

Do's and Don'ts for Church Planting

Susan Brown Snook, snook.susan@gmail.com, 602.980.4970

Mike Michie, mikem@standrewsonline.net, 469.396.6097

For the Church Planter

Do:

1. Pray, and teach the team to pray, and have a prayer team from outside the church plant supporting you from the beginning.
2. Do it as a team, not an individual.
 - Make your team a network, not a bicycle wheel. (In other words, they should be connected with each other, not just with you.)
 - Spend the time to create healthy emotional systems and relationship norms.
3. Discover your “Hedgehog Concept” – i.e., intersection of three circles:
 - Who are We? What do we have to offer, as Christians, Anglicans, Episcopalians, the people in this room? What are our special gifts that bring something unique to this community? Take time and understand the churches around you – Episcopal and non-Episcopal ones. How will you be different?
 - Who is our Community? Spend time understanding your mission field. Who lives there? What are their needs? What are the spiritual practices?
 - What is God’s Mission? Do Bible study, prayer, and discussion to understand what evangelism is and why God wants us to do it.
4. Do many events and public appearances to become known in the community.
5. Spend the money to have good music, when you finally launch.
6. Prepare for very hard work that involves you, heart and soul.
7. Take care of yourself.
 - Make sure your family is supportive and ready for a big challenge.
 - Join a gym, hire a therapist, get a spiritual director....
 - Take your day off and take your vacation.
 - Participate in Genesis Gatherings and seek out other planters in our church, in your area and beyond.
8. Think through the location of your public worship. Portable worship can be amazing in the right place but a struggle in the wrong one.

9. Learn how to preach, teach and lead stewardship. Embrace that you are the chief fundraiser and be willing to ask people for money, initiate capital drives, start planned giving programs, etc.
10. Preach the Gospel. Don't forget that Jesus is the Main Thing.
11. Prepare to see miracles.

Don't:

1. Lead with the worship style as the main thing. The worship style should answer the needs of the community you are trying to reach, not the other way around.
2. Launch worship too soon, before building a team.
3. Accept team members who are leaving because of conflict or anger at another church. They will repeat the pattern at your church.
4. Try to do everything at once (establish a full range of ministries, etc.).
5. Put people in leadership who aren't ready. Leadership development takes time, so don't launch Bishop's committees and traditional church structures until you know you have the right people to form them.

For the Diocese

Do:

1. Support the plant with money, vision, and a mission boldly stated and often repeated to the whole diocese.
2. Be clear about how much money it will cost, and how much you are planning to contribute. Stick to the commitments you make.
3. Support the plant against anxiety and complaints from other churches.
4. Call a planter who has been assessed as having the right gifts and calling. Be willing to wait for the right person.
5. Insist on training, coaching, and a community of support for the planter.
6. Create standards and expectations for accountability, growth, and financial responsibility.

7. Give the planter emotional support when setbacks occur.
8. Be clear on expected target population, geographic area, and model of plant.
9. Consider creating new plants as daughter churches of large congregations, and work with the large congregations to build vision for this ministry.
10. Consider the financial model you expect the congregation to follow, including how it will establish a permanent (or long-term) location.
11. Think about property for this new work. If this is going to be a “traditional” plant with land and a building, if you can, secure land before hiring the planter. Give them a “promised land” to work toward!
12. Get the buy in of surrounding congregations. Bishops should tell neighboring parishes to support this new work with prayer, volunteers and people. Encourage them to have the planter preach in their congregations to share the vision of this new work.
13. Have a church planting committee and/or real estate committee that takes a strategic look at the best places in the Diocese to plant. Think about where the growth is going not the places you’ve already missed!
14. Support the larger church planting movement in the Episcopal Church!

Don’t:

1. Expect too much, too fast. Give the plant the time it needs to do the mostly invisible background work of building up a congregation.
2. Withdraw financial and other support before time.
3. Give in to complaints from other congregations who want to protect “their” territory against incursions.
4. Start this unless you are willing to have it fail. It might!
5. Give the new church a weird name. Make it something anyone in the mission field will understand.
6. Keep a church going if things aren’t working. For the sake of the planter, the core team and the future of church planting in your Diocese, be willing to pastorally end failed church plants if appropriate.