

Church Planting Report

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Our Context

In 2009 at the investiture of Bob Duncan as the first Archbishop of the Anglican Church in North America, Archbishop Duncan challenged our newly forming Province to aggressively pursue the work of church planting by starting 1,000 churches in the first five years of our existence. From this call Anglican 1000, our Provincial church planting initiative, was born to teach the value and importance of church planting and keep it at the forefront of conversation during our seminal years. Through the work of Anglican 1000 and our faithful dioceses, almost 500 new churches were planted in our first half-decade. In 2014, Foley Beach was elected as our second Archbishop to carry the torch of leadership in our Province. At his investiture, Archbishop Beach very clearly called us to press onward with the mission of the church and the call of planting new congregations. His clarion call was, "Forward. Always Forward. Everywhere Forward." Archbishop Duncan's challenge was for the starting of something new and unknown, Archbishop Beach's call is for the carrying on of what was started to continued maturity, effectiveness and fruit. What began as an initiative focused on inspiration, education and conviction regarding church planting has grown to also include practical strategies, resources and collaborative work in support of a long-term church planting effort.

The Work of the Office of Church Planting

I stepped into the role of Canon for Church Planting mid-fall of 2014 with Archbishop Foley's instruction to help keep church planting central in the thoughts of our Province and assist in helping us take next steps in the fruitfulness and effectiveness in our work.

This is a season of reorienting, retooling and refocusing for our church planting efforts as a Province. Much of our efforts, therefore, have been less visible over the last few months, but significant work is being done and preparations for our next tangible and significantly impactful steps are under way. We have been consulting with national ecumenical church planting leaders from across the country, we have taught on sacramental church planting at the significant Exponential Conference, trained church planters in conjunction with our dioceses, began the process of developing an assessment tool for church planters and many other activities in support of starting new local congregations.

My primary goal in these eight months, however, was to make relationships and listen to the church planting leaders of our Province to determine what they need and where they hope we are headed. The focal point of this effort was our first Church Planting Roundtable in December where 30 church planting leaders from across the Province gathered in Atlanta for a few days of assessment and discussion. It was an amazingly helpful and fruitful time.

It was also agreed at that meeting that what was needed was a smaller group of leaders to be able to gather to make strategic decisions for our next steps together. Over the next few months, with the consultation of Archbishop Foley, I assembled a new Provincial Church Planting Leadership Team. The Leadership Team consists of church planting leaders representing nine different dioceses and networks from across North America. Through conference calls and a multi-day gathering in Charleston, SC in May, this team is helping shape the future of our collaborative efforts. The formation of this team and the intentionality it brings to strategic planning for our Province is a major step in our organization and growth.

Our Next Steps

As Anglicans, we are committed to the missional work of church planting and also to going about that work in a way that carries on our long and valued tradition. As such, we hold deeply to the concept of “collaboration with subsidiarity.” In other words, we believe that the mission of the church should be done at the most local level possible. It is local planters and churches that plant new churches, so all of our collective efforts should be in support of their work. They are the heroes in this endeavor. At the same time, we believe that we can do this work better together than we can alone. Our dioceses can function to create a healthy environment where local planters are better cared for, equipped and supported as they plant churches. The Province can then help to support the work of the dioceses through facilitating the collaboration of our common efforts, catalyzing resources for the cause and leading us forward together as a movement across North America.

The mission of our Province in the work of church planting, therefore, is threefold:

Equipping a Movement

In his book “Church Planting Movements” David Garrison defines a church planting movement as “a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment.” Our hope is to see this kind of rapid multiplication throughout North America.

Strengthening Our Dioceses

The role of the Province is to assist the dioceses in their support of church planters through equipping, catalyzing resources and facilitating collaboration. As Anglicans we believe that our polity system (system of governance and organization) has both the backing of history and continued relevance. Our desire is to see the historic structures of the church empowered for the support of the work of mission in our contemporary setting.

Supporting Local Planters

The beauty of an interconnected form of church organization is that planters do not have to do this work alone. They can be a part of a larger support network in their dioceses and a part of a greater family within our North American movement. We

long to see the proper tools in their hands and loving relationships surrounding them to give them the best possible chance of planting healthy churches in healthy ways.

Our Vision

The vision of our Provincial church planting efforts is to see every diocese become a church planting network.

A healthy church planting network has three primary components for the support of church planting:

Culture

A church planting culture holds the work of starting new congregations as a primary conviction. It values healthy risk and celebrates the work of entrepreneurial ministry. We will help create this culture in our Province and assist the dioceses to do the same.

Collaboration

A church planting network does not see the work of planting as solely an individual endeavor, but rather the shared work of the diocese. Local planters are a part of a family and are an integral part of a larger shared strategy. We will help dioceses work together for church planting and develop an environment for local collaboration as well.

Constructs

The unique nature of church planting requires specific systems and structures to equip and support the ongoing work within the dioceses. We will help to educate on the importance of the proper core systems and help dioceses find the solutions for implementing them in their particular context with their individual ethos and values. We define these core constructs as:

1. A Leadership Pipeline
2. Planter Assessment
3. Planter Training
4. Coaching
5. Ongoing Support
6. Funding
7. Mission Oversight

Our Methods

Cultivating Relationships

Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs to do the work of mission and later said that the world will know that we are his disciples by how we love one another. Jesus's methods for ministry were based on relationships and we desire to follow his example. We have no desire for sterile infrastructure, clogging bureaucracy or

faceless organization, we want to be partners in ministry sharing prayer, wisdom, support and encouragement as we engage in this movement together.

Developing A Church Planting Playbook

Our team is in the process of developing a guide to help new church planting networks as they form and organize. It is a living document that simply seeks to gather the wisdom gained throughout our Province. It is not a mandated process of planting, it will simply provide a framework for thinking through the core systems needed to effectively support church planters and offer solutions on how to implement those systems. Hopeful first draft date is January 2016.

Creating An Online Resource Library

To support the local planter and give dioceses a toolbox to use in their work, we are developing a robust online library of articles, tools, coaching, ideas and inspiration. The goal of this library is to collect and curate the wisdom of the planters and leaders throughout our Province and make it available on a broad scale to planters throughout North America and beyond. Our desire is to provide practical help and also to research and codify the theological underpinnings of our church planting movement. Our new website should launch this fall.

Equipping Opportunities

Our team will also be organizing a few events of differing scales for the equipping of church planting leaders and to provide environments for learning and shared wisdom.

Conclusion

I am extremely excited about the future that is ahead of us. We are about to take significant practical steps in our effectiveness and efficiency in church planting, and for those dioceses and church planters that have been struggling in their efforts, support is on the way. May the Lord grant us favor that we may see many more churches planted in our Province and many more souls come to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.