

YOUR LINK TO GOD'S EXPANDING MISSION

CHAPTER 5

GOD'S DESIRE AND COMPASSION compel us to emphasize that participation in his global mission is not optional but essential! The Bible shows that God yearns for all nations to know him. The first Christians carried Christ's story to the world. God provided the power through the Holy Spirit as they became Christ's witnesses in an expanding pattern in "Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."¹ In the book of Acts, we can see the ever-widening wildfire spread of the news of Jesus: Philip baptizes an Ethiopian,² Peter is led to the Gentile home of Cornelius, a Roman army officer,³ and Barnabas and Saul (later named Paul) are sent forth on the first missionary journey in history.⁴

Just as Christians and churches in the ancient world brought the gospel message into pagan settings with differing cultures and ethnic groups, God continues to lead Christians into new endeavors to reach people who come from different cultures, ethnicity, and religious heritages. In cooperation with God's promptings, the Global Ministries Commission has grown to incorporate numerous avenues of ministry throughout the world by empowering national churches, facilitating mission workers, ministering to the world's marginalized, and reminding our members of their call to be "world Christians."

Empowering National Churches

DUE IN PART TO THE ENCOURAGEMENT shown by the members of our E.C. Church (USA), we have witnessed explosive growth in many of our international ministry fields. God has blessed us by raising up tens of thousands E.C. believers who speak a language other than English! Currently more than seventy thousand Christians worship in hundreds of churches spread across seven nations. All of our international churches are facilitated by indigenous leaders, and the Global Ministries Commission works diligently to see these churches deepen within their own cultural contexts and foster ministry from those nations to the peoples of the world.

COSTA RICA

The 1970s through the 1980s is marked as a period of great revival in Latin America, and Costa Rica was at the forefront of that movement. Many people came to embrace a living, personal faith in Christ and the expansion of the evangelical church in Costa Rica was astronomi-

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- 1 Acts 1:8
 - 2 Acts 8:26-40
 - 3 Acts 10:1-48
 - 4 Acts 13:1-3

cal. Continuing with the vision of knowing Christ and making him known, the E.C. Church of Costa Rica was established in 1996. Beginning as one small congregation in San Jose, the E.C. Church in Costa Rica continues to grow to include several other local churches. Under the direction of Dr. William Araya, and with the help of U.S. work teams, a warehouse was purchased and remodeled and now serves as the denominational headquarters building for the E.C. Church of Costa Rica.

Boasting some of the most beautiful beaches on the planet, Costa Rica (or “Rich Coast”) is a small country situated between Nicaragua and Panamá. Diverse in landscape, Costa Rica offers beaches, volcanoes, and tropical forests. Costa Rica is known for its multi-party democratic government and has been touted a stabilizing force in the sometimes volatile region of Central America. Driven economically by tourism, Costa Rica also exports bananas, coffee, and textiles. Costa Rica’s official language is Spanish, although because of the booming tourism industry, many Costa Ricans (or “Ticos” as they are known locally) also speak English.

With a national literacy rate of 96% and an estimated unemployment rate of just over 6%, the majority of Costa Ricans live comfortably on the average annual income of around \$4,600.⁵ However, in spite of Costa Rica’s stable economy, 20% of Costa Ricans still live in severe poverty.

INDIA

As the second most populated nation on earth, India prides itself on maintaining unity while celebrating diversity. Consisting unofficially of over 6,000 distinct people groups as defined by ethnicity, religion, language, and caste, India is a culturally complex nation. Ranking today among the top ten industrial nations of the world because of a booming computer industry, India is rapidly becoming a powerhouse in the global economic arena. This economic success, however, has not extended to the general population. Though services account for more than half of India’s economic output, less than one quarter of the population is employed in industry. The large majority of Indians still depend on agriculture as their main income source. And with an average income of only \$620 per year,⁶ poverty is prevalent in this unique nation.

Hindi is the official national language of India, but English actually dominates the business, governmental, and legal arenas. Most educated Indians speak English as their first language, but across India there are at least 400 different languages spoken. Illiteracy is a huge problem in India, especially among the female population. In fact, only one in every three adult Indian women is functionally literate. More than 80% of Indians practice Hinduism and close to 13% are Muslim. Although full religious freedom is protected officially by the Indian constitution, religious extremism is rampant in India, creating religious strife and fueling a dangerous climate of persecution, especially toward Christians. Still, India has the most (and largest) unreached people groups of any other country on the planet.

Sensitive to the fact that each region of the diverse nation of India has its own unique culture and needs, the E.C. work in India exists primarily in the state of Manipur, located in the hills of Northeast India. Ministering to the local tribal groups whose traditions are closely related to the Burmese (Myanmar) culture, the E.C. Church has had a presence in India since 1910.

5 As compared to a median U.S. household income of \$44,389 in 2004; from a report of the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005.

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About 35% of the local Manipur population is Christian and Christ's movement in the region is unmistakable. Still, residual hate from a 1990s civil war hampers outreach by Christians to local Muslims and Hindus. Drug addiction and HIV are becoming major issues in the region, and the E.C. Church is working hard to implement educational programs to help combat these problems.

Committed to reaching the world for Christ, the Evangelical Congregational Church of India (ECCI) has seven annual conferences, with a total of about 60,000 members.⁷ It is served by the Evangelical College of Theology, a Bible college and seminary in India. It also has its own department of missions and evangelism, which ministers in the neighboring countries of Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Thailand. They are also active in many other states in India.⁸

JAPAN

Ranked as the most expensive country in which to live, Japan has grown over the last decades to be one of the chief economic powerhouses in the world. Known as "The Land of the Rising Sun," from the literal meaning of the kanji characters that make up its name, Japan is comprised of over 3,000 mountainous islands. Japan's capital city of Tokyo currently ranks as the largest metropolitan area in the world with over 30 million inhabitants living in greater Tokyo.

Japanese culture is driven by a quest for status and success. The hierarchical philosophy of Japan is evident even in the Japanese language in which the person talking will use particular verb forms or vocabulary words based on the relative status between the speaker and listener. Almost all children continue beyond the compulsory middle school level of education and more than 75% of all high school graduates persist through university. The pace is fast, the competition is fierce, and the stakes are even higher than most Japanese people realize.

Though rich economically, Japan is one of the most spiritually bankrupt areas of the world. About 84% of Japan's population follow the rules of Buddhism or Shintoism; however, close to 80% of the total population claim no personal connection to their religious practices at all. More than 67% of the 2,568 towns in Japan with a population of between 15,000 and 30,000 people do not have a single church in their town, and even in this highly developed nation, there are still rural areas that have never been introduced to the gospel.

Recognizing the need to reach out to a hurting culture, the E.C. Church strives to be the face of Christ in a place where 99% of the population is non-Christian. Currently, the E.C. Church of Japan consists of three congregations in the greater Tokyo area. The Sagamihara Grace Chapel is in the process of developing, in cooperation with other local churches, a Christian community center which will minister to the needs of local children and the elderly.

LIBERIA

Plagued by fourteen years of civil war, the Republic of Liberia, regarded by the original settlers as the "promised land," currently stands as one of the world's most impoverished nations. Located on the western coast of Africa, the country whose name literally means "Land of the Free" was established in 1822 (with the support of the American government) as a colony for free-born and formerly enslaved African Americans. From its inception, ethnic issues di-

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7 Based on 2006 statistical data.

8 For most recent information about the ECC of India, visit www.ecchurchindia.com.

vided the population of Liberia and fueled hostility between people groups. Though Liberia is a country that boasts natural resources including iron, diamonds, rubber, and timber, the recent decades of war and political corruption have left Liberia poor and destitute. Road systems and buildings are in shambles. Rich farmland is now covered by brush and unkempt forest. Worst of all, the people are left traumatized and scarred by a nation in constant conflict.

Currently over 65% of the population have been refugees, without a home to call their own. The atrocities of hate are rampant in Liberia, with almost every person in the country having been a victim or perpetrator of indescribable acts of violence. An estimated 200,000 people were killed during the wartime that spanned from 1989 to 2003. Children were robbed of their youth and forced to act as soldiers, trained to carry guns and kill on demand. In fact, over 50,000 children under the age of 17 have been killed in direct combat. Every Liberian child has been affected. Many are orphaned. Some suffer from hunger, homelessness, and uncontrollable violent tendencies—they live in constant fear.

This picture of tragedy need not be a perpetual state for Liberia. The end of the fighting in 2003, a new governmental leadership team elected in 2005, and the awareness, efforts, and prayers of people around the world have brought hope for recovery in Liberia.

The E.C. Church is directly involved with such restoration efforts. In fact, the Global Ministries Commission has had works in Liberia since the 1950s. Thirty-nine E.C. churches have remained resolute, even through the destruction of the war-torn years. Currently the E.C. Church of Liberia has 3,000 members, and the numbers are growing every day. Field Superintendent Reverend Matthew Gueh has experienced first hand how God is working in the lives of Liberians. “Peace is here and the gospel is being preached at every street corner. Crusades are hosted every month, and hundreds of people, including ex-combatants, are accepting Christ and his deliverance. Healing is taking place.”

MEXICO

Rich in history, landscape, culture, and tradition, Mexico is one of Latin America’s most diverse countries. The land and the people of Mexico represent a colorful tapestry of uniqueness. Labeled constitutionally as a “pluricultural” nation, the majority of the population is Mestizo (of mixed European and Indigenous descent). Though Spanish is the primary language in Mexico, there remain over 60 indigenous languages spoken, each of which is nationally recognized. Historically, Catholicism has been an element that connects the many peoples and traditions of the Mexican culture. With over 90% of the population declaring themselves to be Catholic, Mexico has the second largest population of Catholics in the world.

The Mexican economy has been bolstered over the past decades through oil and agricultural exports, growing industrialization, and a rapidly expanding tourism industry. And although there has been a significant decrease in poverty rates in Mexico, income disparity remains a monumental problem in the country. At least one quarter of the population is underemployed, and those living in poverty have little or no opportunity for advancement.

Reaching out to help needy children birthed the E.C. work in Mexico. Since 1960, El Retiro children’s home has been providing shelter, nutrition, education, and spiritual training for orphaned children in one of Mexico’s poorest communities. Over time, Mexican churches were adopted and planted, most of which are close to the border with Texas. Further missional opportunities have been explored in others regions.

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NEPAL

The kingdom of Nepal is the world's only Hindu kingdom; however, the constitution guarantees some religious freedom. People can choose their faith, but it is illegal to convert others. An isolated mountainous land, containing eight of the ten highest mountains in the world, Nepal is just slightly larger than Pennsylvania and New Jersey combined. The 27 million people represent approximately 95 different people groups; however, caste is more crucial socially than ethnicity. The capital city, Katmandu has about 1.5 million people.⁹

The main livelihood of the people is from agriculture, but the chief foreign exchange is earned through tourism. While 75% of the population is Hindu, Buddhists are also well represented at 16%. An estimated 2% are Christians. The first group of Christians was formed in 1959. At the climax of persecution in 1990, Christians numbered about 200,000.

The E.C. Church of India began the outreach to eastern Nepal, resulting in the planting of eight churches. We officially inaugurated the E.C. Church of Nepal in June 2003. The churches elected a leadership team of five people to head this new field of the E.C. Church, and a church center was established at Dharan, in eastern Nepal.

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Facilitating Mission Workers

WE CURRENTLY ASSIST nearly 60 workers ministering in 20 different nations. The E.C. Church is unique in that it loans nearly all of its workers to other mission agencies. The approach of releasing workers increases the level of specialization with which our workers can operate and also recognizes the role of partnerships in the furthering of the gospel.

The sending of missionaries is a cooperative venture. Missionary candidates visit local churches for deputation. They share their plans and aspirations about the field in which they are called to serve. The Global Ministries office sets up personal accounts, publishes information about them, and handles their support. After pledges of support provide enough for their particular needs, the Global Ministries Commission conducts a commissioning service to send the missionary into the field.

Once on the field, missionaries communicate needs for prayer and financial support through the Global Ministries office. They are also able to stay in regular contact with supporters within our American churches through prayer letters and other correspondences.¹⁰ Between field assignments missionaries return home to visit their families, friends, and supporting churches, where they can personally share the blessings and challenges of their work upon the field.

While some missionary roles may be more specialized, many functions are vital for fulfilling the Great Commission. Obviously many missionary roles focus directly on sharing the gospel with people. However the need for extending relief, support, and acts of mercy pro-

⁹ Based on 2006 statistical data.

¹⁰ The Global Ministries Commissions provides connection for missionaries and churches through the Spend-A-Day Prayer Network. Sponsoring churches commit to pray for the missionary on the field during a particular month. Individuals within the church voluntarily select different days from the month to commit to pray for the missionary. Each day on the field, missionaries receive a note of encouragement from different participants and are able to pray for their prayer supporters.

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vides opportunities for people of various professions to serve on the field. A small sampling of responsibilities reveals areas that include translation, literacy, airplane repair, medicine, nursing, evangelism, teaching, printing, church planting, counseling, and administration.

In Spain, a field director oversees the training and forming of church planting teams in 20 European countries. At the shipyards, in the subways, and on the urban playgrounds of Philadelphia, a street evangelist attracts crowds by using stories, magic, balloon figures, and puppets. In Thailand, the vision to start a missionary school became reality with 80 staff members and over 500 students due to the efforts of a missionary field worker. In a U.S. airplane hangar, a mechanic rebuilds small airplanes used to transport Bible translators, while several miles away recruiters train pilots at the world headquarters for an aviation mission agency. In Kenya, teachers instruct and mentor children at a missionary boarding school, while another teaches theology at a Bible college in the Ukraine. In New York City, counselors assist those who have experienced sexual abuse and are trapped in homosexual lifestyles and sexual addictions. One member of a translation team's work in Papua New Guinea has helped to develop an alphabet for a tribal language that has allowed God's Word to come and transform an entire culture. Each year, young men and women are receiving training to be sent onto the field in various settings such as engineering, college campus ministry, and church planting.

Ministering to the Marginalized

WHEN WE LOOK TO THE BIBLE it is clear that we are called to seek justice, love mercy, and care deeply about those things in society that undermine human dignity. God cares passionately for the whole of a person—body and soul. God not only desires to bring humans into a personal relationship with himself through the work of Christ on the cross, he also desires to right the wrongs that oppress, neglect, and harm human beings, who are made in God's image. When God delivered the enslaved Israelites from Egypt, he said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them."¹¹ In the rest of the Old Testament when calling his people to compassion and justice, God frequently appealed to the Exodus, the rescue from bondage. Thus in Deuteronomy 10:18–19 we read, "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigners residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt." And the prophet Jeremiah, calling the people not to boast in their power for riches, says "I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight."¹²

The New Testament continues the theme. Jesus, in calling the Pharisees hypocrites for their inconsistency, says, "You give a tenth of your spices—mint dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law— justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."¹³ Paul calls the Corinthians to share in

¹¹ Exodus 3:7–8a

¹² Jeremiah 9:24

¹³ Matthew 23:23

the needs of the poor on the basis of Christ's work in the incarnation and on the cross, "Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."¹⁴ And John even questions the salvation of one who is not moved to mercy and justice, "If anyone of you has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has not pity on them, how can the love of God be in you?"^{15, 16}

The Global Ministries Commission is responding to the needs of people everywhere. Looking to Jesus, we follow his example of compassionate care to the sick and the injured, the social outcasts and the demon-possessed, the grieving and the hopeless. These believers have fed the hungry, healed the diseased and injured, cared for orphans and outcasts, campaigned for justice, and aided the poor.

Churches in the African nation of Liberia are more like community centers that sustain the lives of those in their communities. So when 36 of 39 E.C. churches were damaged or destroyed by government fighters during Liberia's recent civil war, many lives were destroyed as well. The Global Ministries Commission is committed to rebuild these churches and more importantly seeking to rebuild the nation's future.

The E.C. Church now operates an orphanage that supports several young boys who had previously been recruited into the "child armies" that roamed the country. This orphanage houses, feeds, and trains these young men to reenter society. When the war in Liberia decimated the male population, women and mothers became the basic fabric of the nation's economic system. The E.C. Church of Liberia provides funds to train these women and give them basic loans to start small businesses.

In the nation of India, the gospel and social concern work hand-in-hand. The E.C. Church of India runs numerous schools and orphanages among the marginalized Christian communities in this predominantly Hindu nation. They do not possess a segregated view of evangelism and social action; whenever a need arises they sense a strong obligation to meet it.

The E.C. Churches of India have been sending missionaries into Nepal and have witnessed many conversions to Christ. However in Nepali culture, when people die, their families are required to provide their "burial upon death." Virtually no cemeteries are available to Nepalese converts from Buddhism to Christianity. Our E.C. workers are attempting to raise the finances to purchase land in order to provide for the burial needs of Christians from a significant region of Nepal.

Becoming World Christians

FROM ITS INCEPTION, the E.C. Church sought to carry the gospel to people who were disregarded by the general population—ethnic Germans living in Pennsylvania.¹⁷ The passion of God that Jacob Albright used to inspire his circuit preachers has been passed along the generations through the E.C. Church. Today many pockets of marginalized ethnic people still

14 2 Corinthians 8:9

15 1 John 3:17

16 These two opening paragraphs were taken from Dennis Hollinger, "Biblical Foundations for Social Justice," *Window on the World* (Spring 2007): 2, 7.

17 See *Your Link to God's Movement*, page 7.

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exist in the urban landscape of the United States. They will require the same compassion and patience that had been demonstrated with others when the E.C. Church began to take form.

There is no doubt that the mission field is at our doorstep. In our urban congregations, often several different nationalities are represented. The challenge to bring healthy interaction between broad scopes of backgrounds, ideas, and cultures is enormous. Creativity is also essential to provide the relevant and necessary care for people's needs. Classes for English as a Second Language (ESL), basic computer skills, and citizenship orientation help these immigrants integrate into the host society. Our churches in the inner city can provide the link for suburban churches to become active in the place where the root of many of social issues begins. A variety of partnerships can be formed in order to make substantial differences in the lives of these marginalized people.

Another way to get involved includes taking advantage of short-term mission opportunities that are available all around the world. The Global Ministries Commission cooperates with several mission agencies, most of whom offer short-term opportunities of various time lengths all over the world. In addition, we sponsor numerous work teams throughout the year—whether to established ministries such as Victory Ministries in Alaska or as part of various disaster relief team efforts.

Ultimately, the pathway to become a world Christian starts with becoming aware of the many needs around the world, praying for them, and then making plans to visit a foreign field sometime in the near future. Take the time to find out what is happening in our international churches by visiting our website at www.ecglobal.com or reading one of the many publications that communicate what the E.C. Church is doing around the world.¹⁸

Planting New Churches

“WORLD CHRISTIANS” also see the needs in others close to home that only Christ can meet. A missional church, comprised of World Christians, shapes its ministry around God's commands to share the Gospel and make disciples. In light of this understanding, we are always “on mission” to our own communities and families. Kingdom-minded congregations and believers learn to think and act like missionaries to unreached people nearby, as well as far away. As Christ's followers, we need not cross an ocean to be a missionary. A trip to the other side of town or a walk across a room can place us on-site in a new mission field. Missions and evangelism, two sides of the same coin, find a home in the ministries of church planting. Church planting, on the foreign field and in our local communities, has proven to be one of the most effective evangelistic strategies.¹⁹

The purpose for the Church Planting Commission of the Evangelical Congregational Church is to know Christ and to make Him known. Church planting, as old as the New Testament, finds deep roots in the scriptures. From the earliest days of the Church, making

18 The Global Ministries Commission currently issues the *Window on the World*, *E.C. Scene*, and *Short Stops* publications.

19 C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Regal Books, 1990).

disciples has also included gathering them into a community of faith for worship and ministry. Paul used his apostolic gifting to plant churches where there were none.²⁰

His pioneering efforts launched congregations in urban centers from which the gospel witness spread into the countryside like spokes from the hub of a wheel.²¹ The first believers did not expect pre-Christians to “come and see” what church was about. They “went out and lived like Christ” before their neighbors. This “viral” pattern of growth rapidly saturated and transformed the Roman Empire and enabled Christianity to have a global impact.

The mission of the Church Planting Commission of the Evangelical Congregational Church is to help churches plant healthy churches that proclaim Christ to a hurting world. Church planting, a significant element of our denominational “DNA,” originated in the itinerant preaching ministry of Jacob Albright who “planted” a series of Class Meetings (discipleship groups or house churches). These early church plants became the initial Evangelical Association congregations. Other frontier evangelists like John Seibert continued this biblical pattern of “making churches” out of new converts. New believers were nurtured in the faith and equipped for ministry in these fellowship groups. The goal was to send them out to make more disciples and plant more churches. The obvious must never be forgotten – every existing E.C. Church was once a church plant, birthed by another congregation, church planter, or church planting team. You are reading the *Link* today because of church planting!

The vision of the Church Planting Commission is that the Evangelical Congregational Church becomes a Church Multiplication movement, realized when churches plant healthy churches that plant healthy churches. The future of the E.C. Church and the fulfillment of the goals of our missionary God depend on our commitment to intentionally and effectively plant new churches. We cannot obey the Great Commandment and Great Commission without doing so. The Church, according to Jesus, Paul, and other biblical teachings, is God’s tool for drawing people into a relationship with Himself.²² The newly “born again” need a spiritual home in which to “grow up.” The local church is the family God has designed for spiritual growth.

In the same way that we are not fully disciples until we are engaged in discipling someone else, a church hasn’t fully matured unless it is involved in parenting a new congregation.²³ Think of it this way. The fruit of an apple tree really isn’t an apple, but more apple trees. The apple is just a “seed package,” a means of delivering new life that will outlive it. So too, all of our churches need to dream of “motherhood” — bringing into this world the next generation of congregations who will reach the yet unreached.

Like literal childbirth, church planting is not without risk or pain. But it is the only means of perpetuating spiritual life and leaving a lasting spiritual legacy. Furthermore, new churches have the youthful adaptability to customize their outreach to connect with individuals existing churches have not reached by providing an atmosphere where new believers feel more accepted. And new churches are often more passionate and deliberate about evangelism because

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20 Romans 15:20

21 Acts 14:21–23; Acts 19:10

22 Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Timothy 3:15

23 3 John 5–8

their very reason for existence and survival hinges on it. Church planting parallels the inherent design of God's creation. Healthy, living things grow, not by forever getting larger but by reproducing themselves.

Through the Church Planting Commission the E.C. Church empowers and resources local churches to multiply themselves. The commission helps provide the funding, training, and prayer to make possible new churches. You can explore the commission's strategy for church planting and learn about our most recent church plants by clicking the CPC icon on the E.C. website: www.eccenter.com.

Our Church Planting Commission has realized that denominations can't start enough new churches "by committee" to keep up with the rate of general population growth and natural church attendance decline due to attrition (death, relocation, etc.). Most of your neighbors are unchurched. Spiritually speaking the fastest growing group is the "nones" – those who claim no religious affiliation at all. There aren't nearly enough churches to reach or even house all the lost. Not even where you live. If the Church is to continue to grow, more local churches must be planted.

We invite you to envision the church you are thinking about linking with as a church-planting church. Just as moms come in all sizes and shapes, readiness to daughter a church isn't based on the size of a congregation but its health. In fact, the most likely time for a church to "give birth" is during its first five years of existence, often when it has barely grown out of the church plant stage. Any time you see a "people group" not being touched by the good news of Jesus is time to start asking if God may be calling your church to plant a new church.

As a church-planting denomination, we expect all of our people to link with the adventure of church planting on a personal level. The adventure begins with prayer. Ask God to share His "church-planting heart" with you. Ask God to give you eyes to see the fields white unto harvest (opportunities to birth a new church in your community or E.C. District). The adventure picks up speed when you begin to talk with God about recruiting and equipping additional church planters and raising the necessary funding to deploy them. Along the way, be sure to ask God to reveal to you His perfect place for you in this existing ministry. Are you a potential planter? A financial supporter? Perhaps He wants you to be His voice for church planting before your home church (inviting them to invest in parenting a church or releasing some of its leaders to form the nucleus of the next E.C. congregation). Maybe you and your family are meant to be part of the next "launch team." Disciple-making believers and churches planting churches is the vision we call you to embrace because it is Christ's vision for His people.

In one of His parables Jesus challenged us to use who we are and what we have in this world to "gain friends. . .so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."²⁴ We are left to wonder: "Will there be someone in heaven 'because of you,' waiting to greet you when you arrive? Have you lived life for something greater than taking care of yourself?" You can ensure a "Yes" answer to both questions, by linking to God's expanding mission as fleshed out in church planting.

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24 Luke 16:9