



CHAPTER 1 – Statement of Problem and Rationale

The Problem Addressed

The problem of ministry I addressed is that many church plants fail to reach viability.

⇒ Definitions for church planting “viability” or “success” vary but include: ability to exist independently from outside aid after a time - typically about five years; steady growth in numbers, conversions and baptisms; and, ability to reproduce. In sum, viability involves sustainability, growth, and some measurable success in Christ’s directives for His church.

Hypothesis

Evangelical churches that are able to successfully plant viable new churches will utilize common methods of preparation.”

My Aim

“To identify common methods of preparation that churches in Western Washington State are using to plant viable new churches.”

The Research Question

“Will churches which have successfully planted viable new churches exhibit common methods of preparation?”

Three Rationales – Stated reasons for the undertaking of this project

1) The Theological Rationale

2) The Practical Rationale

a. Practical Effects of Successful Church Plants

- Blesses a nation. Successful church planting has blessed our nation with over 300,000 Protestant churches existing today.
- Evangelism
 - “The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.” – Peter Wagner

John Mark Terry adds other practical effects such as:

- The adaptability of new churches to changing needs of community
- Increased participation of congregants
- Inspiration for existing churches to plant new churches
- The impossibility for any one church to reach and retain all the people groups in a community.

Ralph Moore notes several others. New church plants:

- Speak best to the next generation
- Move the gospel across cultural lines
- Open doors for poor people
- Present leadership development opportunities
- Were the chosen tool of Jesus and the Apostles

b. Not Enough Churches are Planting New Churches

“The percentage of the population attending a Christian church on any given weekend will decline from 17.5 percent in 2005 to 14.7 percent in 2020.” How many new churches are needed, then, just to keep up with population growth? “Approximately 55,000 churches will close between 2005 and 2020, while 60,000 new churches will open, producing a net gain of 4,500 churches. However, to keep pace with population growth, a net gain of 48,000 churches will be needed.”¹

3) The Strategic Rationale

¹ David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids.: Zondervan, 2008), 176.

CHAPTER 2 – Biblical and Theological Research

Church Planting Theology

Ecclesiology

The local church is a community of regenerated believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. In obedience to Scripture they organize under qualified leadership, gather regularly for preaching and worship, observe the biblical sacraments [ordinances] of baptism and Communion, are unified by the Spirit, are disciplined for holiness, and scatter to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission as missionaries to the world for God's glory and their joy.²

Missio Dei

Churches which recognize *missio Dei* will pour resources into God's mission. And, as individuals respond, new churches will form.

Great Commission

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:18-20

"Our goal is not just to meet and evangelize; we must congregationalize.... The first believers heard the commission, left their homes, and went out to plant. When we hear the Great Commission, we should also be motivated to go out and plant new congregations."³

Church Planting in the Book of Acts

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." - Acts 1:8

² Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 26.

³ Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird. *Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 15, 199.

Target Communities in Acts

God's First Target Community – Jerusalem (Acts 1-8)

Paul's Ministry Bases and Target Communities

⇒ God shaped Paul's leadership to thrive in the _____. Thus, Paul's primary selected ministry bases and target communities were _____.

Church Planting Models in Acts

- Antioch Model – Entrepreneurial Planter, Mission to Gentiles
- After Antioch – Paul's First Missionary Journey: Apostolic Harvest Model
- Ephesus Model – Team Planting
- House Church Model

Church Planting Strategies in Acts

- Gospel-Centered Biblically-Based Proclamation
- Selecting Regions and Cities
- Selecting Venues
 - Beginning with the Local Synagogue.
 - Moving from Synagogue to Lecture Hall – in Ephesus
- Selecting Social Structures
 - To Jews, God-Fearers, and Proselytes. Paul commonly approached Jews, God-Fearers, and proselytes first.
 - In the Public Square despite Opposition. These efforts often resulted in persecution, but extraordinary successes.
- Maximizing Leaders' Personal Resources
 - Tentmaking/Self-Supporting/Bivocational
 - Citizenship, Personal Background
- Maintained Ties with the Mother Churches
- Maintained Ties with Church Plants
- Multiplying Leadership through Discipleship

Church Planting Leadership in Acts

- Jerusalem – Effective Overseers
- Antioch - Recognizing, Appointing, and Commissioning Leaders
- Ephesus - Leader Discipleship and Training

Conclusions from the Biblical Research for Today's Church Planters

From this chapter's journey through Scripture, today's church planters can draw from the following summarized church planting principles:

1. Be yielded to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit made His will known to the senders and to the church planters (Acts 13:2-4; 16:6-10). Those involved at every level of church planting must be yielded to the Holy Spirit.
2. Recognize the need to be constant in worship and prayer to discern the Holy Spirit's leading and to remain abiding in the Vine, Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church (Acts 13:1-3; John 15).
3. Cultivate a deep love for God, strong burden for people, and ability to walk by faith.
4. Assemble a team with diverse gifts for the purpose of better leadership and more effective ministry and multiplication.
5. Be partnered with a mother church, network, or other sister churches for wisdom of many counselors, support, and accountability (Acts 14:26-28). To church planting leaders, churches, or agencies, Paul's example demonstrates the strategic value of maintaining ties.
6. Be strategic in target communities, thinking in terms of best current strategies and future effect, as Paul did in many cities. Have a watchful eye on the time to expand or to leave and hand the work over to others.
7. Be strategic in methods, like Paul, so that expansion will extend beyond a particular leader, location, and generation.
8. Be strategic in leadership, as there were in Antioch both prophets and teachers as well as members ready for action (Acts 13:1-3). Varied roles were given to the congregation. Various recruiting, assessing, and training methods were employed, based on following the Holy Spirit's leading and fitting the need present.
9. Seek the type of unity and care Christ had in mind for His church, both on a local and universal level.
10. Recognize that persecution and opposition of every kind can strengthen leaders, strengthen the church, testify to God's power, and expand the witness in unimaginable ways.
11. Church planters today, like Paul, may choose any of a number of approaches of financial support, between being fully self-supported, bi-vocational, and fully others-supported strategies; and, even remain fluid and adaptable in them as their situation changes.
12. Be strategic with venues. Paul's "synagogue first" strategy was often effective, but when it was not, Paul strategically changed venues. Church planters learn to use whatever venues are available and best fit the needs.

CHAPTER 3 – Literature Research

State of Church Planting in America Today

“North America is the ONLY continent where Christianity is not growing.... Our need is simply not to plant hundreds of new churches but thousands.”⁴

Best Practices of Church Planting Relating to Viability

In Regards to Successful Church Planting

Stetzer and Travis identify several activities which have proven to indicate church health and viability. These activities include:

- Engaging in ministry evangelism (i.e., food banks, shelter, drug/alcohol recovery)
- Starting at least one daughter church within three years of the church plant
- Having a proactive stewardship development plan enabling the church to be financially self-sufficient
- Sending out mailers for invitation to services and church events
- Conducting a block party as an outreach activity
- Conducting a new member class for new church members
- Conducting leadership training for church members
- Receiving church-planting training in terms of a boot camp or basic training by the church planter
- Working full-time over part-time as the church planter
- Being assessed prior to the beginning of the church plant as the church planter
- Delegating leadership roles to church members

Stephen Gray identifies several dominant practices present in the fastest-growing church plants:

- Church planting teams
- Core group of 26 to 75 people
- Contemporary style of worship
- Ten percent or more of their budgets toward outreach and evangelism
- Top financial priority is to fund a qualified and well-trained church planter
- Assessment

⁴ “A Step-By-Step Handbook for Planting New Churches,” NAMB, 2001, iv-v, accessed September 9, 2014, <http://www.lifeway.com/Product/new-churches-needed-our-church-can-help-churchwide-resource-kit-P001114281>.

- Mentoring
- Training
- Expectations: “If, for the church planter, the expectations of the church plant meet the reality of the church planting experience, the chance of survivability *increases* by over 400 percent.”
- Proactive stewardship development plan

Additional best practices from the literature:

- Achieving self-sufficiency
- Pastors who work hard
- Well thought-out plans
- Creatively work through and solve problems
- Aggressive outreach
- Fueled by optimism and faith
- Good social skills
- Take responsibility for the growth of the church
- Limited number of nominal or hurt Christians who are unwilling or unable to change and grow
- Christlike discipleship

As Seen in Failed Church Planting

As in life, much of church planting’s greatest wisdom comes from failure. In a large study, Griffith draws out the following ten most common mistakes made by new church starts:

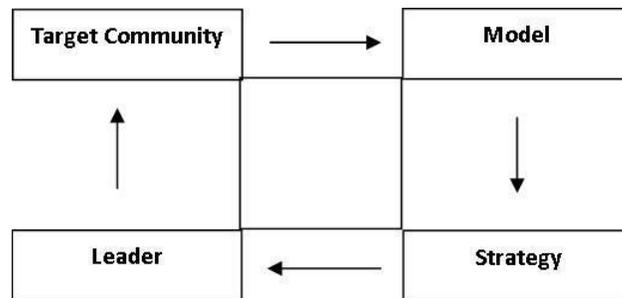
1. Neglecting the Great commandment in Pursuit of the Great Commission
2. Failing to Take Opposition Seriously
3. A Love Affair with One’s Fantasy Statement Blinds the Planter to the Mission Field
4. Premature Launch
5. Evangelism Ceases After the Launch
6. No Plan for the Other Six Days of the Week
7. Fear of Talking about Money Until It Is Too Late
8. Failure of the Church to Act Its Age and Its Size
9. Formalizing Leadership Too Soon
10. Using the “Celebrity Pastor” Model as the Paradigm for All Church Plants

Best Practices of Church Planting Relating to Preparations

Samples of Church Planting Systems

Particular Preparation Practices for Church Planting

- Target Communities – “The identifiable group, culture, or neighborhood to be served by the new church.”
- Church Planting Models – In selecting a model, the church planter determines, “I want the new church to be like this. I want to create this; to use this approach.”
- Church Planting Strategies – In selecting strategies, the church planter, “These are the steps, methods, or actions I will take to establish and create this.”
- Leadership (Assessing, Selecting, and Training) – “An analysis of church plants will reveal that the single most important tangible factor impacting the success of a new church is the leadership ability of the church planter.”⁵
- Vision and Strategic Planning – The other preparation steps inform the crafting of the vision and strategic plan, and in turn, the development of a vision and strategic plan informs the execution of the other preparation steps.



Homogeneous Unit Principle – “People like to become Christians without crossing racial/linguistic/class/cultural barriers. In other words, they prefer to remain who they are culturally while changing to being Christian.”

⁵ Gary Bulley. “Developing a Contextualized Church Planting Strategy.” Alpharetta: NAMB, 2001, 36.

Church Planting Models Discovered in Research:

- Apostolic Harvest Church Planter Model
- The Founding Pastor
- Team Planting
- Program-Based Model
- Seeker-Based model
- Purpose-Driven model
- Ministry/Service-Based model
- Relational-Based model
- Missional Community model
- Pioneering Model
- Branching Model
- Partnering Model
- Restarting Model
- Catalyzing Model
- Spinoff Models
 - Mother-Daughter
 - Multisite
 - Various Sponsoring Type models
- House Churches
- School Based
- Café Church

Peter Wagner offers an organization of twelve models, divided according to his modality-sodality bifurcation.

Modality Models (relating to established congregation):

1. Hiving
2. Colonization
3. Adoption
4. Accidental parenthood
5. Satellite model
6. Multi-congregational churches
7. Multiple campus model

Sodality Models (independent works):

1. Mission team
2. Catalytic church planter
3. Founding pastor
4. Independent church planter
5. Apostolic church planter

Church Planting Strategies Discovered in Research:

- Begin with Strategic Prayer. “Mobilize your intercession team.”
- Develop strategic plan
- Core-to-crowd strategies involve beginning with a core group of believers and expanding it over time until the core grows into a crowd. Crowd-to-core strategies are outreach-oriented strategies which gather many unchurched people, and then move them towards greater maturity and commitment.
- Team Planting
- Partnerships
- Small churches planting churches
- Large church planting strategies
- Merger Campuses
- Internet Campuses
- Multiple campus launches
- Urban strategies
- Multiplication and Church Planting Movements (CPMs)
- Portable church
- Event-based
- Affinity-based
- College-based
- Apprentice-based
- Pioneer evangelism
- Start urban and move out from there
- Tentmaking leadership
- Traveling in circuits
- Urban strategies:
 - Transitional Ethnic Churches
 - Multiple Mission Churches
 - Multi-Ethnic Churches
 - Regional Churches
 - Satellite Churches
- Final note: Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird claim: “The most effective church multiplication strategy clearly seems to be local churches planting other churches—which in turn have church planting DNA ingrained in them from their inception.”⁶

⁶ Stetzer and Bird, *Viral Churches*, 161.

Church Planting Leadership

Leadership Assessing

Ridley Assessment's Thirteen Necessary Church Planter Traits:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Visioning capacity | 8. Responsive to community |
| 2. Intrinsically motivated | 9. Utilizes giftedness of others |
| 3. Creates ownership of ministry | 10. Flexible and adaptable |
| 4. Relates to the unchurched | 11. Builds group cohesiveness |
| 5. Spousal cooperation | 12. Resilience |
| 6. Effectively builds relationships | 13. Exercises faith |
| 7. Committed to church growth | |

Leadership Training

A study performed by Ed Stetzer and Stephen Gray identified leader training as the most significant of twenty-one statistically significant factors in fast-growing church plants.

Leader Training Methods Discovered in Research:

Innovation has transformed church planting training as it has most other areas of education in the world today.

- Church planting boot camps
- Months-long training classes
- Turbo training
- Online training tools, courses and support groups
- Internships
- Apprenticeships
- Residencies
- Coaching
- Small Group Leadership as training
- Becoming staff at mother church as training

Summary

The literature review demonstrates not only the clear need for vast and varied church planting efforts, but that certain preparations are critical in order for church plants to become "viable," meaning to survive, thrive, grow, and multiply.

The vastness of variables in church planting preparations presents a barrier for many to participate or succeed in church planting. In resolution to that problem, the literature calls all existing churches to support church planting in some way, as God directs and allows, and for prospective church planters to enter the endeavor faithfully to God while giving sufficient attention to the preparations required for reaching viability.

CHAPTER 4 – Project Design

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to identify common methods of preparation that churches in western Washington State are using to plant viable new churches.

The Research Perspective of the Project

The research perspective was qualitative in nature, using information gathered by interviewing church-planting leaders of successful church planting ventures in western Washington State, in both mother and daughter churches.

The Setting of the Project

The Selection of Churches

The selection of churches was based upon the existence of five characteristics. First, each daughter church was required to have been planted over five years ago. Second, the churches must be physically located in the western part of Washington State. Third, each daughter church needed to have a mother church among its primary sending agents. Fourth, the primary church planting leader(s) was required to be available for the interviews. Fifth, each daughter church needed to have reached viability, as determined by three standard measures of new church viability: 1) Ability to exist independently from outside aid, 2) steady growth in numbers, conversions and baptisms, and 3) some measurable success in Christ's directives for His church, such as evangelism, discipling, and growth in unity and maturity.

The Development of a Research Instrument

The research instruments used were formal interview questionnaires, one tailored to mother church leadership and one to daughter church leadership. These included the use of preliminary personal background and church background forms

The Interpretation of the Interview/Research Data

The results of these questions will be discussed in Chapter Five under the following six headings: 1) Demographic Information of Key Informants 2) Awareness and Participation in Church Planting, 3) Prelaunch and Core Group Development Methods, 4) Mother Church Process and Support, 5) The Identification of General and Particular Preparations, and 6) Assessments of Preparations Contributing to Viability.

CHAPTER 5 – Project Results

1. Demographic Information of Key Informants

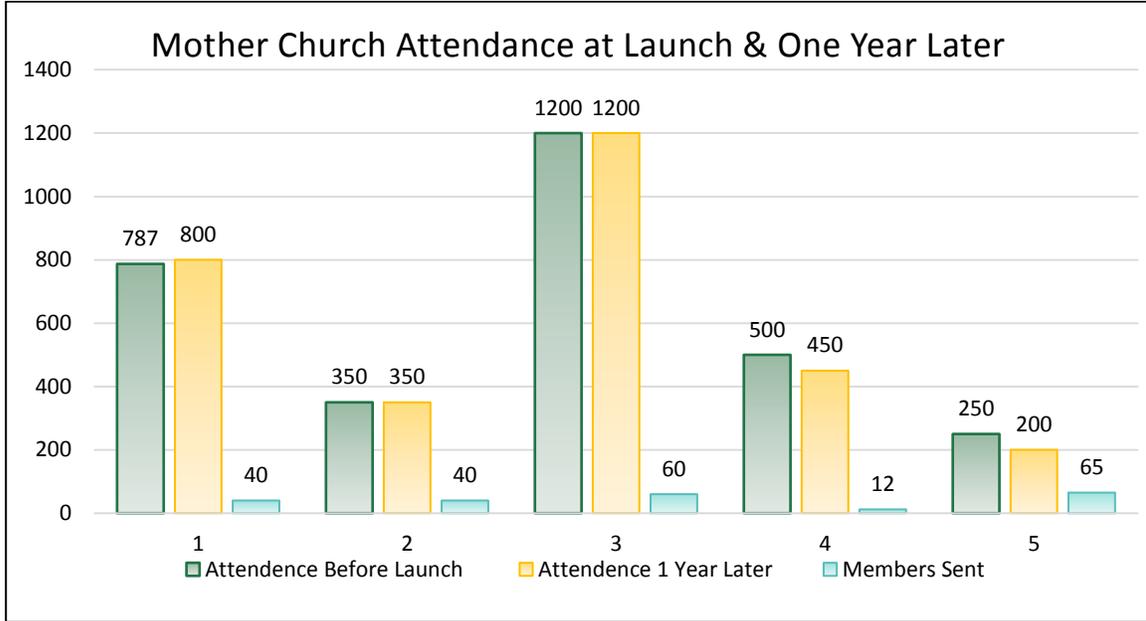


Figure 1—Mother Church Attendance at Launch & One Year Later

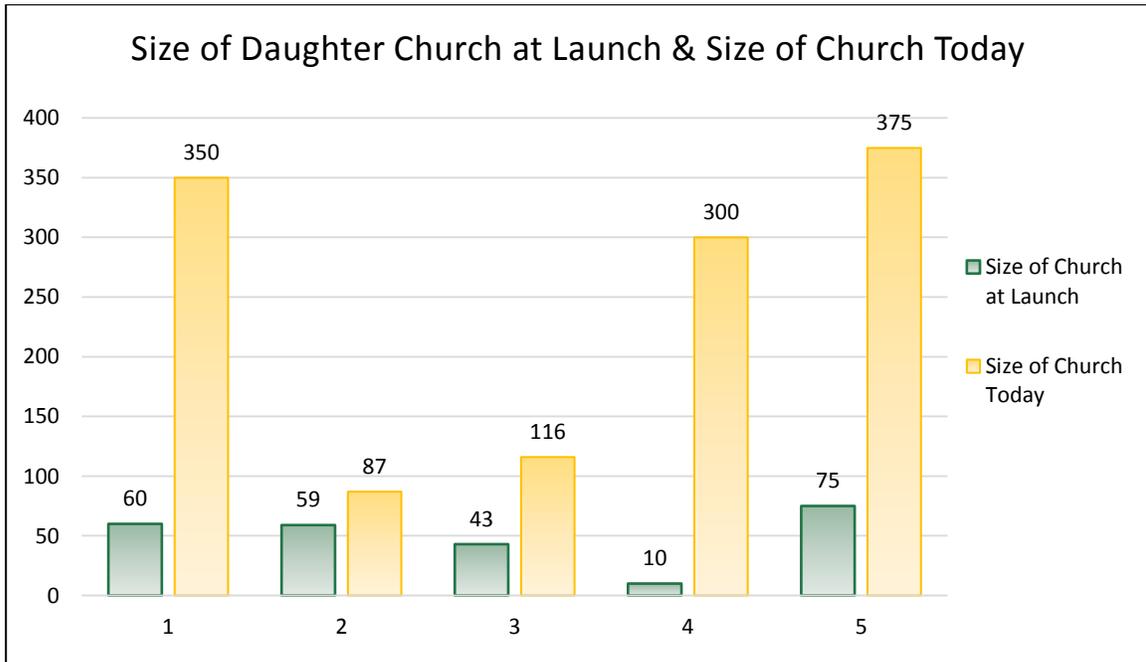


Figure 2— Size of Daughter Church at Launch & Size of Church Today

2. Awareness and Participation in Church Planting

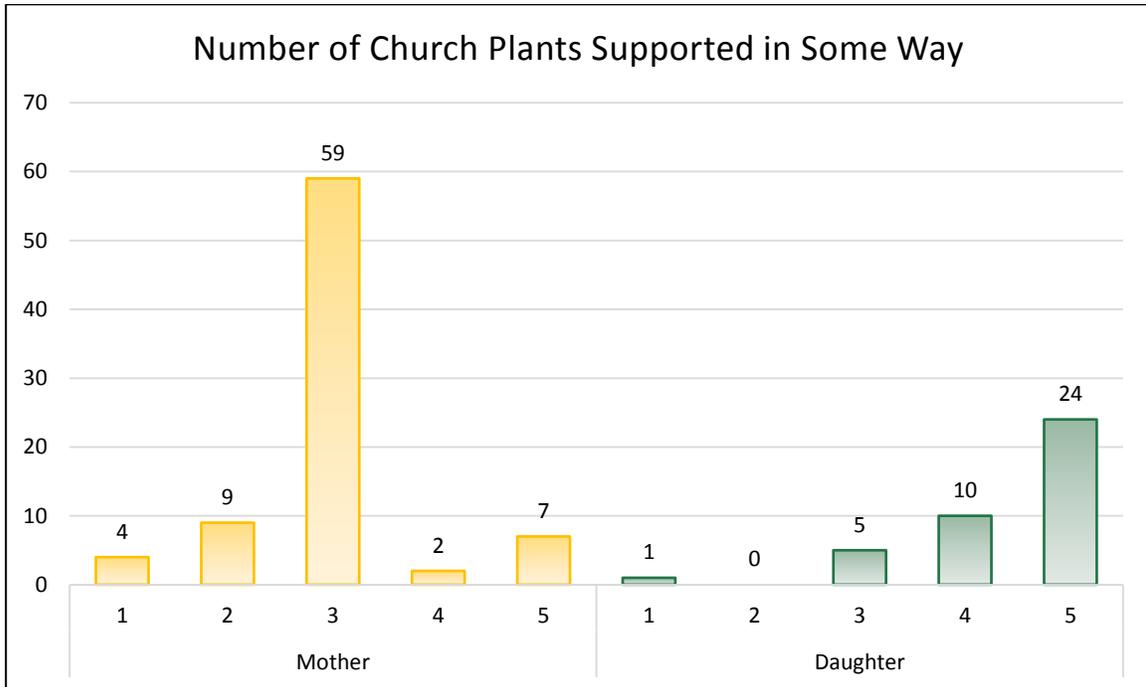


Figure 3—Number of Church Plants Supported in Some Way



Figure 4—How Church Planting Relates to Disciplemaking

3. Prelaunch and Core Group Development Methods

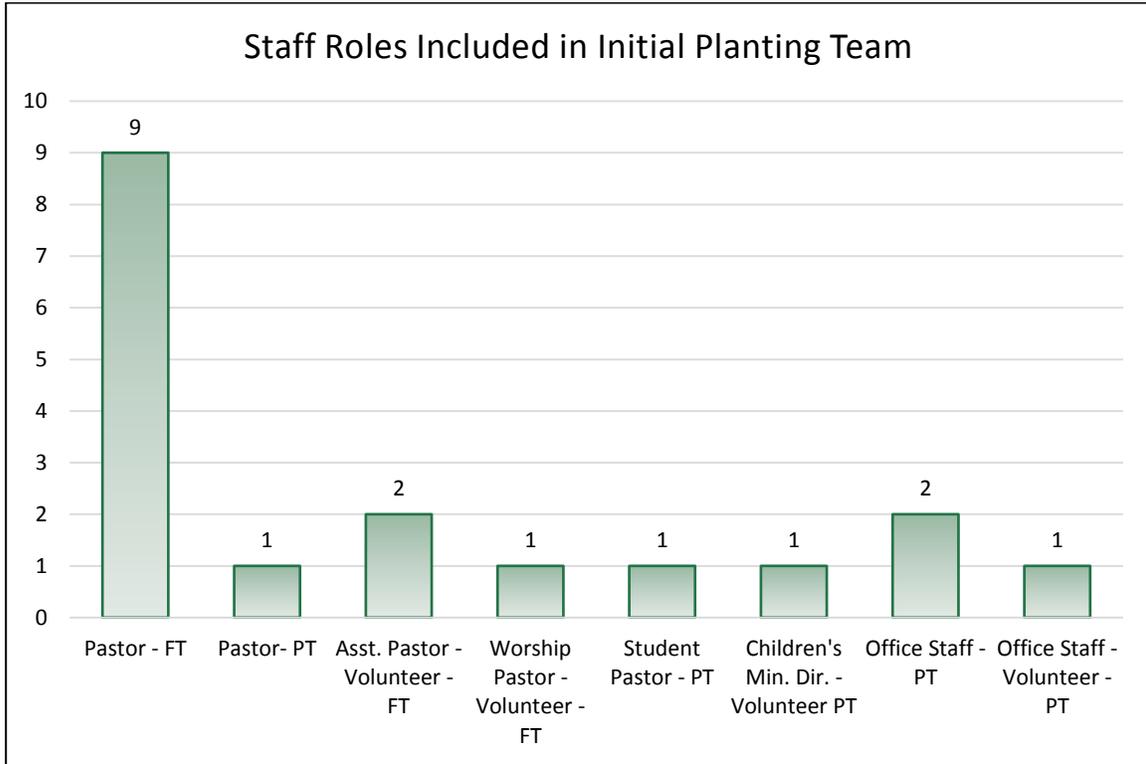


Figure 5—Staff Roles Included in Initial Planting Team

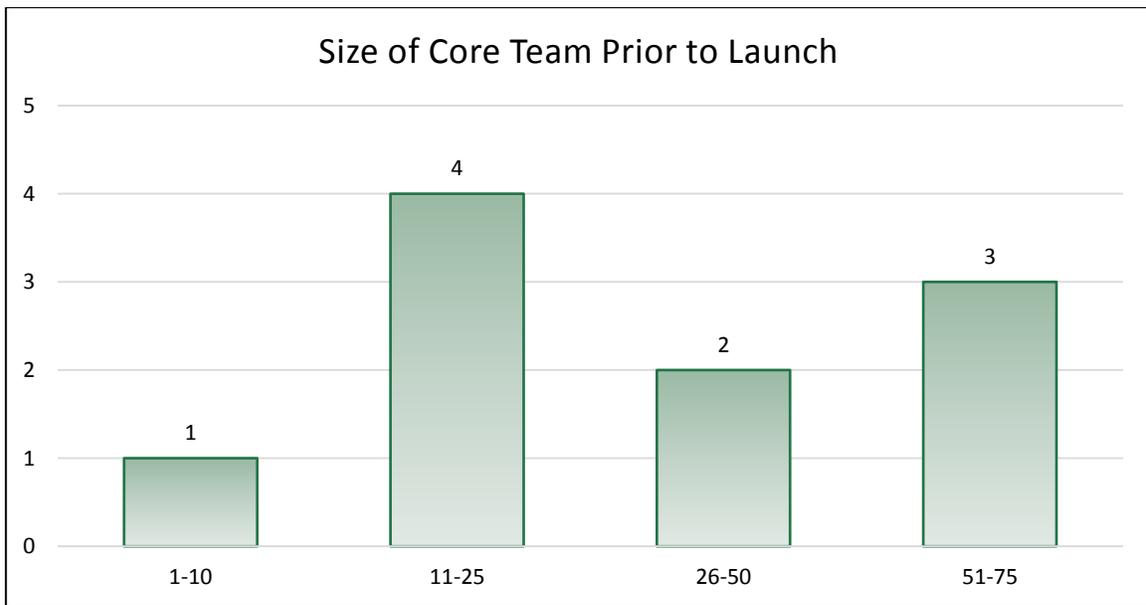


Figure 6—Size of Core Team Prior to Launch

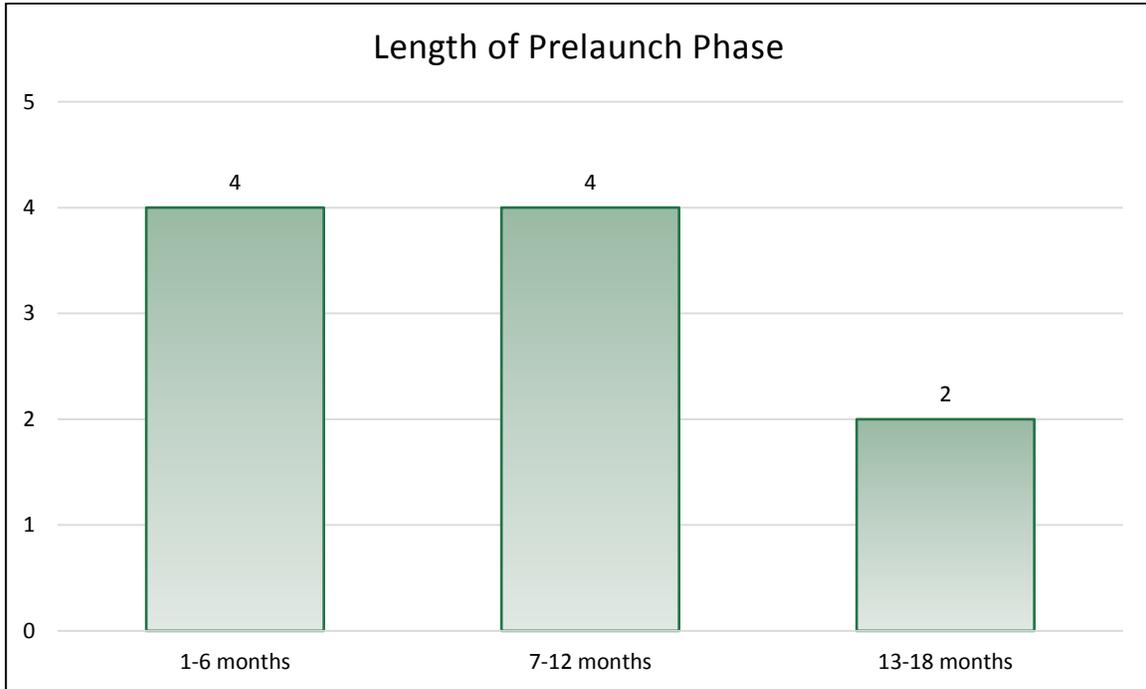


Figure 7—Length of Prelaunch Phase

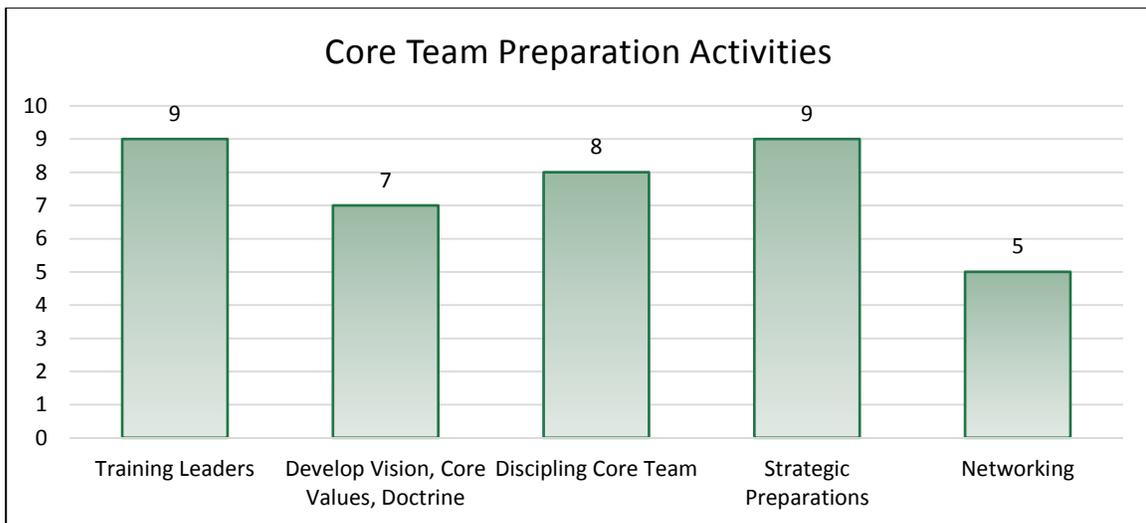


Figure 8—Core Team Preparation Activities

4. Mother Church Process and Support

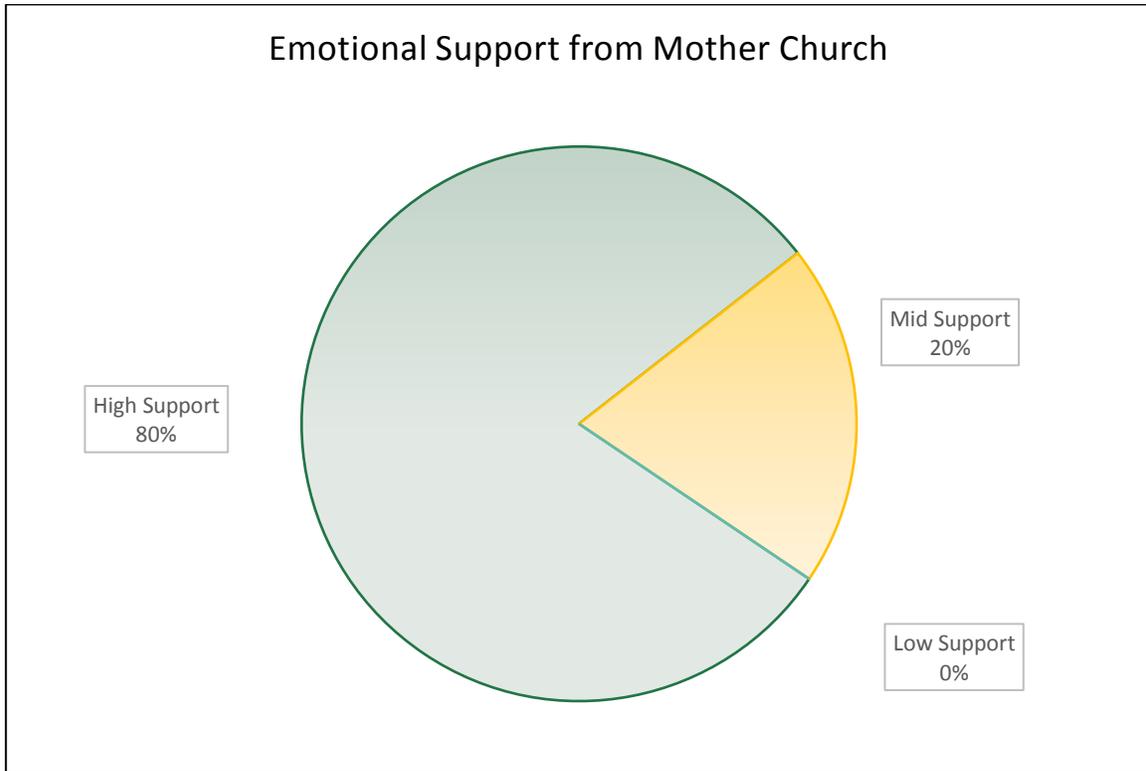


Figure 9—Emotional Support from Mother Church

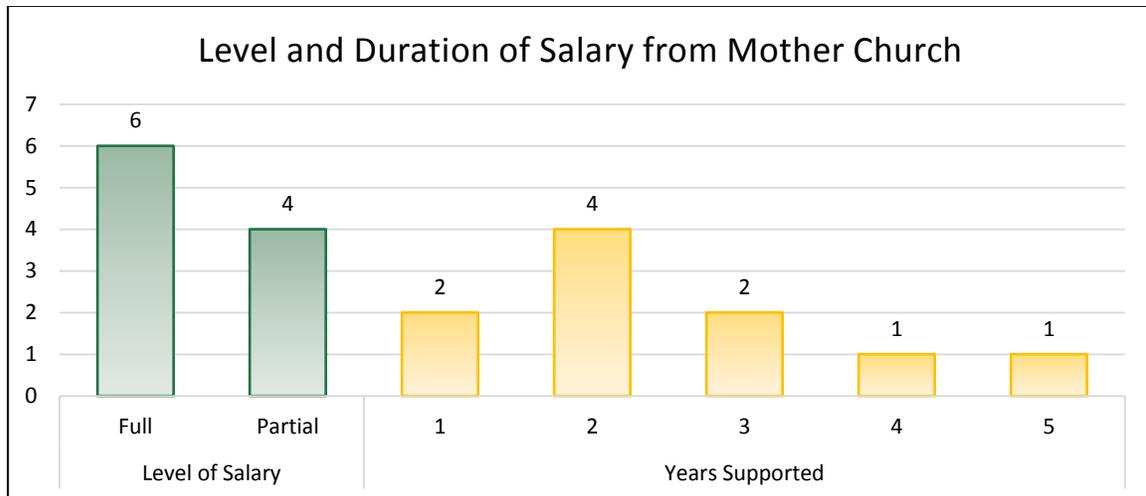


Figure 10—Level and Duration of Salary from Mother Church

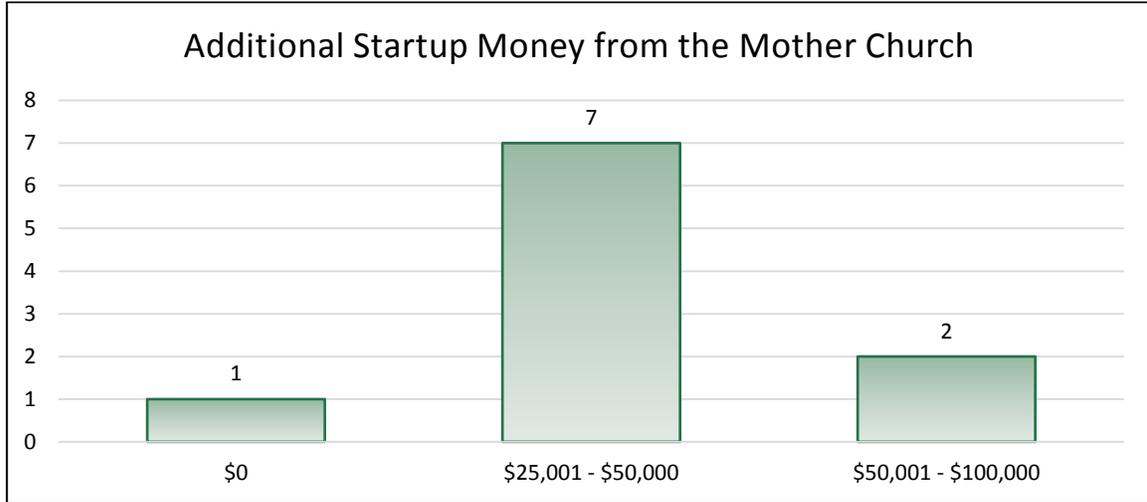


Figure 11—Additional Startup Money from the Mother Church

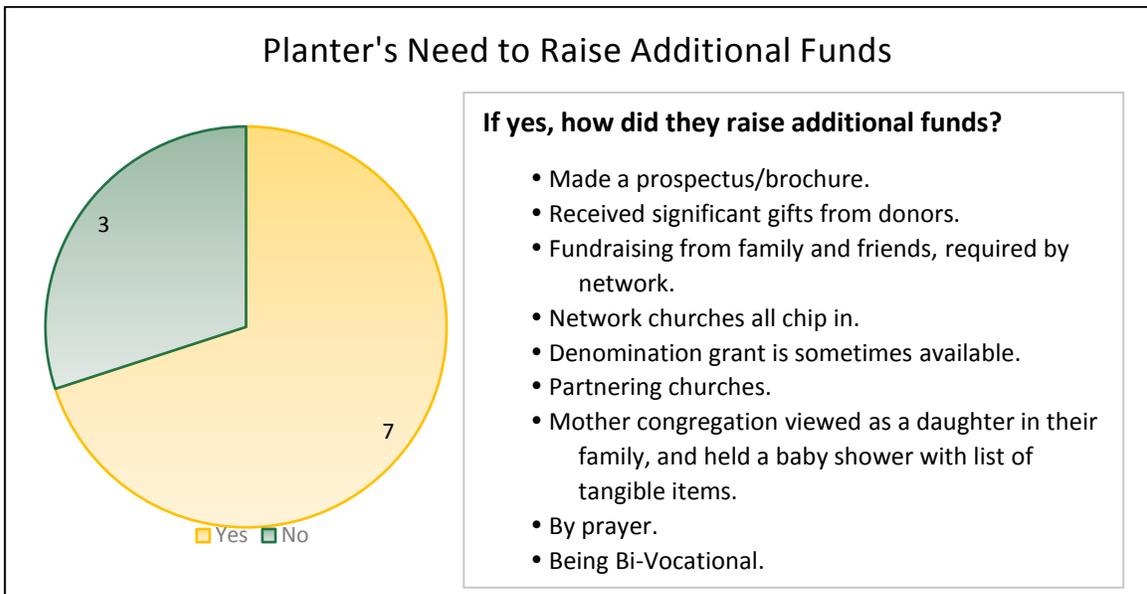


Figure 12—Planter's Need to Raise Additional Funds

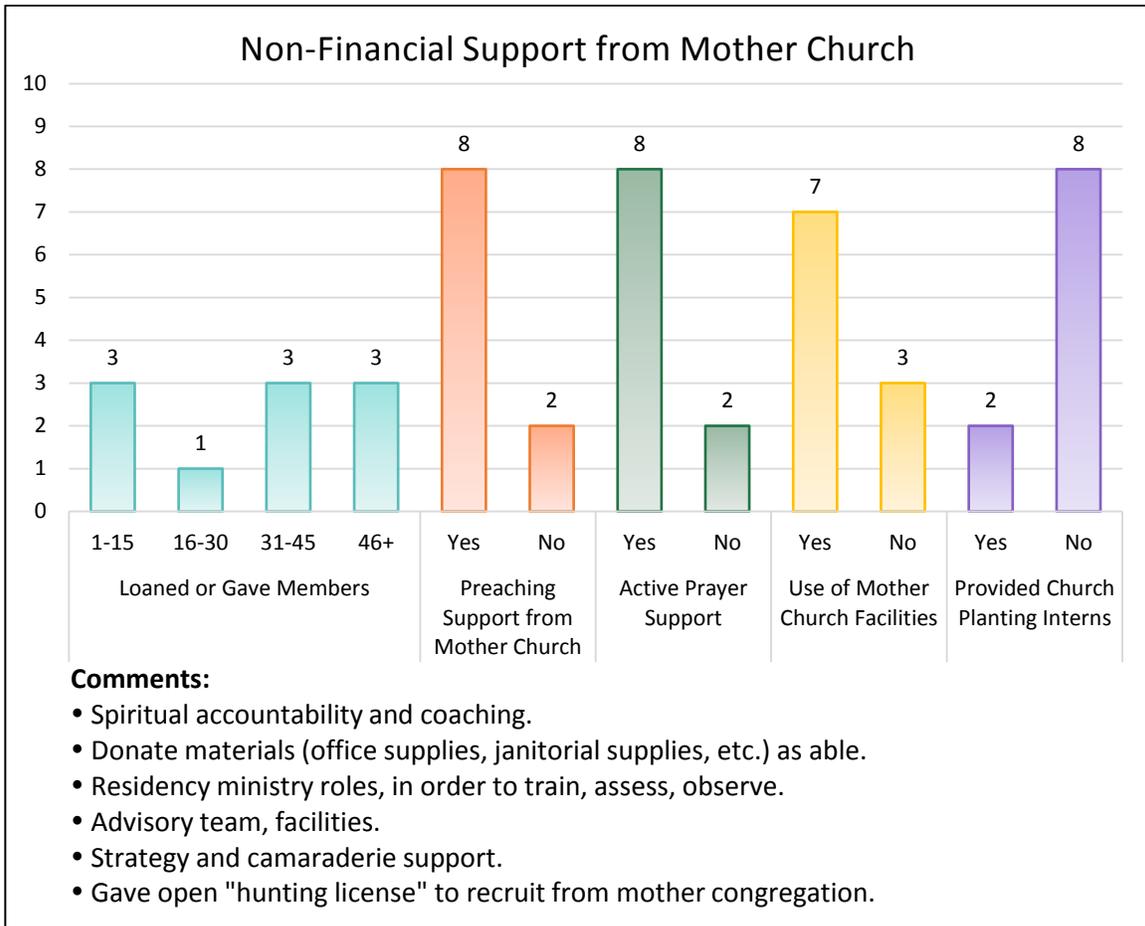


Figure 13—Non-Financial Support from Mother Church

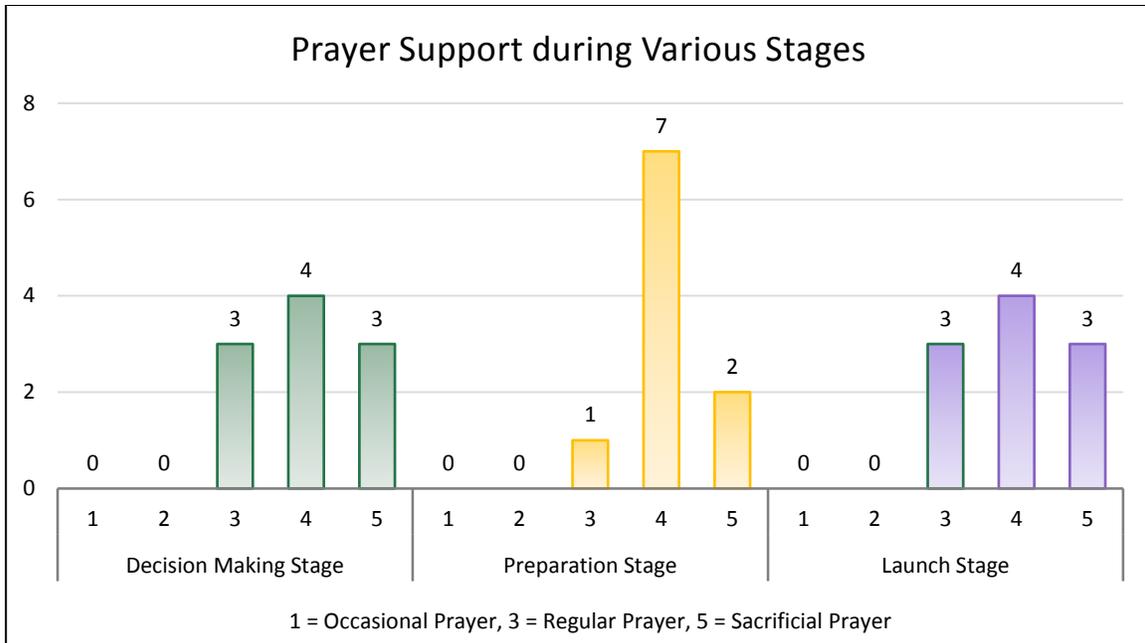


Figure 14—Prayer Support during Various Stages

Mother Church's Support of Planter's and Wife's Spiritual Care

- Elders and wives met regularly. Mini-network gives mutual care.
- Elders and wives took on this role.
- Pastors and wives of mother church were an incredible support. Core Team had intentional caring relationships.
- Senior pastor and wife mentored. Core team was very close relationally, accountability
- On mother church's staff until three months prior to launch. Bi-monthly wives group.
- Great relationship with mother church leaders. Sent me on prayer retreats.
- Three team members were on the mother church's Elder Board.
- Mother church sent us to assessments, cared for us, gave us ample opportunities for rest.
- Camaraderie among network. Informal but deep because shared difficulties.
- "That's a great question. To be honest, not much. That's an area of weakness. It was more like a check-in."

Figure 15—Mother Church's Support of Planter's and Wife's Spiritual Care

5. The Identification of General and Particular Preparations

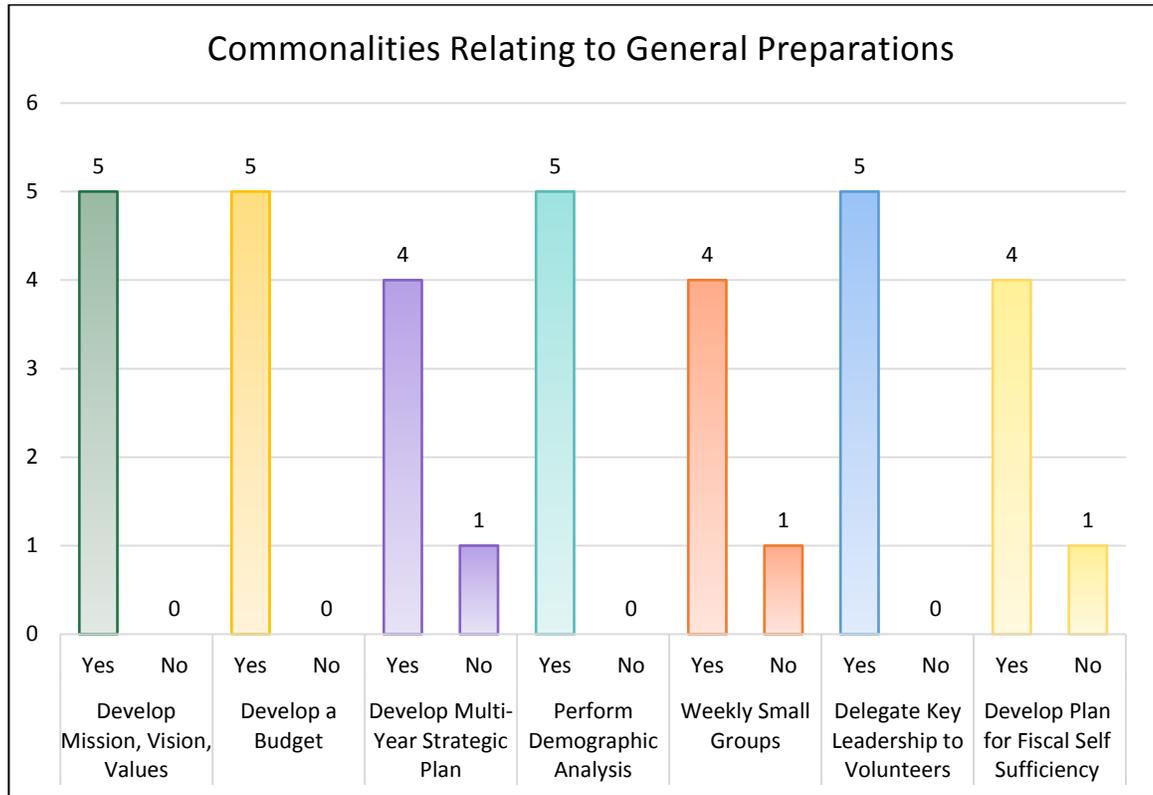


Figure 16—Commonalities Relating to General Preparations

When a Vision Statement Was Created

- Immediately, at the beginning of prelaunch.
- Right away. The mother church wanted the level of clarity and commitment.
- That was foundational – Began it before training the team; revised it with team.
- Before the prelaunch phase, alone as planter.
- At the boot camp which was 10 months before launch.

Figure 17—When a Vision Statement Was Created

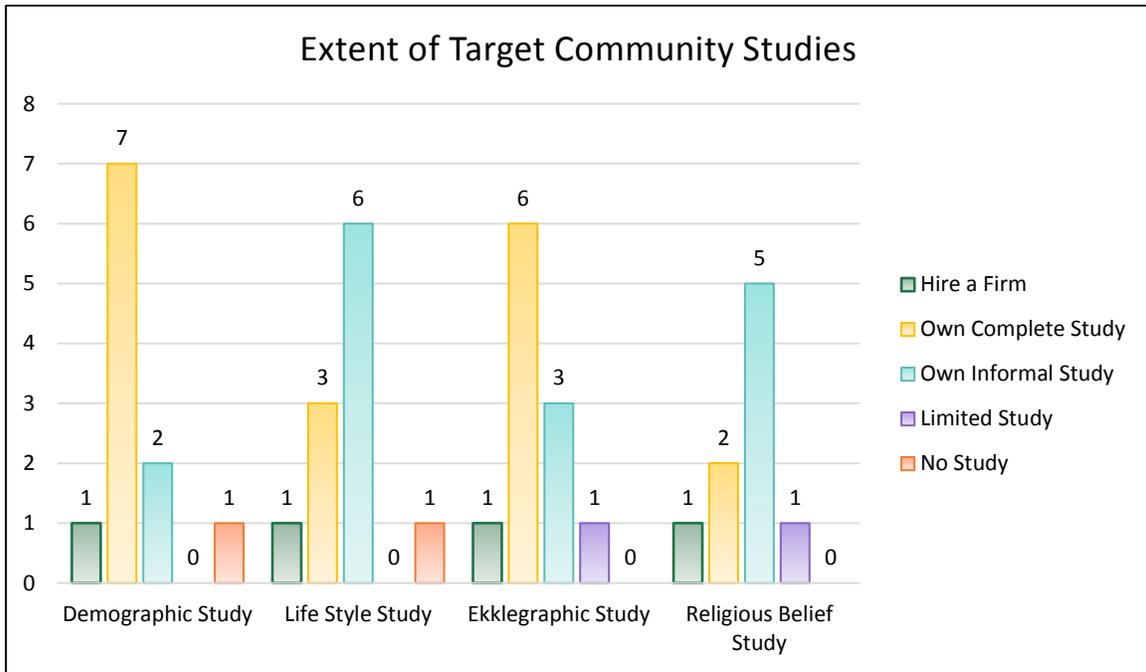


Figure 18—Extent of Target Community Studies

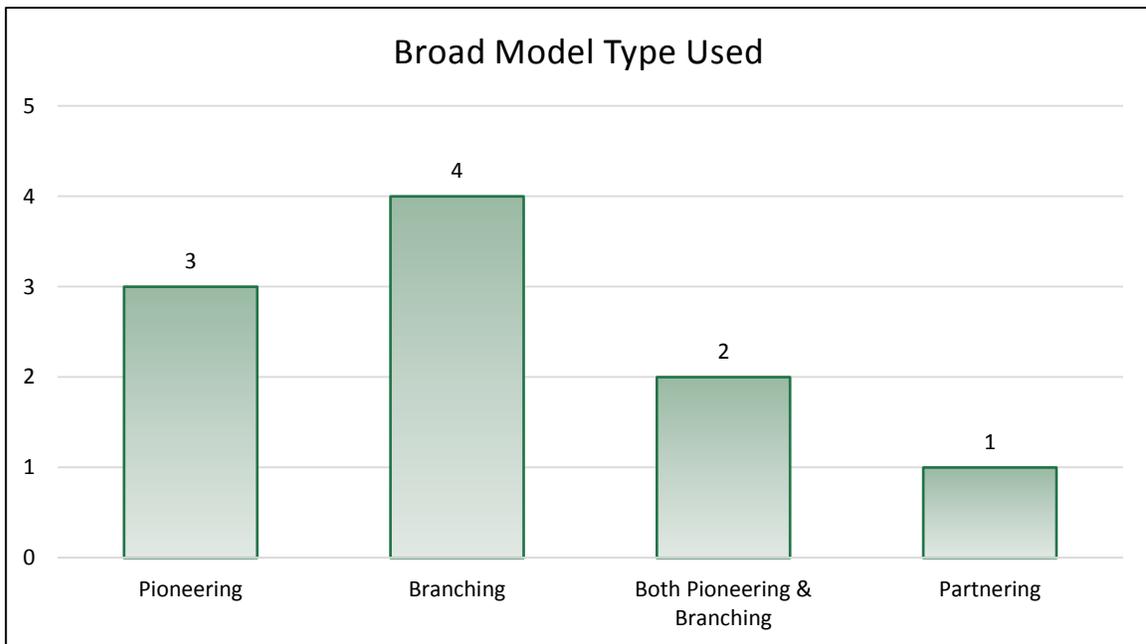


Figure 19—Broad Model Type Used

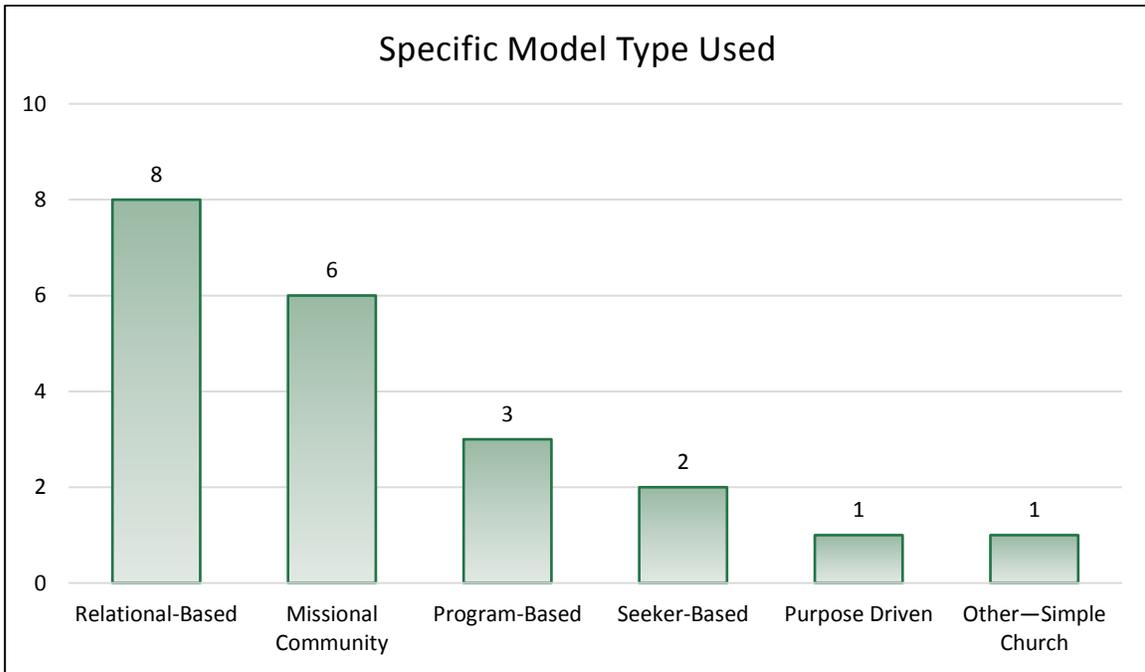


Figure 20—Specific Model Type Used

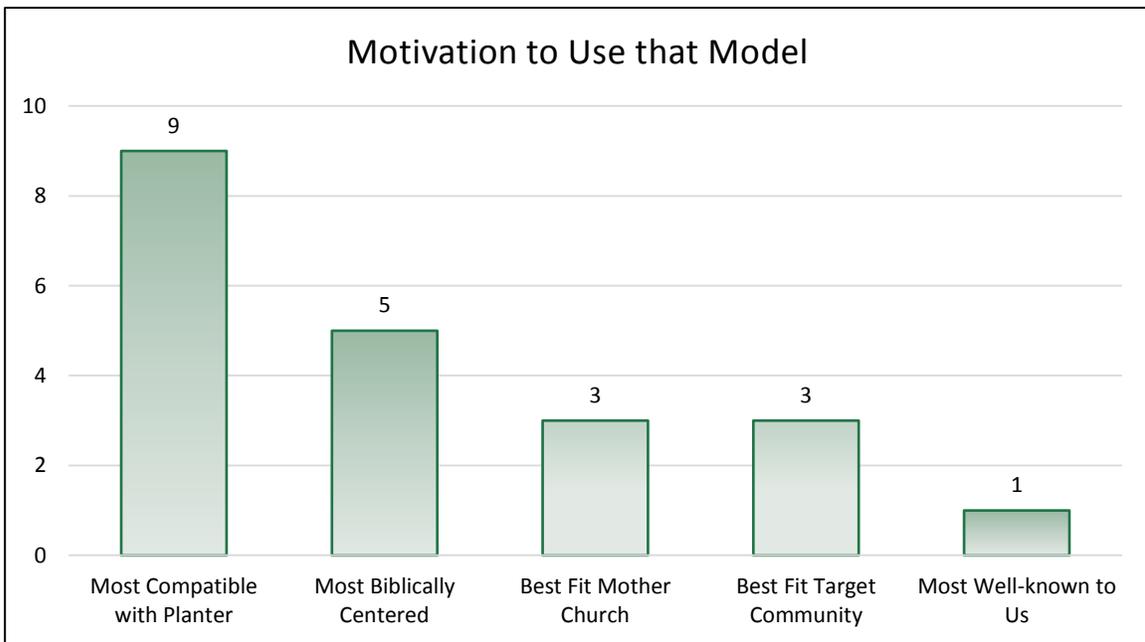


Figure 21—Motivation to Use that Model

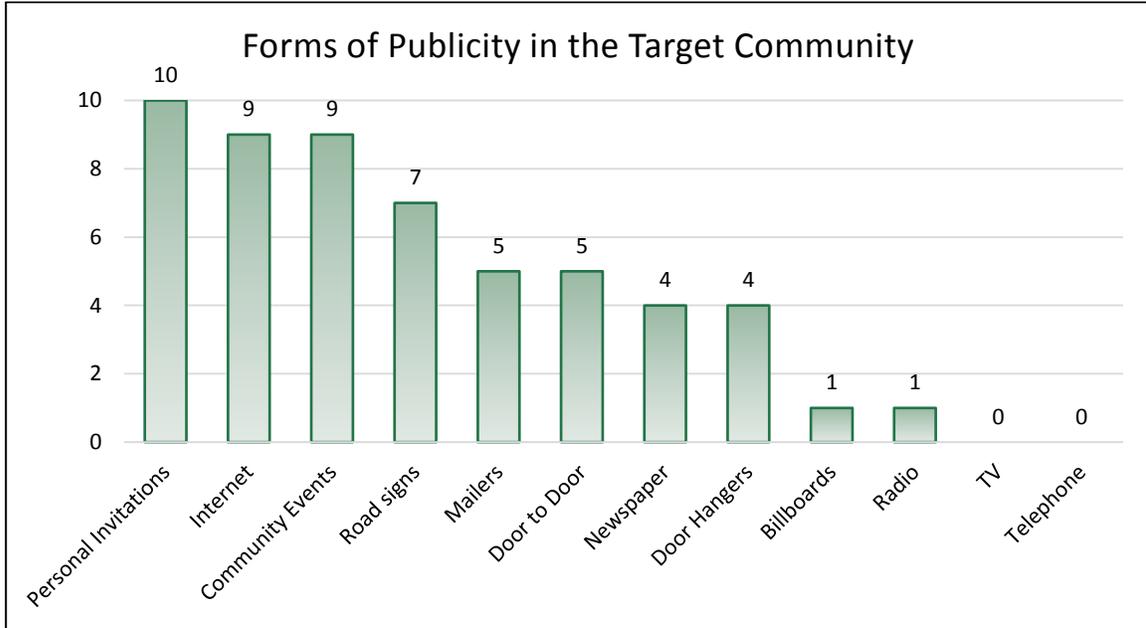


Figure 22—Forms of Publicity in the Target Community

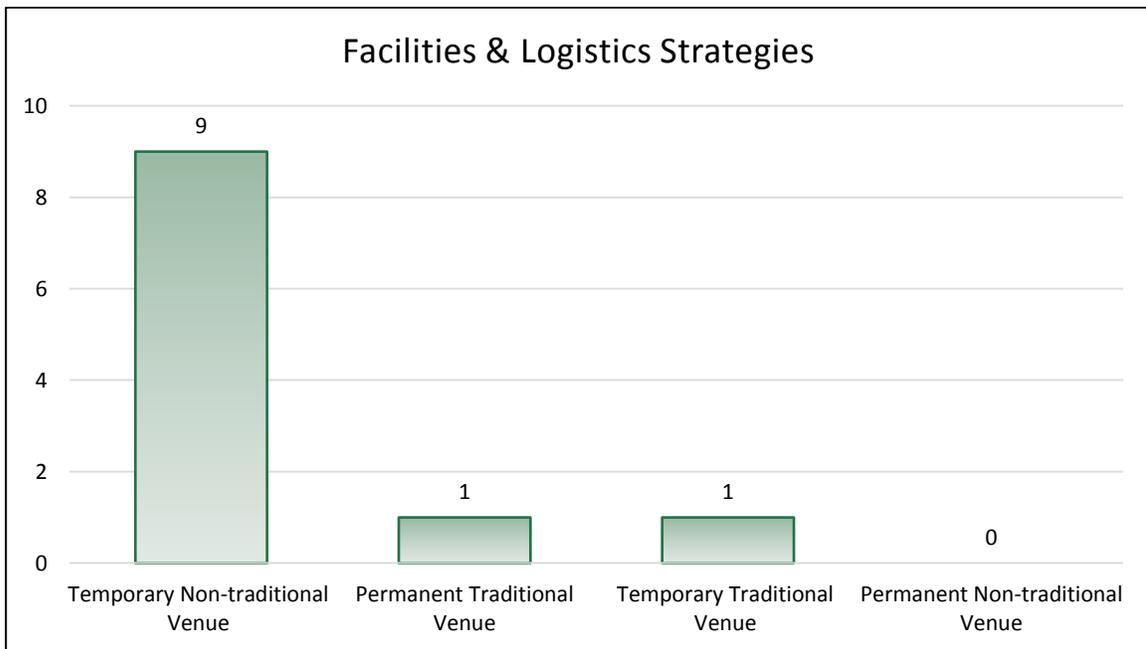


Figure 23—Facilities & Logistics Strategies

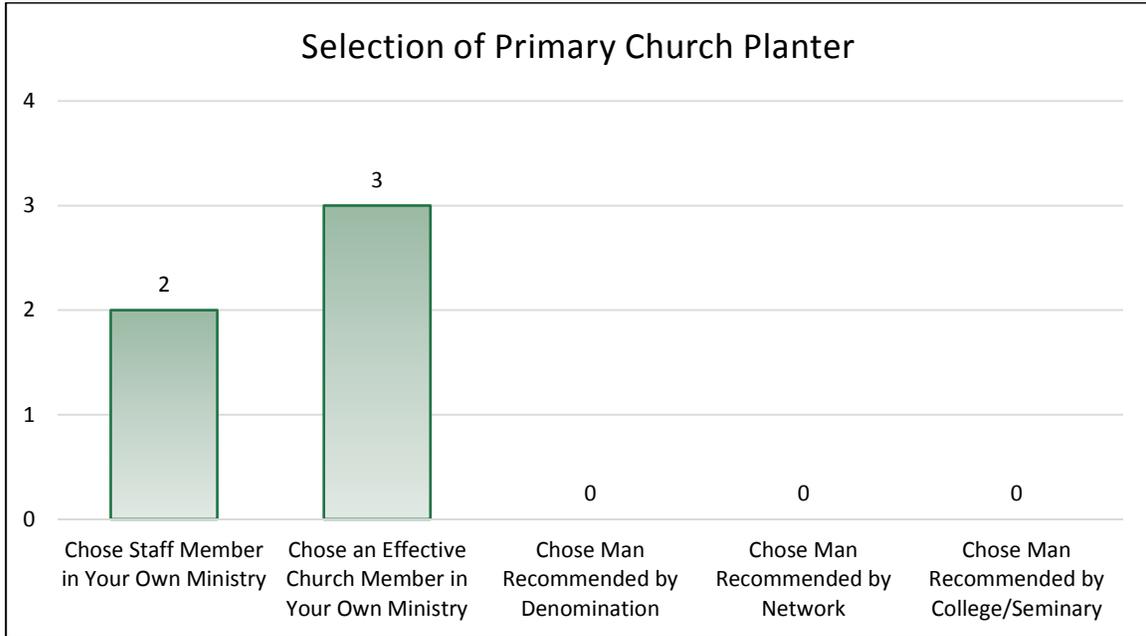


Figure 24—Selection of Primary Church Planter

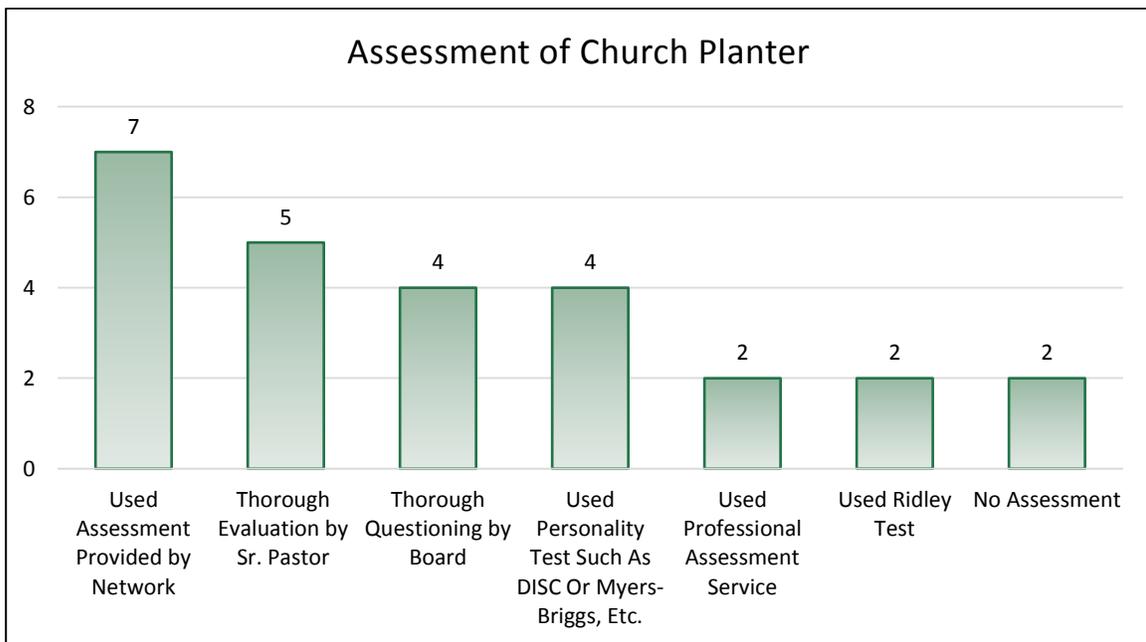


Figure 25—Assessment of Church Planter

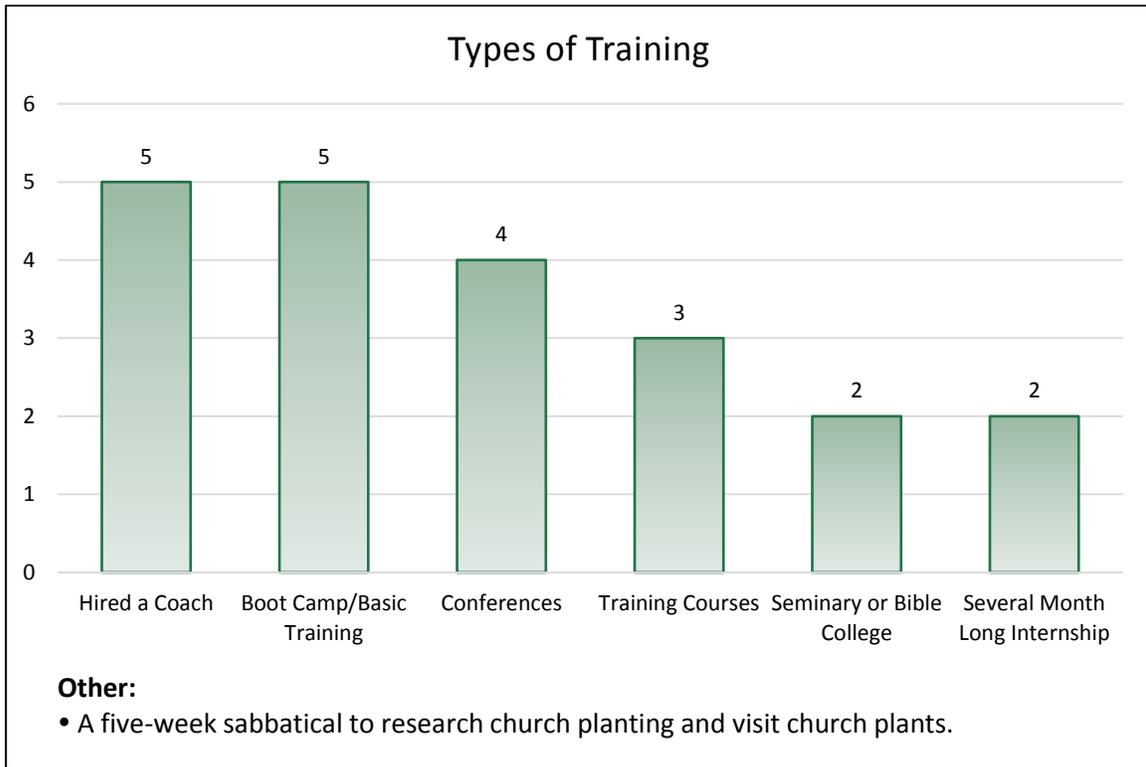


Figure 26—Types of Training

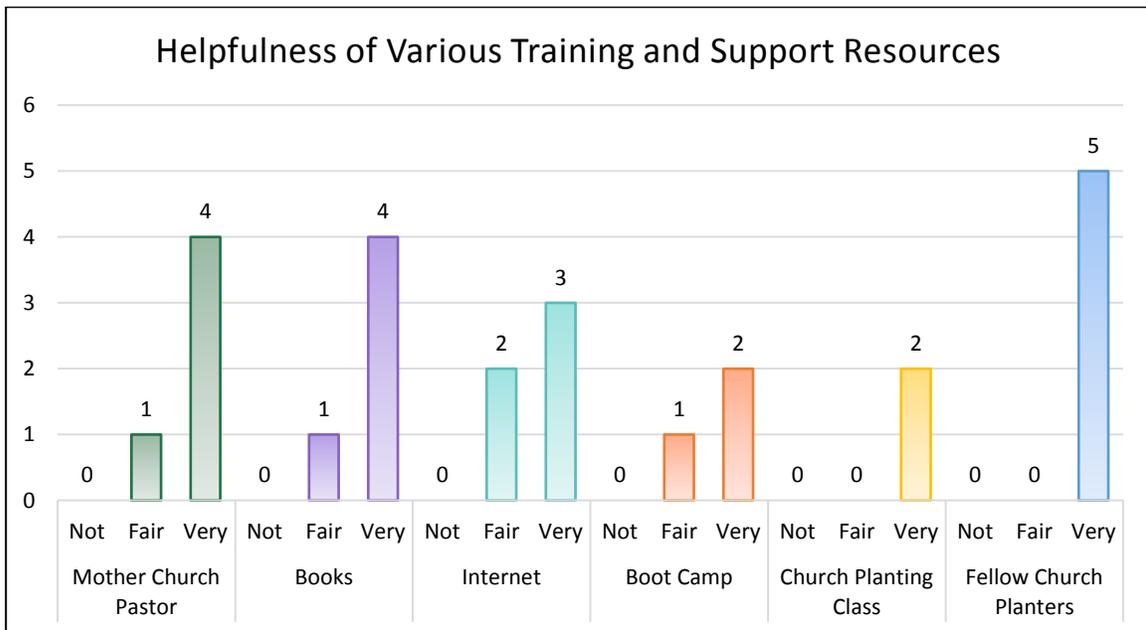


Figure 27—Helpfulness of Various Training and Support Resources



Figure 28—Overall Rating of Training

6. Assessments of Preparations Contributing to Viability

After numerous questions regarding particular preparation steps, the informants were asked to boil all of their experience into one or two best pieces of advice. Below are the informants' answers to these two questions: 1) "Imagine you are talking to someone, or some team, that is preparing to plant a church. What is the best advice you would give them?" 2) "If you could do it all over again, what changes would you make?"

Planters' Best Advice for Those Preparing to Plant Churches

Question: "Imagine you are talking to someone, or some team, that is preparing to plant a church. What is the best advice you would give them?"

- Make sure the man planting is elder qualified in: Character, Competency, and Chemistry. If the mother church doesn't believe in the planter fully, the church and community will know it.
- At some point you have to pull the trigger, and you will never feel ready.
- Even if you don't have a planter, you can still support church planting somewhere. Health reproduces, so supporting various church planting efforts is a great way to build church planting into your DNA.

- Don't rely on strategy and demographics as much as focusing on what it means to be a healthy church.
- Don't become a church planting church unless you are prepared to be sacrificially generous with leaders, people, ministry, and money.
- Be willing to live out a risky faith without all the answers before jumping off the cliff. (If we think we've got it, then God doesn't need to show up.)
- Preach a sermon series to the mother church congregation on the necessity of church planting as a whole.
- Make sure missions, discipleship, and church planting are all in the church's core values.
- Spend a considerable amount of time on communication with both the church planting team and the mother congregation --- and do it early!
- Hold all resources open-handed, including money, things, and especially people. A kingdom-mindset is vital.
- Almost everyone who starts the church with you won't be there in year five.
- Quantify how many conversions, baptisms, growth you want to see. Then, set a "God number," and see if you can hit that one.
- Teach your church's kids about church planting now, in your focus on evangelism.
- Do not appoint an elder board as the top authority until the church is three to five years old. Make the planter the top authority, with other church leaders supporting. The vision is the planter's, and sharing that authority kills momentum in the weeds every time.
- A team that sees themselves as church planters is important. Avoid rushing and independence. Taking time to train core team pays off.
- Your purposes should be from Scripture, bathed in prayer.
- Importance of being involved in the community, known by them, and invested into it. The more generous we can be in the community, the more people take our message seriously.
- Be aware that most anyone who attends a church plant comes with an agenda.
- Have a lot of great conversations and dream with your wife.
- Network a lot – as much as possible. Listen a lot.
- Mentally prepare for preaching every week. Many planters are blindsided by this load. Most haven't done it before. Tips: Set a time limit that you will spend on sermon prep each week. Get into a rhythm. Acknowledge that your first 100 sermons will stink.
- Surround yourself with good leaders.
- Don't have your identity in the church plant's success. The brokenness of spirit is a must, and will come one way or the other.
- Pray sacrificially, and when God answers, act accordingly. There's nothing like having a clear calling, because when the going gets tough it's too easy to give up.
- Go through an assessment process – get a clear knowledge of giftings, styles, and team around you that fits you and fills your weaknesses.

Appraisal of What Could Have Been Done Differently

Question: *"If you could do it all over again, what changes would you make?"*

Mother Churches

- I would like to see a more robust leadership development program in our church that has off ramps for people to become missionaries, church planters, team members, and leaders in partner churches and para-church ministries. This would have created stronger leadership around our planter.
- We are always in the process and always tweaking the system, and always remain flexible based on the planter and other variables. We have learned little things like that the senior pastor often makes a terrible coach for the planter because at some point they stop caring wholly for the plant, and have one eye on the mother congregation. The planter's coach needs to be wholly focused on the daughter. The mother pastor can always consult.
- Start earlier with preparing the mother congregation. Build up their understanding, vision, and excitement about church planting.
- First, start the financial plan very early. Also, start a fund very early. Put aside a percentage of the church's budget early. Be prepared, with cash on hand, for a six-month recovery time of church membership back to its original number. Second, communicate earlier than we did with the mother congregation. It unintentionally started feeling subversive, like "cloak and dagger," when the planter personally met with individuals and families about joining the plant.
- A sermon series right when sending the planter to original assessment would have been ideal.
- There is a strong possibility for disunity in the preparation stage (comparing lists, ministries losing people, etc.) Our church started speaking of planting team as a "ministry leadership team" of their church, in order to help people view this as normal and healthy.
- Build a more intentional strategy of supporting the planter spiritually, offering care and accountability. And, not just for the planter, but the teams and congregations as well.
- Let the planter have more liberty to do his own vision, even though it is substantially different from the mother's.

Daughter Churches

- Work harder in prelaunch phase. It wasn't long enough. We just didn't realize how important these preparations are to do. The preparations got pushed back because they seemed less important. Also, establish milestones better. Reach certain targets before moving to next phase. It's imperfect, but would have tended towards better timing of phases. And, any church planters who follow would have better benchmarks.
- Do less imitating of others and more discovering your own gifts and your community's needs, and then being and meeting those.
- Gotten more buy-in from the mother church pastor, and continually stay on same page as the mother church's elders. It's so easy to run ahead.
- Buy and prepare for growth.
- There are huge costs. Would try to have more startup money.
- Have mother church allow you to preach more. I preached only twice a year before I planted, so the mother church wasn't that familiar and bought into me. The mother's next

planter preached 12 times in the year leading up to his plant because they learned this lesson that the planter needs platform time.

- Appoint leaders in your church more carefully. It is much more work to undo a mess; fire someone later. Follow Paul's advice to Timothy to not appoint too quickly.

These responses were the voice of wisdom from experienced church planters, to the next generation of planters.

CHAPTER 6 – Summary and Conclusions

The project's research question was, "Will churches which have successfully planted viable new churches exhibit common methods of preparation?" To test this question this workable hypothesis was developed: "Evangelical churches that are able to successfully plant viable new churches will utilize common methods of preparation." This hypothesis was falsifiable if the churches interviewed had planted viable new churches without holding any preparation methods in common.

On the basis of the research presented in this chapter, the researcher proposes that the hypothesis be accepted as correct. The data presented in the previous sections demonstrate that there are at least fifty preparation methods shared in common by the ten churches interviewed. The consistent agreement, and even unanimity in many cases, among the five mother churches, the five daughter churches, or all ten churches combined, verifies the significance of these preparation methods to viable church planting.

Furthermore, the data presented in the Conclusion questions demonstrate that the informants believed that the commonly shared preparation methods made the best contributions possible to the church plant's viability.

Conclusion #1: At least sixty preparation methods exist that prove common in viable church planting.

Conclusion #2: The common preparation methods interrelate to one another in a general sequential order.

Conclusion #3: Commonalities exist among mother churches that lead to viable church plants.

Conclusion #4: Commonalities exist among daughter churches that bring them to viability.

Conclusion #5: The leadership exemplified in mother churches replicates itself in daughter churches according to certain patterns.

Recommendations from the Informants for Further Research

Question asked: "Are there any other issues that I have missed that you think would be pertinent to this discussion, or that might be helpful in guiding my research?"

- Your elder board needs to come to a strong conviction of the authority of the local church. Networks don't have the responsibility or privilege to affirm, call, and send. That's the elders of a local church. No man should plant a church without it. Networks come and support that.
- The reason for never having an elder board at the daughter church until at least year three is that you don't know who you have yet, so you don't want to rush that level of authority. They develop a leadership team called a task force, and the third year of

that task force is spent on elder training. Then you have a solid, long-term, healthy elder board. If you rush, one bad elder will eat the planter and the plant.

- Understand the role and connection of the daughter church after the plant. It is multifaceted. Need clear expectations about everything.
- The heavy assessment process of the planter revealed to him that we need more assessment of our leaders within the mother church. The health benefits of doing that will strengthen the mother church and lead to even further help in church planting.
- Address belief and behavior equally in the assessments of your people. Example: “You believe in discipleship, right? Tell me two stories of people you have discipled in the last two years.”
- Mother congregations are full of “elder brothers” (cf. Luke 15). Some will never get on board. Some will, but they will return to the mother congregation. Some people are pioneers, some are settlers. Be aware and intentional to assess that.
- Be aware also of the 300 Rule. The number of souls you church wins at a congregation of 100 will be the same percentage when congregation is at 300. You want high evangelistic commitment early. Shoot for 50% of the church as new converts. It is messy, but impactful.
- Just acknowledge that every work is so different, and that is good. -One beautiful change to the mother church occurred. Planting churches creates two sets of opportunities for members’ service that wouldn’t exist otherwise – the needs for leadership and service at the plant, and the holes created by the departures. Church planting is a “leadership factory” that cranks out more leaders than ever seen before. People get to lead where they never would have been able to at the mother church; and do it how **they** want to. They prayed against the danger of manipulative agendas, and God blessed.
- Buy big. Plan for growth!
- Know/determine clearly the leadership structure at the beginning, and have clear expectations how it will morph. Set markers/milestones/goals. Their goals were to become: 1) self-sustaining by year one (financial goal), 2) Self-governed by year three (when advisory board transitions into elder board at end of year 3), and 3) Self-multiplying by year five.
- Don’t overlook recruitment skill. To recruit only from seminaries is a mistake. Ask the young men in your congregation who has started a business; who starts new ministries; who adequately handles overseeing large numbers of people; etc. Tip: Start by looking in the high school group for the above. Develop them... and keep them out of debt!