

Catch the Vision...

SPONSORING A NEW CHURCH

GUIDELINES and STRATEGIES

"Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

Mark 1:38

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INTRODUCTION:

Seeing the Need

After His resurrection, Jesus' final words to His disciples are recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. He said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The mission of every believer is to make disciples. It is almost impossible to carry out Jesus' Great commission without being an active participant in a local church. The natural process of spreading the Gospel is to join a local church, and, if one does not exist, to aid in beginning a new one.

There are many factors in the church starting process that have changed through the years. Today there is more money for church starting, there are more trained church planters ready to serve in Mississippi, and there is a more developed process for church starting. We are grateful that resources are available for researching and analyzing an area, for assessment of a potential church starter's aptitude, and for the mentors assigned to each partner. Of course, the sponsoring church continues to be a key player in this process--but today there is training available for carrying out this vital assignment. In the final analysis, it still comes down to discovering and following the will of God. We hope that this manual will help you grow in your ability to help start strong new churches.

SPONSORING NEW CONGREGATIONS

Church Starting in Mississippi is a major function of who we are as Baptists. It is imperative that new congregations be started, nurtured and resourced to multiply themselves. The Kingdom of God demands it, and Mississippi Baptists have a passion to be a part of this movement of God.

Our mission is: To glorify God by nurturing a process whereby Southern Baptists in Mississippi can participate in the Great Commission tasks of reaching and ministering to all persons in the name of Jesus, helping them to grow in their understanding and practice of the Christian faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Each new generation of Christians needs to reconsider the foundational issues we face in ministry. Those issues have to do with the call of God in our lives as individuals and communities of faith, which provides our identity. Once we know what our identity is we can then move on to the deal of faith and action, and others. To this end we need to engage in conversation on the issue of sponsorship of new congregations.

Southern Baptists often say that it is the job of the local church to sponsor new congregations. Not only is it their job, but it is only through their initiative that a new congregation ought to be started. In this understanding the operative word here is "sponsor."

In many instances this is not the best way to start new congregations because you may not have enough committed local churches to intentionally engage in church starting. Many churches sponsor in name only (there is no involvement in the starting or nurturing of the new congregation). This represents a major flaw that delays and sometimes kills the process.

Yet the authority to send the called out ones rest on the local church and not on a parachurch organization like the association, seminaries, state convention, or national denomination. In the zeal to start new congregations the parachurch organization is often the one that initiates the start of the new congregations. What do we do then? Do we stop starting new congregations for lack of sponsoring churches?

If we go back to the Bible for a moment we will see that the operative word for the local church should be "sending" and not "sponsoring." The local church is not responsible for sponsoring new congregations, although nothing would prevent them from doing so. Their role is to "send" the called out ones to start new congregations (See Acts 13:1-3).

The church at Antioch did not sponsor the work of Paul and Barnabas-- that is did not provide money, supervision, or otherwise resource the ministry on a regular basis, except through prayer and affirmation of God's call on their life. It was the Holy Spirit that set them apart, and it was the Holy Spirit the one who sponsored them. What the local church did was to obey the Holy Spirit and send them out.

The parachurch organization does have a role to play in this endeavor as a supporting agency without violating the function of the local church. As a supporting agency it is appropriate to have a covenant with the church starter and the sending church spelling out the expectations from all sides. This way the ones called out by God would be mobilized with the active participation of the local church. The issue of money becomes secondary for the local church, for what is important is that those called are mobilized to respond to the call in their lives.

The local church has the sending authority and the supporting agencies can resource the local church in many ways. The supporting agency can provide a vision beyond the community where the local church carries out its ministry. It can foster networking among other congregations, make available specialized resources, and provide funding for the church starter.

How then, should we sponsor church starting in Mississippi today?

DEFINITIONS

Webster's New World Dictionary describes "sponsor" as "a person or agency that undertakes certain responsibilities in connection with some other person or some group or activity, as in being a proponent, endorser, advisor, underwriter, surety, etc." This sponsor "also assumes the role of protector or benefactor, now usually in a financial capacity." Thus the sponsor of a new congregation is another congregation, or agency, that assumes the role of protector or benefactor, to finance and otherwise resource the new church start.

For the focus group reflecting on the issue of church starting, by definition church starting is "the ministry of evangelizing and gathering new Christians in a voluntary covenanted community to share the message of Christ, observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and for worship. All this is with the purpose of making disciples and nurturing them to become committed followers of Christ for the furtherance of the gospel."

Sponsorship Models

There are many models for starting new work, including our favorite—a sponsoring church like you. Below are listed a few of these models, which differ mainly in the persons or groups initiating the new work.

THE LOCAL CHURCH INITIATED MODEL

The church is led by God to see a need. They have members who live in the area of need. They search the will of God in prayer. The church missions development council gathers information about the area where the new church is needed. The church votes to initiate a new church in the area. The pastor preaches about the need, the challenge and the opportunity. He invites the church members to respond to God's call and volunteer to be on the church starting team. A core group is gathered, some who are church members and some who are not church members living in the target community. They get training, do planning, make preparations and when all is ready they launch the new church. The sponsoring church nurtures the process, providing resources, and celebrating the milemarkers. They continue the support after the launching and all the way until the constituting of the new church. They partner with the new church, providing musicians, teachers, and child care workers until the new church can provide its own workers. They offer guidance in setting up a budget, financial record system, preparing a constitution and doing other legal matters. The pastor mentors the church planter. The new church shares everything that is happening with the sponsor church. It is a very healthy church start.

MULTIPLE CHURCH PARTNERS MODEL

Two churches, three churches or an association of churches may want to partner with one another in establishing a new church. They know where there is a community in which a new Baptist church might be started. They form a partnership council which then gathers the needed information about the community, plans cultivate events, work together to gather a core group and with the core group carry out the church starting process. The new congregation has many supportive partners each of who helps with surveying

the community and providing special events to establish the identity of the new church. The partnering churches find they are bonding to one another in this project. They are doing a work, which glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. A healthy, new church is born.

LONG DISTANCE INITIATED MODEL

Christians from other states may volunteer to spend a week or two surveying a community, witnessing to the lost, starting Bible studies, and even organizing a Sunday School and Sunday worship. The churches of which they are members decide to send and support a church planter/pastor. This is a long distance partnering. The new congregations keep in contact with the out-of-state partners, sharing their progress and their prayer needs. The partner churches continue to send mission groups to assist the new congregation. A love relationship grows and a healthy new church grows.

FIELD EDUCATION MODEL

The Field Education model consists of a partnership between the educational institution such as Seminary Extension, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, etc., a local church that will be the teaching church, and the Association and Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

The teaching church, the education institution, and the student put together a learning covenant detailing the learning activities the student is to perform during his/her time at the church.

The covenant will be revised every six months, to make sure the learning the student is meeting goals, and that the church is carrying out its commitment to be a teaching church. The emphasis here is the learning the student is to attain and not the service the student can provide to the teaching church.

ASSOCIATION/PARACHURCH MODEL

The local Association works with churches to select a potential area for a church plant. The Association would discover a nucleus of believers, and would seek a church planter. The church planter would be accountable to the Association through the church planting strategist or catalyst. The

church planter would be in a collegial relationship to other churches in the Association, but his primary accountability would be to the Association.

SPONTANEOUS MODEL

God will establish new churches wherever and however He chooses best. A church or a group of churches do well when they join the Father in what He is doing. Unity, which God commands, is the result and healthy new churches are born with Christian family support. This type of model cannot be ignored and we need to recognize God's control. It is Christ who establishes His church, who is the sovereign head of His Church. To Him belongs the glory.

Methods of Sponsorship

There are many different methods for how a church can sponsor a new church start. However, not all methods are as good as others. The goal should be to provide the new church start with the most supportive environment for the new work as is possible. Partial assistance methods, while they may be the only option available to a sponsoring church, should be carefully studied and the most appropriate method selected. Our ultimate consideration should be the well-being of the new work. Of course, associational and state convention staffs are available to assist in resourcing you in this process.

TOTAL RESOURCE METHODS

THE INTENTIONAL BIRTH METHOD *"We Want You In the Family"*

This full assistance method suggests the sponsoring church has a vision and a calling to be involved in starting new churches, just as a parent envisions and prepares for becoming a parent. The church will dream together and design appropriate levels of support (financial, physical, spiritual, etc.) and involvement before the church starter arrives on the field. In this method, the sponsoring church has marked out some mileposts that will help the new church start achieve autonomy, but knowing that it will take time and effort to bring it to fruition. This scenario is the best of all worlds for the new church starter, but is often too demanding on smaller sponsoring churches.

THE FACILITY PARTNERSHIP METHOD *"We Want You to Use Our Facility and Be Part of Our Family"*

This method may or may not have originated in the mind of the sponsoring church. Sometimes a denominational worker will suggest the scenario, and the sponsoring church will want to make it happen. Money may or may not be involved. Usually a strong bonding takes place between the pastor and the church starter. Throughout the life of the

new church start, there often will be some form of joint participation events (worship and/or fellowship).

THE 'SPIN OFF' METHOD *"We Want You Here for a Time... Then Go"*

In this method the new church starter actually serves on the sponsoring church staff for a specified time period (usually about six months) before launching on to start the new work. This enables the starter to become acclimated to the area as he seeks to contextualize his strategy. It also builds trust in advance between the new church starter and the sponsoring church, provided they determine the boundaries in their relationship and involvement early in the process of dialogue.

THE ADOPTION METHOD *"We Accept You as Part of the Family"*

Usually some third party (denominational worker, etc.) approaches a potential sponsoring church in this method. However, opportunities may still exist for the sponsoring church to be a design contributor in the new church start strategy. What's more important, though, is that the sponsoring church determine how it will assist and support the new church start as it moves toward maturity. Usually, this involves an agreement on assistance and accountability until autonomy is established by the new church.

THE MULTIPLE SPONSORS METHOD *"Let's Do This Together"*

Often, smaller churches feel that they are unable to sponsor a new church start adequately because of their own limitations and commitments. In such cases, such churches should consider sharing the responsibilities for a new church start with one or more other churches in the same situation. A church interested in this can initiate conversations along these lines with other churches or they can talk to denominational workers in this field who can advise them as to options. This method has the power of synergy on its side. Be forewarned, though, agreements need to be reached among all parties involved on help to be given, and by whom, including supervision and accountability.

PARTIAL PARTICIPATION METHODS

THE PERSONNEL METHOD *"We Will Send People to Assist You"*

This limited assistance method may be the best of the lot, due to the dynamic nature of the people involved. In this scenario, the sponsoring church and the new work agree how the church members participate (as core group or as leaders, etc.) and assist the new church start. Some will do it for a previously agreed term of service (6 months, 1 year, etc.). Others may release their members or even send them out as local missionaries, assuming a permanent relationship change. Regardless, the sponsoring church would be well advised to have some form of commissioning for those involved in such a noble purpose.

THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE METHOD *"We Will Contribute to You"*

This limited assistance method adds the element of financial contribution from the sponsoring church to the new church start. The sponsor church may stipulate that the money be used in certain ways (for example, for operations expenses or for pastoral support). Some sponsoring churches expect, as a result, some form of accountability or to have "a say" in some key decisions in the new church's life, since they have invested money in the congregation. Usually little else differs from the other methods mentioned above.

THE FACILITY USAGE METHOD *"We Will Allow You to Use Our Facility"*

This method may substitute the use of the church facility by the church start for financial assistance. It may provide space for worship only, or for other group meetings...even office space for the new church starter. There may or may not be interaction between the pastors or other church leadership. This method is often used when one ethnic group sponsors the new work of another ethnic group.

THE RESOURCE METHOD *"We Will Provide Resources for You"*

This method doesn't provide financial assistance, personnel involvement or active participation on the part of the sponsoring church. It may

provide prayer support. However, what makes it distinctive is the additional element of resourcing (material and/or equipment) provided by the sponsoring church to the new church start. These items are either loaned or given to the new church to facilitate its early work.

THE SUPPORT METHOD *"We Will Mentor You"*

The uniqueness of this method is that, while financial and physical assistance in the new church start may not exist, a level of supervision, support, coaching and encouragement take place. The pastor of the sponsoring church usually takes the lead in this, but the church may also provide some form of support network for the church starter and maybe, his family.

THE PRAYER PARTNER METHOD *"We Will Pray for You"*

This method is similar to the one above...no money or personnel are provided by the sponsoring church for the new work. However, it differs in that some form of involvement, at the spiritual level, connects the sponsoring church to the new work. This may take many forms, from prayer walks, to prayer chains, to prayer lists. The means are almost endless, and the impact is eternal. Still, this method is a very limited form of sponsorship.

THE NAME ONLY METHOD *"We Will Let You Use Our Name"*

This method involves no money, personnel or real involvement from the sponsoring church to the new church start. The church simply agrees to allow the new work to operate under the auspices of their name and all that implies. While this is the most limited method of assistance, it does provide the new work with legitimacy that is needed for financial support and a legal "covering" that protects them in their infancy. WE DO NOT PERSONALLY ENCOURAGE THIS KIND OF SPONSORING UNLESS IT IS A LAST RESORT.

THE WATCHCARE METHOD *"We're Here If You Have Questions"*

Sometimes churches approach the association or the state convention, seeking to affiliate with them. They may or may not be a very young

church in age. In such cases, we have found it to be helpful, especially if they are a fledgling new work, to find a sponsoring church to relate to them in a "watchcare" method. In this scenario, the main role of the sponsoring church is to advise, answer questions, orient and acquaint the new church with "how things work" in our system of cooperation. The sponsoring church may or may not choose of their own accord to participate with the new church in any other manner described within this article.

PLEASE NOTE: ALL METHODS SHOULD HAVE A WRITTEN COVENANT AGREEMENT DEVELOPED AND AGREED UPON BY THE PARTICIPATING PARTIES (especially the new church starter and the sponsoring church), THIS COVENANT SHOULD BE REVIEWED AND ADJUSTED, AS NEEDED, AT PERIODIC TIMES TO THE SATISFACTION OF ALL INVOLVED. More is mentioned in this regard elsewhere within this manual.

Elements of a New Church Start

So, you're interesting in helping start a new church, then...

- ◆ **PRAY** asking the Lord if He is indicating the planned church plant is part of His Kingdom strategy? What circumstances have led you to believe God is moving to create a local expression of His church in the target area?
- ◆ **CONDUCT A FIELD STUDY** in order to determine the type of church which needs to be started in the target area. Conduct a Community Needs Survey, collect census and lifestyle data.
- ◆ **MOBILIZE A PRAYER NETWORK FOR THE NEW CHURCH.**
- ◆ **DETERMINE THE METHOD OF SPONSORSHIP YOUR CHURCH WILL EMPLOY.**
- ◆ **ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION, SUPPORT, ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENCOURAGEMENT** from the sponsoring church toward the new church start.
- ◆ **CULTIVATE THE FIELD** in order to prepare for a church start. Conduct community surveys, prayer walks, block parties, children's events, seminars, concerts, ministry events and other activities, which will aid in community penetration.
- ◆ **MOBILIZE AND TRAIN LAY PERSONS** from sponsor church or association to assist in the starting of this new work.

- ◆ **DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN** listing a timetable for all activities to be conducted in preparation for the launch of the new congregation.
- ◆ **DEVELOP A BUDGET AND FINANCIAL PLAN** for helping the new congregation.
- ◆ **RESOURCE THE NEW CONGREGATION** in calling of their church planter/pastor, if he is not all ready on the field. Help new church planter/pastor "settle in" to the new community.
- ◆ **ESTABLISH A COVENANT BETWEEN THE SPONSOR CHURCH AND THE NEW CONGREGATION** listing responsibilities and expectations of each entity.

FLOW CHART FOR STARTING A NEW CHURCH

<u>PREPARATION ACTIONS</u>	<u>TARGET DATE</u>	<u>PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE</u>
1. Select the Area		
Check associational priorities	_____	_____
Develop PREP Analysis	_____	_____
2. Prepare the Church		
* Pastor Preaches on Biblical Mandate of Missions	_____	_____
* Missions Committee Report and Recommendation	_____	_____
3. Church Commitment to Plant	_____	_____
4. Cultivate the Field		
* Community Prayer walk	_____	_____
* Community Needs Survey	_____	_____
* Community Cultivative Activities	_____	_____
6. Begin Outreach Bible Studies	_____	_____
7. Begin Search for Church Planter if he is not already a part of process (may be bi-vocational, Mission Service Corps volunteer, layman)	_____	_____

- 8. Develop a Partnering/New Church Covenant _____
- 9. Support Plant Efforts in variety of ways _____
- 10. Receive regular Reports from field _____

TOP TEN REASONS NEW CHURCH STARTS FAIL **(Pitfalls You Need to be Aware of.....)**

10. No Assessment of the Church Planter

"He's a great guy, (we don't need to assess him)."

Lack of assessment is the equivalent of hiring someone just because of how they look, or whom they know...it fails to go beyond the surface. The church planter assessment is an instrument that helps sponsoring churches and others that work with church planters to know how the planter measures in the thirteen most crucial characteristics found in successful church starters. Every sponsoring church needs to be sure that the planter they have selected is assessed, and approved, by our denominational leaders.

9. No Contextualization

"This kind of church will work anywhere."

This statement is naïve to anyone who has lived in other parts of the country. The differences are great! While models for starting new work may transcend context (not in all cases, though), the need to modify and adapt them to the particular culture and environment of the new church plant is immense. Sponsoring churches need to be sure that the strategies undertaken are "community-compliant".

8. No Planning

"Plan??? Are you crazy? We've got a church to plant."

Planning is the bedrock of intentionality, a critical ingredient in almost every successful church start. We have all heard it before: to fail to plan is to plan to fail. Church starters need a vision, values, and a mission to accomplish the vision and goals and action plans to achieve those ends. Anything else is spontaneous, and the odds would suggest, will end up in spontaneous combustion. Sponsoring churches need to be sure that the new church starter has a written strategy in place before he starts, and adaptable along the journey.

7. No Covenant

"Don't worry about it, we'll all get along."

Church starters that fail to develop a covenant with their sponsoring

church is setting themselves up for difficulty. A wise church starter will use the opportunity to surface expectations and relational concerns that need to be dealt with in advance. These boundaries and responsibilities will keep communication lines open, and relationships growing. Doing correctly, a covenant can be the most advantageous tool for all parties involved in the church starting process.

6. No Connection with Unchurched People

"We will evangelize later."

A new church start without evangelism is at best, sheep stealing, and at worst, dead weight. Evangelism and church starting are two sides of the same coin; both need each other to continue. Sponsoring churches need to model evangelism and to encourage new church starters in this area, reminding them that church starting is the number one method of effective EVANGELISM in the world today.

5. Premature Public Launch

"We can't afford to wait any longer to start worship."

Starting at the right time is an art, not a science. The window for momentum's sake is usually between eighteen weeks and eighteen months. The optimum time is six months to a year. That being said, the pressure will be great (internal as well as external) to get to public worship quickly. As a sponsoring church encourage the church starter to wait until his core group is above 35, or at the very least 25, before he starts services.

4. No Sharing Ministry with the Laity

"I'm the Church Planter and it's my job to do it all."

Church starters are by nature self-starters. Unfortunately, that usually means they are oblivious to the need to delegate, especially early in the process. Not only is it good theology to involve the laity according to their giftedness, it's a practical help to the new church starter. A sponsoring church can help keep a church starter from this mistake by providing a few capable people to help assist the starter in the beginning stages of the new work, or by inquiring regularly as to others who are assisting him in the work being done.

3. **No Support Network**

"We don't need any help; we can do it ourselves."

The top complain new church starters have is that they feel so all alone, so isolated, in their work. To that end, our denomination and local entities have worked diligently to provide a nurturing, encouraging support network for the new work starter. This includes a mentor (not the same as the supervisor; his job is to listen and encourage the new work starter), a Church Planting Network (a support group of his peers), a partnership church (s), and you...his sponsoring church. New church starters need to know of your continuing prayer, love, support and encouragement. It makes a world of difference to him.

2. **No Prayer**

"I'm just too busy to pray right now...there's so much to do."

One of the grave dangers in church ministry in general, and certainly in church starting, is the neglect of prayer. The rationalization is usually based on the need to do so much, when no one else is available to help in the work itself. While we may have all felt that way at times, nothing could be farther from the truth of what we need. The remainder of a sponsoring church that this is God's church we are starting, not our own, can serve as a corrective in this area, as well as accountability in the area of the planter's own personal walk with the Lord.

1. **No Commitment to the Call**

"If this doesn't work out, I can always go back home to minister."

The number one reason church starters fail, in our opinion, is a lack of abandonment to the call of new church starting. Sometimes the romance of a new church start, or the appeal of no history or tradition to fight, prompts ministers to want to start a new church. These are poor and inadequate reasons. There will be days when only the conviction that "God has called me here to start a church" will keep the starter from leaving. Denominational workers should have questioned the starter about his call before he arrives on the field. Sponsoring churches need to remind him of it, and even celebrate it with him, regularly.

RESOURCES

In this appendix, our desire is to assist the church that has studied the material in this manual and has decided that it wants to sponsor a new work. The following resources are among the initial steps an existing church should take to begin laying the foundation for a new church start. Denominational workers in the associational and state convention offices are ready to help you in these steps, and the ones that follow.

In addition, a follow up manual has been developed for those churches that make the commitment to sponsor a new church start. More information on this manual will be shared with those who indicate their interest in helping start a new church.

INITIAL PRAYER STRATEGIES **FOR ANY NEW CHURCH START**

The following two strategies are among the best that a sponsoring church can implement in an effort to assist the new church start in getting off on the right foot.

1. INTECESSORY PRAYER TEAM

- The new church starter is encouraged, from the initial days of his commitment to start a new church in a specific place, to enlist an intercessory prayer team for his new work. A sponsoring church can help him do this by preparing a prayer letter, similar to the one below, and giving it out to congregation as well as mailing it to other individuals and churches they may know. They can also help the starter, at their initiative, keep those who accept the challenge “up to date” with mailings or emails, reporting both requests and answers to prayer. While there is no magic number to enlist for this team, the starter is encouraged to find as many as possible—at least fifty—who will pray for him, his family and the new church they are starting. Even if you don’t have a new church starter enlisted yet for the community where you have chosen to plant a church, you should start praying right away. It should be the first thing a sponsoring church begins to do

SAMPLE PRAYER ENLISTMENT LETTER

Date

Dear Friend,

In the course of the past year, God has placed a burden on the hearts of many people for a new church to be established in (town), Mississippi. We have been amazed, as church after church, individual after individual, has shared with us this similar desire. Now, with our congregation and the cooperative work of our association and state convention solidly behind us, a new church is being born there. A Bible study will soon be underway and a search is on for the place and people, including the new church starter, God would have joined us in this process.

That's where you come in. It would be a serious mistake to begin any work on the Lord's behalf without an adequate base of prayer support. To be sure, there are few things the Enemy detests more than to see a Bible-believing, soul-winning church being born! As a result, we are seeking to enlist at least 50 prayer warriors who will go before God on a daily basis for this new church work in (town). We need YOU to consider being a part of this team. Certainly only heaven can be sure, but it may just be that such a team, made up on people like you, will be the difference between starting a successful, healthy growing church, or not.

Will you consider being a member of the prayer team for (town)? Will you pray for God to prepare hearts to receive the Gospel? Will you pray for God to provide the leaders, musicians and meeting location for this new work? Will you pray for others to join us in the ministry of intercession for this new church? We have given a place at the bottom of this sheet for you to respond to us, if you will join in this endeavor. It is my hope that you will. Once you have indicated your desire to be a part of the team, simply mail it to me at the address listed above. We will keep you informed of our progress and prayer needs as they arise.

As E.M. Bounds once said, "Prayer IS the battle". Thank you for helping us start right, by listening to God and building a hedge of protection around the work God is preparing to do there in the coming days.

Sincerely, in Christ,

(your name)

(cut out and return)-----

_____ Yes, I/we (circle) will be members of the prayer team for (town) and covenant with you to pray for this new work daily for the coming year.

_____ No, I/we (circle) will not be able to join the prayer team for (town) at this time.

Signed _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/ST/ZIP _____

email address (if applicable) _____

(Please return this sheet or portion of it to us at the following address:
[list address again here]. Thank you.)

2. PRAYER WALK THE COMUNITY

This strategy, which has received much publicity over the past ten years, is literally “praying on site with insight”. The idea is to get people out into the community where a new church will be started in order to pray for the town, its leaders, the businesses and the residents. Walking or driving through the community while you do this will enable you to pray more effectively:

- Your eyes and ears will pick up significant things to include in your prayers that may not be known to you if you only pray inside of a home or church building;
- Your own people will see the needs, feel the burden and be “connected” to the new work in the future, so that they pray more intensely.

Below are some guidelines for prayer walking a community. You should determine how extensive you make the walk(s) in advance. You may do a one-time prayer walk, in hopes of praying for a spiritual covering over the town where the new church is to be placed. You may choose, over time, to pray upon every street and sidewalk for every building and person you see. The complexity is up to you, as you sense the need.

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYERWALKING FOR A NEW CHURCH START

- Mark on portions of a community map with a highlighter pen for the prayer partners to cover
- Gather at a significant site—a government or business building or an historical location—where the group prays together as they begin, interceding for the ones involved at the site and those they influence
- Divide the team up in pairs...no one goes alone.

- Pray for each location out loud on your assignment while you walk or drive, with your eyes open, regarding their health, protection, decisions, and salvation

A sample prayer might be... "Father, thank you for the family that lives here. We pray together that you would protect them from the Enemy. Give them health and wisdom in the decisions they must make. Grow their love for you and for one another...and Father, if they are not believers, touch their heart with your grace that they may come to know you as their Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen."

- Gather back at the given time (usually 2-3 hours at a time is the maximum) and place to report, collect maps showing what was actually covered during the walk, and to rejoice in prayer that God will respond
- Report the results to the church and to the new church starter (if known), and if you see the importance and have the desire, do it again

Studies have shown that crime goes down, safety goes up and God's power is seen and felt in significant and powerful ways as a result of prayer walking. However, many of the results may either be experienced by others instead of us (including other churches!), or be invisible to the naked eye. Only eternity will show all of its impact. Prayer walking, in a very real sense, is tilling the soil where God's Word will be soon scattered. As such, it has tremendous potential to make a difference in the ministry of the new church. Sponsoring churches that participate in this prayer strategy are preparing God's field for harvest.

P.R.E.P. Process

The P.R.E.P. (Perspective, Receptivity, Exegesis, Penetration) workbook is available to help churches determine where and how to start a new church. It will assist the church that has made the decision to start a new church in finding appropriate foundational material, interpreting it and compiling it into a community profile. This material forms the basis for a new church start proposal, suggesting strategies and methods to be used and the type of personnel and facilities that will be needed. Associational and state denominational staff are ready to share this material with you when you are ready and to assist you in developing it. They are able to provide companion materials to help you in this process, and in subsequent steps, as well. Any questions or desires for further information can be addressed to them. They will be glad to partner with you in the journey of starting a new church for our Lord.

SAMPLE CHURCH STARTING COVENANT

The following is a sample covenant that the Sponsoring Church and the Church Start might consider utilizing as they begin their relationship. Its inclusion here does NOT imply our endorsement (the MBCB or the Association) of all that is contained here. It is provided simply as an extensive example, in order to have you, as a sponsoring church, ponder all the areas of responsibility that need to be considered in such an arrangement.

Responsibilities of a Sponsoring Church

1. COMMUNICATION

It is important that a good relationship be maintained between the sponsoring church and the new church start. This does not just happen. It must be intentional and the lines of communication must always be open.

II. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SPONSOR CHURCH

- 1) The sponsor church agrees to associate with the new congregation for a period of at least _____ years during which time the sponsor church will offer support in the areas of administration, finances, leadership training, and other helps as deemed necessary by both bodies.
- 2) The sponsor church shall appoint or elect a Missions Development Council (MDC), or a sub-committee, of not less than three, and not more than five members, whose primary responsibility shall be that of giving assistance to the new congregation as well as serving as a liaison between the sponsor church and the new church. Any complaints or correspondence from the new congregation to the sponsor church should be addressed to this committee.
- 3) A representative committee from the new congregation (the mission pastor at least 2 other members) shall meet with the MDC on a monthly basis to provide a status report to the sponsor church.

- 4) The status report of the new congregation should include the minutes and financial report from the new congregation's business meeting. The committee should review the progress of the work. The MDC will provide a monthly report to the sponsor church and shall make all recommendations relative to the new congregation.
- 5) The sponsoring church shall make a commitment to a prayer support ministry for its new congregation seeking God's power to enable it to do all it should for the Kingdom of God. Prayer requests should include love, respect, cooperation and a mutual blessing for both bodies.
- 6) The sponsoring church selects the pastor for the new congregation when the congregation is inaugurated. When the new congregation loses its pastor a search committee should be elected composed of two members from the new congregation, two members from the sponsoring church, and the sponsoring church pastor or his designee.
- 7) The pastor of the new congregation should be authorized by the sponsoring church to administer the ordinances. If the new congregation does not have a pastor, the pastor of the sponsoring church will administer the ordinances.
- 8) The sponsor church shall establish guidelines to assist the future relationships between itself and its new congregation.

A covenant relationship between the two pastors will be established and will include a mutual understanding of:

- a. The lines of authority and accountability.
 - b. Expectations of each other
 - c. A time for regular meetings to develop a mutual relationship that allow time for mentoring, planning, praying, encouraging, instructing and evaluating.
- 9) The sponsor church shall be responsible for the titles to all real estate, buildings, property, and all financial commitments of the new congregation until such time it is constituted into a church. Legally the new congregation is considered a part of the sponsoring church. Therefore the new congregation shall not enter into any legally binding contracts or leases without prior written approval of the sponsoring church. In no case will the new congregation become

indebted without approval of the sponsor church. The sponsor church should make sure that its new congregation has sufficient insurance coverage including liability.

- 10) The sponsoring church shall assist the new congregation in the administration of its finances by:
- a. Helping it to open its own checking account and providing guidance in bookkeeping and reporting procedures to the treasurer of the new congregation.
 - b. Funds from all sources related to the new congregation should be kept in a separate account from that of the sponsoring church.
 - c. Checks issued by the new congregation should bear signatures of representatives from both the sponsoring church and the new congregation (preferably the treasurers). If distance is a problem, the sponsoring congregation may designate a local person to sign with the treasurer of the new congregation.
 - d. The sponsoring church will handle the new church's pastor's salary and other remuneration from the church as agreed upon and with the same care and promptness as for the sponsoring church pastor.
 - e. Adequate insurance and annuity, preferably through the SBC Annuity Board, should be provided for the pastor as agreed upon.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NEW CHURCH START

The new congregation will:

- 1) Be faithful in teaching Biblical doctrine. It will teach, preach, and practice sound biblical doctrine using the Bible as a basic curriculum and literature offered by the Southern Baptist Convention.
- 2) Be loyal to the denomination. It will establish and maintain a healthy, friendly, relationship with the sponsoring church, local association, state convention, and Southern Baptist Convention.
- 3) Be regular in its contributions to the association, Cooperative Program, and the three special annual missions offerings. Both the sponsoring congregation and the new congregation shall be responsible for making these contributions to the

appropriate entities. (All offerings except those designated for associational missions are to be sent to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board indicating the cause for which they are designated).

- 4) Operate according to the constitution and bylaws of the sponsoring church.
- 5) Plan its programs and adopt a budget with approval of the sponsoring church. The treasurer elected by the new congregation should handle the income and expenditures as directed by the budget. (The pastor of the new congregation should never handle any funds). A second person authorized by the sponsoring church should act as signatory with the treasurer on all checks. Both financial procedures and records should follow the policies and procedures of the sponsoring church, and should be reviewed annually by the sponsoring church and new congregation.
- 6) Follow the policies of the sponsor church when:
 - a. Voting to receive (or not to receive) as members all persons desiring to become a part of the new church family. Joining the new congregation makes one a member of the sponsoring church and subject to its membership requirements. The sponsor church allows its new congregation to receive members on its behalf. The new congregation should maintain its own membership files. An up to date duplicate of this file will be held by the sponsoring church.
 - b. Electing officers. Upon recommendation of a nominating committee of the new church, the body shall elect its officers and workers such as Treasurer, Clerk, Program Directors, Teachers, etc., and shall present their names to the sponsoring church for approval.
- 7) Establish financial maturity among its members. It will teach Biblical stewardship and move toward financial maturity and self-support.
- 8) Organize its programs and ministries. As commanded by its growth, the new congregation will organize and develop the basic functions of the church, which will include Bible Study, Discipleship, Missions Education, Stewardship, Evangelism, and Ministry.

- 9) Establish outreach ministries to reach unchurched people in the surrounding community and will begin ministries in neighboring communities that may develop into future churches.

- 10) Will conduct a regular business meeting each month at least one week before the sponsoring church business meeting. If not otherwise stated in the sponsoring church's constitution and bylaws, the pastor or moderator can call a special business meeting after a one-week notice.

- 11) Outline plans and set annual goals, which will result in the new congregation becoming an organized church at the earliest possible date. When both the sponsoring church and the new congregation feel that the new church is strong enough to organize into a New Testament Church, the Church Missions Committee shall recommend to the sponsoring church that plans be made to constitute the new church.

SIGNATURES:

Pastor of Sponsor Church

Date

Pastor of New Congregation

Date

NOTE: This is a sample relationship agreement. Individual churches should make changes and additions as deemed necessary.