COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction and systematic overview of the process of starting new churches. It is intended for students who may be exploring the possibility of planting a church and for those who are in (or will be in) an established church that wishes to participate in the planting of a new church. It explores biblical and theological rationales, provides an overarching conceptual framework, and engages the student in a process-oriented approach, using specific tools, techniques, and resources for winning those who are far from God. In addition to lecture-discussion and group participation, primary emphasis is placed upon assisting students in the design of a culturally sensitive evangelistic strategy based on personal experience within their own communities.

MINISTRY COMPETENCIES

The major purpose of the course is to develop understanding and beginning skills to plant and nurture churches. To this end, the student will:

1. Define and describe his/her own biblical rationale for church planting consistent with their personal theological convictions and church traditions.

2. Identify and discuss particular principles and skills needed for healthy church planting and growth.

3. Design a proposal for planting a new church in a community selected by the student.

4. Assess his/her own competency to engage in church planting ministry related to the above strategy proposal, and identify and discuss ways to acquire necessary capabilities or resources as needed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The primary learning experience for the course is the design and production of a written proposal to plant a new church in a community of the student’s choice. The class will provide all the structure and guidance needed to do an excellent job. Students will create an end product that will provide practical assistance in the planting of a new church by (1) conducting in-depth research for a specific community, (2) generating interest and a sense of confidence with potential church members, (3) creating a website and marketing materials to advertise in their communities, and (4) engendering support from sponsoring churches, networks, or denominations.

Generally there are three distinct groups of students who take this course. (1) You may be considering the possibility of church planting at home or abroad as a pastoral calling. (2) You may wish to become knowledgeable about church planting so that you can be more supportive to those who are called to this ministry, even though you know this is not your own calling. If you find yourself in either of these two categories, the project proposal will be for you a “practice community” and a “practice exercise” that could be replicated in another community in the future. (3) You may already be a church planting pastor. If so, the proposal will be a way for you to sharpen the focus of the ministry you have already begun.

All work in and out of class will be directed toward preparing you to write your proposal. Class sessions will be devoted to examining the overall process for planting new churches, understanding best practices, and working on a team with other students to walk through the planning process together using a “practice community,” which may be fictional or an actual community. The team will share responsibility for data collection and analysis to sharpen skills needed for each student’s individual proposal.

Auditors are welcome. Spouses are particularly encouraged to audit the class.
The grade scale is listed in the catalog. Student grades will be determined as follows:

- Class Participation: 10%
- Book Reviews (5% per book): 15%
- Community Profile and Analysis: 25%
- Church Plant Proposal: 50%

All student work is to be submitted to the instructor via email as an attachment using Microsoft Word format (“doc” or “docx”). Work should be double-spaced and employ 1” margins and a 12-point Times New Roman (or equivalent) font. Students should name their attachments in the following way: “Student’s Last Name [space] Name of Assignment.” You will find the “Name of Assignment” you are to use in each section below in the paragraph entitled “Filing Naming.” All materials sent by email must be submitted to the instructor by the dates and times specified below or they will be considered late and graded accordingly. Materials may only be sent via surface mail in cases of need with prior approval from the instructor. Materials sent via surface mail must be postmarked on or before the due dates listed below.

**DUE DATES**

**I. REQUIRED READING (15%)**  
DUE DATE: May 21st by 9:00 pm EDT

**Description of Assignment:**
The three texts listed in this section are the only required reading for this course. All three texts must be read prior to the first class on Monday, May 19th. Read enough to be familiar with the material – read with a curious mindset. As you read, write down questions that come to you for your own benefit (not to be handed in). The texts are:

  **ISBN-10:** 0827236476; **ISBN-13:** 978-0827236479

  **ISBN-10:** 0801035805; **ISBN-13:** 978-0801035807

  **ISBN-10:** 0830743103; **ISBN-13:** 978-0830743100

Having completed the assigned reading, students will complete and prepare 3 book reviews, one for each of the required texts. Each review should be 250 – 500 words (maximum) and include all of the following items:

a) a brief overview of the material covered in the book;
b) a synopsis of 2 or 3 key ideas presented by the author(s) that students found to be new, exciting, or innovative;
c) a response to any idea presented by the author(s) with which students disagree;
d) a response to one idea presented by the author(s) about which students would like to learn more; and,
e) the number of pages read.

**File Naming:** For convenience, students may download and use the master copy of the Reading Verification Form from CAMS provided by the instructor. Whether using that file or creating your own, when you save your completed book review, please name the file you send to your professor according to the guidelines listed above in the section entitled “Course Requirements.” For the “Name of Assignment” please use the words “Book Review” followed by the last name of the first author listed in the syllabus for the book you are reviewing. For example, if your last name is Jones, your book reviews should be named as follows:

- Jones Book Review Griffith
- Jones Book Review Ott
- Jones Book Review Searcy
RECOMMENDED OPTIONAL READING

DUE DATE: August 15th by 9:00 pm EDT (if you decide to submit this)

Books listed in this section are optional reading and will be considered as “extra credit” which will contribute to a higher grade if the student’s final course grade is in the balance. The extra credit may be completed any time before August 15th. Submit a one-page Reading Verification Sheet that indicates you have completed the optional reading, following the same guidelines listed above for Required Reading. Your instructor will be happy to make recommendations based on your interests.

II. COMMUNITY PROFILE AND ANALYSIS (25% of grade)

COMMUNITY PROFILE DUE DATE: June 13th by 9:00 pm EDT

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS DUE DATE: June 30th by 9:00 pm EDT

Description of Assignments:
Understanding the community setting is vital to effective ministry. Congregations that are able to listen to their communities and accurately discern the needs that exist are able to contextualize their message and ministry strategies to form solid connections with those they are trying to reach, gain their trust, and make a Gospel impact in transforming their lives. The Community Profile and Analysis is a two-part assignment that will assist you in getting to know your community, its opportunities and challenges, and prepare you to make good decisions about how to focus your ministry. Doing a good job with this assignment will make writing your proposal a much easier task. Part I of this assignment is to gather as much data as possible on your community. Think of the information in your Community Profile as your raw data. As you gather it, keep an open mind and deal with your presuppositions. The key to doing an effective job is to be a good observer and listener. Part II is where you analyze your data and make sense of your research. Effective analysis has great implications for the type of ministry you will begin. The new church plant must be tailored to your community. If you don't know whom you are trying to reach, how they think, what types of problems they deal with, then you will not be able to connect well with them and your ministry will suffer. This Community Analysis is not a rehash of the Community Profile, even though you may repeat some of the information. It will enable you to begin thinking strategically about how to build bridges of loving Christian witness for evangelism and service to those in need.

Community Profile - DUE DATE: June 13th by 9:00 pm EDT:
The Internet provides an extensive set of tools for you to build a comprehensive community profile. A complete profile will include data from the sources described below. You are to compile data from these sources and others of your choosing, summarize your research, and present it in the form of a report using the section headings given below. The required tools, below, have been selected for their general adaptability for the overseas context as well as the US setting. Each of the following will be introduced in class:

- Geographical Area Map Required* (see below)
- Windshield Survey Required* (see below)
- Community Leaders’ Survey Required* (see below)
- General Observations Required* (see below)
- Other Churches (detail data) Required* (see below)
- Survey of Residents Not required
- Census Data Not required
- Community Service Agencies Not required
- Other Sources (of your choosing) Not required

The above required data will be incorporated into your formal proposal for planting a new church (defined below). The care with which you collect and report all of the Community Profile information will have a direct affect on the quality of your final proposal. All assignments marked with an asterisk (*) require a passing grade in order to pass the class.
Required Elements to include in the Community Profile:  

A. Geographical Area Map

Your first task is to define the physical dimensions of your primary service area. What will be the anticipated physical boundaries of the area served by the church? Follow either of the following procedures:

Define your church’s service area by an incorporated township or other legally defined area, provided you believe that your church can reasonably offer ministry to that entire area.  OR

Define your church’s service area by drawing a radius on an area map that extends 5 miles from the church; reduce the area to 3 miles if it includes more than one-half million persons; increase the area to 10 miles for a suburban church; increase the area to 15 miles for a rural church.

Area maps are generally available from a number of sources: state highway department, state development office, county planning office, Chamber of Commerce, American Automobile Association, or commercial maps for purchase at a local stationery store. A real estate agent willing to help can be a real God-send!

Use colored markers to identify different types of areas on the map [remember to place a legend on the map itself]:
- Major highways (purple)
- Railroads (black)
- Business/Industry (yellow)
- Residential (orange)
- Rural farm (green)

You may also devise symbols within your legend to indicate community agencies of various kinds: churches, schools, parks/recreation, hospitals, counseling centers, etc.

B. Windshield Survey

It will be helpful to gain an accurate overview of the community in which the new church will be located. Good church planters have an intuitive ability to observe and reflect on the obvious things that are often overlooked. Take some time to drive through the community and making careful observations. Spend time praying and listening to the Holy Spirit as you make your observations. Work within the defined radius of your church’s service area (as defined above in your “Geographical Area Map”) and carefully respond to the questions below. Drive around and have fun!

Windshield Survey, Part I: Dominant Patterns of the Community

1. Are there natural boundaries, such as rivers, hills, lakes, etc., that affect ways in which people function in this area? Explain.
2. What are the man-made boundaries, such as highways, railroads, industrial zones, shopping centers, commercial areas, etc.? How do these affect life in the areas that surround them? What are the main thoroughfares that affect movement or traffic through this area?
3. What types of persons do you observe in the community? Are there distinct racial or ethnic enclaves within the general geographical zone under study?
4. What significant changes do you observe from one section to another as you drive through the area?
5. What residential areas exist within this zone?
6. Where are the agencies that affect persons in this area, such as schools, recreation centers, shopping malls, etc.?
7. What other churches are present in the area (list by name and denomination)?

Windshield Survey, Part II: Residential Configuration of the Community

1. How would you describe the type of housing in the area? Are the houses single or multiple-dwelling?
2. How would you describe the condition of the housing in the area? How well kept are the homes in the community or sub-community? Are the homes in good repair or are they deteriorating? What does this tell you about this community?
3. Is there evidence of mobility among the community or sub-community by “For Sale” signs appearing among the homes? Do the houses sell quickly in this community or sub-community?
4. How would you assess the socioeconomic status of the residents of this community or sub-community?
5. What types of automobiles are parked in the community or sub-community (describe)? Are they predominantly local or out-of-state?
6. What signs of life do you see, predominant age, activities, etc.?

C. Community Leaders’ Survey

Interview a minimum of 4 leaders within the geographical boundaries of the community (from among representatives such as a school principal, director of a social service agency, owner of a business, an elected public official, a real estate agent, a pastor, etc.). Use the questions below to get you started, but you are encouraged to ask additional questions of your own.

1. What are some of the distinctives that give this community its identity?
2. What are some of the major issues facing this community at this time?
3. What are some of the needs people may have in this community which churches are currently attempting to meet? On which issues are they doing better, and on which are they less effective, in your view? Why?
4. Can you suggest major needs in the community with which churches are not involved, but could be if they were willing?
5. What advice would you give a pastor / new church in this community?

D. Other Churches

This is a two-part section:
Part I: The first section should include a list of all the churches represented in the area in which the church plant will be located. You should include as many details as possible about these other churches, such as the name of church, address, email, pastor’s name (if possible), web page and average Sunday attendance. This data will be difficult to find, so you are advised not to put this off until the last minute. If you are unable to find reliable data, anecdotal and observational data is acceptable.
Part II: You must construct a pie chart that shows the amount of people who live in the community versus the amount of people who attend each church. The pie chart will give a snapshot of the entire church attendance of the area you are studying relative to the total population.

E. General Observations

As you talk with community leaders, try to discover general trends over the past 5 years. Ask these questions and others that may occur to you:

1. The average age of people in this community has:
   - stayed about the same
   - increased
   - decreased
   Your Source of Information:
   Briefly Describe/Explain:

2. The educational level of people in this community has:
   - stayed about the same
   - increased
   - decreased
   Your Source of Information:
   Briefly Describe/Explain: (You may continue on opposite side of page)

3. The economic condition of this community has:
   - stayed about the same
   - increased
   - decreased
   Your Source of Information:
   Briefly Describe/Explain: (You may continue on opposite side of page)

4. The ethnic/racial configuration of this community has:
   - stayed about the same
   - increased
   - decreased
5. The number of churches in this community has stayed about the same, increased, or decreased.

File Naming: Save your completed Community Profile using the file name described in the guidelines listed above in the section entitled “Course Requirements.” For the “Name of Assignment” please use the words “Community Profile.” For example, if your last name is Jones, your report should be named “Jones Community Profile.”

Community Analysis - DUE DATE: June 30th by 9:00 pm EDT:

Having gathered your data, you are now prepared to analyze it and begin to form conclusions about the best ways to reach the people who live there. Good analysis is largely common sense. During your observations, you will begin to have ideas about the best ways to build bridges. For instance, if you notice there is a sizable immigrant population whose needs include language proficiency or employment opportunities, you will want to ask the questions, “Who is addressing these needs?” and “How are they doing it?”

This is a narrative report making sense and drawing conclusions based on all of the information you have gathered about the community, whether in class, from the Community Profile (above), or any additional elective research you have undertaken. This is not a rehash, but a synthesis based on your data. Your Community Analysis is for the purpose of casting a vision for planting a church in this community. Give those to whom you are presenting your vision a reason to care about this church and the promise it holds for them. Be sure to lay our your thinking carefully. Explain what your ministry strategies will by and why you have decided to pursue them. Remember, your ministries will be based upon your analysis, so bear this in mind as you reflect on your research and write your conclusions. If your thinking is solid, your ministry will be effective and will connect with those you are trying to reach.

Prepare a report that is 3-5 pages, single-spaced, double spacing between paragraphs, using Microsoft Word format (“doc” or “docx”). Work should employ 1” margins and a 12-point Times New Roman (or equivalent) font. Send to the professor as an email attachment by the due date and time, using the file naming convention described below.

File Naming: Save your completed Community Profile using the file name described in the guidelines listed above in the section entitled “Course Requirements.” For the “Name of Assignment” please use the words “Community Profile.” For example, if your last name is Jones, your report should be named “Jones Community Profile.”

III. FORMAL PROPOSAL FOR PLANTING A NEW CHURCH (50% of grade)

DUE DATE: August 15th by 9:00 pm EDT

Description of Assignment: The primary assignment for this course is a formal, written proposal for planting a church in a community of your choosing. It is the culminating project from all you have learned in class, your reading, and your own research. Draw upon and include all the work you have done in your previous assignments, being sure to include them in the final document, by incorporating portions in the main body of the proposal or as appendices at the end. Students will have opportunity to work with the subtopics of these required elements in class, preparing them to write the final proposal. Think of your classmates as a church or denominational board whose endorsement you are seeking for your project. Use the class assignments and team reports as a way to prepare for the writing of your proposal. You may arrange your proposal in any format you wish, but you must include at least the following required elements.
**Required Elements to include in the Proposal:**

I. **INTRODUCTION – Initial Conception Of The New Church**

II. **IMPLEMENTATION, PHASE I – Earliest Formation (Nucleus Building)**

III. **IMPLEMENTATION, PHASE II – Birth & Beginning Development of the New Church**

IV. **PERSONAL SELF-EVALUATION – Made in Light of the New Church’s Projected Needs.**

**Explanation of the Required Elements:**

I. **INTRODUCTION – INITIAL CONCEPTION OF THE NEW CHURCH**

Your assignment is to bring a dream to “life” in the hearts and minds of those you need to enlist to make it happen by God’s grace and empowerment. Who are you trying to influence? (e.g. your sending church for their prayer and financial support? the initial nucleus group who will comprise the embryonic beginnings of the new church?) Be sure to address your audience. For each of these persons/constituencies: What can you say…how can you say it in order to: (1) increase their interest? (2) build their confidence in you and in your calling by God to this new work? (3) help them “own” with you God’s vision for the new church? (4) make their own personal commitment to the new church in specific and identifiable ways (e.g., prayer, time and talent, money, etc.).

Analagously, in the biological realm of reproduction this phase is **conception**.

Some suggested subtopics to include:
- A. Biblical / Theological Foundations for Church Planting.
- B. Community Description / Opportunity Assessment.
- C. Mission / Purpose / Vision Statement (What Makes This Proposed Church Unique and Exciting?)
- D. Needs & Resources.
- E. Goals / Objectives (with Estimated Time Frames)
- F. Budget (First Year)

II. **IMPLEMENTATION: PHASE I – EARLIEST FORMATION (NUCLEUS BUILDING)**

This is your plan to begin to bring the dream into being. As you anticipate God’s formation of the church, the following questions may assist you in your reflections about the future. [You may give theoretical projections to the questions, i.e., pretend, if you are not working with an actual group of people during this class experience]. Who is coming together to begin to realize the dream (general description)? How are they forming? What are their respective roles? What is exciting and contagious? How are the “people of God” loving and serving the Lord…one another…their community and world for whom Christ died? What does the start-up leadership and “followership” look like, and what are the implications for the future church?

Analagously, in the biological realm this phase is healthy **prenatal development** that eventuates finally in birth.

Some suggested subtopics to include:
- A. Early Leadership / “Followership” Formation.
- B. Team Development
- C. Multiplication of People and Embryonic Beginning Ministries.

III. **IMPLEMENTATION: PHASE II – BIRTH AND BEGINNING DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW CHURCH**

Birth is generally defined as the first public worship service along with announcement to the community. Your assignment is to describe the new body with all its future potential. What organization and leadership are in place to make it possible for the organism to become all that God wants it to be?

Analagously, in the biological realm this phase takes us all the way from birth to growth to maturity and reproduction of more new churches.

Some suggested subtopics to include:
- A. Dynamic Worship.
- B. Church Governance / Relationships to the Denomination and to the Church at Large.
C. Leadership / Ministry Development.
E. Outreach, Evangelism, and Assimilation of New People Into the Church.
F. Reproduction of New Churches.

IV. PERSONAL SELF-EVALUATION IN LIGHT OF THE CHURCH’S PROJECTED NEEDS

This is a brief description of your own person and calling, including personal strengths and weaknesses. Given who you are by virtue of God’s call, how will you equip the new church to become in reality “the people of God”? How do you plan to utilize your strengths as you lead in the recruitment, encouragement, and coordination of those God has anointed to share leadership with you under your shepherding oversight?

Prepare a proposal according to the guidelines explained above that is approximately 15 pages, single-spaced with double spacing between paragraphs, and which makes use of all of your Community Profile data and Community Analysis, an includes any other research you have done. Use Microsoft Word format (“doc” or “docx”) and employ 1” margins and a 12-point Times New Roman (or equivalent) font. Send to the professor as an email attachment by the due date and time, using the file naming convention described below.

File Naming: Save your completed Church Plant Proposal using the file name described in the guidelines listed above in the section entitled “Course Requirements.” For the “Name of Assignment” please use the words “Church Plant Proposal.” For example, if your last name is Jones, your report should be named “Jones Church Plant Proposal.”