

# Getting Serious About Church Planting Let's Talk About It

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE DESK OF THE  
GENERAL OVERSEER



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# A MIRACLE FROM VISION AND HOPE

Sometimes after I preach, I find myself going back recalling statements and reliving moments in my sermon that were emboldened by what I like to believe was anointing from God - and not mere temporary exuberance. If you will recall, during my message at the 2016 General Assembly, I stated that I believed a million dollars could be found within the Church of God to start the "church planting bank." Looking back, I cannot affirm that my statement was as much anointed as it was just simply an expectant vision for the Church. Hopefully it was both! Regardless, when the newly elected Executive Council came together in their first meeting in September 2016, they made the vision of a million dollars for church planting a reality. But they did not stop there. When the Council met in January 2017, they designated another half million dollars for church planting, for a total of \$1.5 million to begin the church planting bank. By April 2017, the Church Planting Bank - formally called the Church of God Church Planting Designated Fund - was initially funded, guidelines and policies were developed, and the first seven church planters had met the criteria to qualify for matching, no interest loans from the bank.

Less than a year from the time I made the funding pronouncement at the General Assembly, a group of church planters have already raised some or all of their matching funds, and money from the church planting bank has been disbursed to them - and they are preparing to launch their new churches this fall.

This is wonderful news and I am glad.

No, actually I'm thrilled .... believe me, I am thrilled!!

But let's talk about it .....

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## ONLY A BEGINNING

One and a half million dollars isn't nearly enough money to reach the countless cities, towns, and communities across America that need a vibrant, life-giving church. These funds will be used up and will vanish quickly without a continual inflow of new dollars into the church planting bank and into state/regional offices and the international office for funding new churches. We must keep working to raise additional funds – and we will.

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It is important to remember that the church planting bank is not giving out grants. These funds are zero interest loans that are intended, among other things, to help the church planter acquire equipment, get a social media presence, do advertising, and build the “brand” of the new church plant, usually well before the first service is ever held.

## A SYSTEM OF PARTNERSHIPS

The church planting bank funding model mirrors those developed by the Association of Related Churches (ARC) and other church planting agencies. On the front-end, it is understood by the church planter that these funds are to be paid back, primarily so that they can be used to plant more churches. Following the structure already in existence for local Church of God congregations, the repayment model is set up where ten percent (10%) of the income from the new church plant will go to repay the loan. The hope is that the church can repay the loan quickly and become a fully organized Church of God congregation. But most importantly, the goal is for that new congregation to start reaching out immediately to

their local community to tell them of the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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This prompts me to make a clarion call for help for our church planters across the country. They need all of us to assist them, not only in prayer but in raising the needed dollars to qualify for the matching loan from the church planting bank. These church planters need help from their local church, their state/regional office, their sponsoring church, as well as their family and friends. Your contribution to the Kingdom of God can pay dividends for multiple years to come as you plant “seeds” into a new church.

## **PERCEPTION VS REALITY**

Let me completely debunk the rumor and the mistaken idea that "since the church planting bank has \$1.5 million, there is no need for financial assistance from other levels of the church." Nothing could be further from the truth. Because of the massive need to plant churches across this great country – and the corresponding costs associated with such, I am personally requesting that every State Overseer, every State Council member, every pastor and every Church of God layperson get involved in our church planting effort and find a church planter that you can assist.

While our church planting efforts are developing strongly, I recognize that "one size doesn't fit all." There are different models for church planting and churches are being planted everyday by people that will just simply find a way to get the job done, with or without assistance from the

Church of God “structure.” I applaud the ingenuity of these efforts as we all work together to increase the Kingdom of Heaven.

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But, as just noted, church planting is not something that we can do on our own. So as not to reinvent the wheel, we have developed tremendous partnerships for training and coaching church planters with the Association of Related Churches (ARC), Church Multiplication Network, Dynamic Church Planting International (DCPI) and others. Along and with these partners, the Church of God’s Office of Church Planting and Church Revitalization offers onsite and webinar coaching for potential church planters. The director of our Office of Church Planting, Mitch Maloney, and the Church Planting Task Force, headed by Dr. Sean O’Neal, stand ready to assist those who have an interest in serving as a church planter, whether you seek funds from the church planting bank or not.

## **MAKING THIS PURPOSE A PRIORITY**

As we so proudly proclaim, the Church of God has approximately 6,500 churches throughout North America. In the not too distant past, we were planting as many as 250-300 churches per year. In the midst of the economic recession and Tithes reallocation, we hit an all-time low of planting only 85 churches one year. For the last few years, we are back to planting between 100-110 new churches per year. I am pleased that we are increasing again, but we can – and we must – do better.

As a Pentecostal movement, we have a message that must be shared with communities everywhere. One of the greatest ways to share that powerful message is through planting new churches. Can we as the Church of God actually plant 1,000 new churches in the United States

and 10,000 globally by 2020? The Scriptures seems to demand no less of us. Acts 1:8 says that “after the Holy Ghost is come upon you .... you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

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Whether it is planting a church in a Tennessee city of over 150,000 people, a rapidly growing suburb of Ft. Worth, Texas, an upwardly mobile community of professionals in Northern Alabama, or along the beautiful Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest, Church of God church planters are going into our modern-day Jerusalem’s, Judea’s, Samaria’s, and into the uttermost parts of our nation. And they will make a difference for the Kingdom – with your help – and with your prayers.

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## A CALL TO ACTION

Since we are talking about it, our church planting efforts can only be successful if they are bathed in prayer, we have ministerial families that are willing to take on the difficult task of planting a new church, and we have the financial resources available to get these churches off the ground. So, to each of you, I offer these challenges:

- Join me in daily prayer for those who are planting churches. Whether you pray for a specific church planter or church planting in general, this effort will only succeed if it is covered in prayer.
- Pray about becoming a church planter or participating in a “launch team” for a new church plant. You will have to give up the comfort of the familiar but the reward that you will receive will be out of this world!!
- Consider giving a regular offering to the church planting efforts in your state or gifting resources to the Church Planting Bank. Your gift will truly keep on giving when you give to plant a church.

Yes, let's talk about it, but also let's do something great for the Kingdom of God.

***Tim Hill***

**General Overseer**



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