall came the fall of communist ideology, the cement that held Eastern Europe together. Now the countries cry 'freedom' but what does this really mean, particularly with regard to church growth and church planting in Eastern Europe today?

Having travelled extensively throughout Eastern Europe for the past decade, I share here some of my observations in the hope that we can learn from our brothers and sisters in the East and also recognise ways in which we can help to offer support as they face this newly created challenge. In Romania it is reported that there have been around 1,200 new Baptist churches planted since the revolution in 1989. (Around 800 would be more accurate.) In Bulgaria the

Baptist churches have grown from 16 with a congregation of 800, to 66 with a congregation of 6,000 over the past two years. In Albania the churches have grown from 0 to 6 in the past year with a total number of 150 Christians in the country's capital Tirana. Rapid church growth is also recorded in the community of independent states, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. When you meet with some of the church leaders and their congregations, you cannot help but be impressed with the level of vision, faith and commitment that exudes from these resilient people. They have prayed for freedom for 40 years and now their prayers have been answered with freedom to evangelise. They have a tremendous burden and desire to maximise the use of this freedom for the sake of the gospel.

Strategy

Firstly, towns and villages with no particular Christian witness are identified and a church is usually established in the home of a Christian family. Neighbours and friends are invited to a simple service. It is not usually long before a piece of land is purchased and the desire to build

a church gets under way. In Eastern Europe a church building is considered essential if the believers are to be recognised as an authentic and credible church within the community. This stems from the Orthodox/Catholic culture of many of these nations where buildings play an important part in the national life of the country. With very little resources a church group will set about digging the foundations and acquiring the materials which is not an easy task. The design of the church building is always for multi-purpose use. In some cases it will be a 3-storey building, with accommodation for the pastor and his family and the church secretary and his/her family, additional rooms for visiting guests to sleep, and ample space for the worship sanctuary. In the basement there are large rooms where the youth, Sunday school, offices and aid distribution facilities are provided. The whole church family work together to build this church. The children carry buckets of rubble or soil, the wives mix cement and the men do the brick work and prepare the building. The church supplies food for the men who come straight from work every evening, and all day on Saturday, to devote their spare time to the building of the church. Very often there is no financial reward for their labours.

Within 18 months to 2 years the church is established in that community and often has grown simply from one family to around 120 believers. The mother church may have up to six church plants on the go at any one particular time, which puts enormous strain and pressure on the pastor, who is already pastorally responsible for between 8 - 10 churches, due to the great shortage of ministers resulting from the limited or non-existent theological training under the past communist regime.

In Romania it is estimated that there are 1,500 Baptist churches with around 150 pastors, many of whom are around retirement age, so there is a great need for new ministers to take over these new church plants. In the West we can learn very much from the faith, vision and the commitment of our East European brethren as they give sacrificially of their time and energy. The Friday evening prayer meeting is the **power-house** behind much of the church planting and growth strategy. It usually lasts for about 3 hours with worship, preaching and much

prayer for the needs of the church as it seeks to reach out to the community. This would also be repeated on Sunday where much prayer is undertaken. It is therefore no surprise that regular baptismal services of up to 25 candidates at a time are frequent occurrences.

Difficulties

There are still difficulties, however, facing Christians as they seek to plant in different villages. The national Orthodox church in Romania are not happy to lose members to the Baptist and Pentecostal churches being planted everywhere. In extreme cases pastors have had their homes, churches and cars set on fire and attacked by radical Orthodox believers. There is the rise of nationalism in all the Eastern countries; in Romania there is a strong division between Hungarians living in Romania and with the Romanians themselves nationalistic roots go deep. One village can be totally Hungarian and another village totally Romanian. East Europeans have long memories and remember what once was their land before boundaries were redrawn. With this new freedom, many are eager to regain what is rightfully theirs, which has led to the conflict that we now witness in the fragmentation of Yugoslavia. The exit of communism has left a huge vacuum in people's minds and many people are rushing to fill it. This is the flipside to the freedom coin, not only can the Christians hold meetings in football stadiums, halls and villages throughout the country, but so can the cults who are also seizing the freedom opportunities in Eastern Europe: the Mormons have sent 22 full-time evangelists to Romania and there are also Moonies and Jehovah's Witnesses working extensively in mountain villages. Hari Krishna and the Bahai faith are working very much in capital cities. The spread of Islam, fuelled by finance from the rich oil states, is gaining ground. Recently Colonel Gadaffi shipped boat-loads of the Koran into Albania to fan into flame the growth of Islam. In Eastern Europe a battle for the mind is being fought. Another difficulty is that many of their young people are not prepared to work and struggle on until their country comes up to the living standards which they see on television exist in the West. Many cannot get enough dollars together quickly enough to flee for Western Europe or America,

which they see as the world of opportunity. Materialism is also spreading with the desire to own a car, a video, television, radio or Western clothes, particularly among young people.

One disturbing trend that I have witnessed throughout Eastern Europe is the promotion of different strands of theology. Some pastors are offered cars and generous allowances but they must preach and adhere to the theological standpoint of the church that gives these gifts. In some cases this can be selling out to Liberal Theology instead of upholding a strong evangelical position. One cannot blame pastors in desperate situations with the responsibility of caring for family and fellowships if they are not tempted to accept the big carrot, often from wealthy Americans who breeze into town with a fistful of dollars.

Theological Training is the Key to Church Growth

In the face of such changes the church continues to grow. The preaching of God's Word is held in awe. Unless the preacher has spoken for at least an hour they feel they have not had a proper service. An essential key to sustain church growth in Eastern Europe is for pastors to be trained. The Baptist Seminary in Bucharest, Romania has gone from 9 students, its limit under the communist regime, to 90 in the past 18 months. Some Christian leaders from countries where there is no theological training have had to come to the West to gain degrees, M.A.'s and doctorates before returning home to teach existing pastors. In Bulgaria there have been no trained Baptist ministers for over 45 years and there has been no Baptist seminary; now it is planned to build one in Sofia. At Spurgeon's College two young Bulgarian pastors are taking the degree in theology before returning to lecture in their own country. They are sponsored by Spurgeon's Overseas Bursary Fund. Spurgeon's are also training students from Romania and Russia.

Development is also required on the lay ministry level. There are a few projects to encourage the training and teaching of deacons, elders and Bible/Sunday School teachers who are in full-time employment. This is limited but is a key area of development if a church is to retain the new converts in the years ahead.

How Can the West Help?

Much aid has flooded into Eastern Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall and this is good, but much of it has now dried up. The next phase is to share how national Christians can help themselves. This must be done through theological training so that nationals can teach and train national pastors but also in every other area of social life: industrial, medical, social and political. What is needed now is the sharing of expertise and the teaching of what democracy really means. Another area of help is through literature, providing Bibles and good clear Bible studies or machinery for them to produce their own literature. Also the financial sponsoring of ministers. At present East European Ministries sponsors several Baptist ministers in Romania for 3 year periods so that finances can be released to build the churches and to maintain the ministry. The level decreases over the years to avoid any unhealthy sense of dependency.

One way of helping is for a church in the West to twin up with a church in the East, have exchanges and visits and help with the building of new churches, providing literature and practical help without any strings attached. We need to ensure that through our giving from the West we do not impose pressure, propaganda or persecution that they once faced from the communists.

Eastern European churches have learned to appreciate that the congregation is a spiritual home and a sustaining community, a place of refuge and an oasis for the Christian believer. We can learn much from them and we can also give much through prayer and practical support. As the body of believers in Eastern Europe is now free from its restrictive illness we can help the new Christian man of Eastern Europe stand tall and proudly proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ that once had to take place in secret.

If you would like to twin with a church in Eastern Europe or support a church planting project in a practical way, please write to the Rev. Clive Doubleday, 117 Kingsway, Petts Wood, Orpington, Kent BR5 1PP.

Clive Doubleday is the pastor of Petts Wood Baptist Church, Communications Director at Spurgeon's College and founder/director of East European Ministries

From the Editors

BACUP becomes 1:3:6 Group

Apology

BACUP is now to be known as the "1:3:6 Group". This change of name is necessary to prevent any confusion between ourselves and the **British Association of Cancer United Patients**, also known by the acronym "BACUP". We would like to apologise to any members or friends of this organisation who may have been caused confusion or distress by our adoption of the same acronym.

Why 1:3:6?

1:3:6 in itself implies a growing sequence of numbers appropriate for the multiplication of churches. But the real significance is found in 1 Corinthians 3 v. 6.

Paul writes: *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (RSV)*

Thus the title "1:3:6" serves to remind us that, despite all our human efforts and diligence, we are still totally dependent on God Himself for success in church planting.

1:3:6 Executive

The editors would also like to apologise for omitting Rev. Eric Westwood (B.U. President 1992/93) from the list of the 1:3:6 Executive Committee in the last issue. The 1:3:6 Executive Group comprises the following:

Gerry Barlow (Ruddington, Notts.)

Steve Ibbotson (Moortown, Leeds)

Jon Bush (Herne Bay, Kent)

Geoff Reynolds (Southern Area Superintendent)

Colin Cartwright (Spurgeon's College)

Derek Tidball (B.U. Secretary for Mission)

Steve Hill (Isle of Dogs, London)

Eric Westwood (B.U. President)

Correspondence Welcome

Please write to the editors of the 1:3:6 "Planting Papers" with any of the following:-

- ★ responses to articles published (positively or negatively);
- ★ suggestions for topics you'd like to be addressed in future issues;
- ★ your own articles/case studies/opinions/research into any area of church planting in the UK or abroad;
- ★ details of local church planting events/launches/day conferences etc. for advertising in Planting Papers;
- ★ book reviews

Write to: 'The Editors, 1:3:6 Group, c/o 189 South Norwood Hill,

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