

MORE THAN MONEY!  
A MODIFIED CONTENT ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN MATERIAL REGARDING  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPONSORING CHURCHES AND THEIR NEW  
CHURCH PLANTS IN THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

by

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE NEED FOR NEW CHURCHES TO HAVE A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SPONSORING CHURCH

In July of 1993 this writer sat down to meet with the Church Extension Committee of the Knox County Association of Baptists to discuss starting a new church in Knoxville, Tennessee. The committee members consisted of local pastors in the Association and the Director of Missions for the Knox County Association of Baptists. There are over one hundred and fifty churches affiliated with the Knox County Association of Baptists, with the majority of the new church starts beginning as "splits" from other churches. Therefore, the committee wants to ensure, to the best of its ability, that each new church has a healthy beginning. William Tinsley, in his classic book *Upon This Rock*, states that the role of the denomination is "more in the role of obstetrics and pediatrics rather than conceiving new churches" (Tinsley 1985, 24). He further states and this author agrees that

just as it is hard to conceive of test tube babies populating the world, it would be difficult to conceive of redeeming the world with only centrally planned, clinically pure test tube congregations spun out of

denominational laboratories. Churches must catch a vision of their own potential of begetting. (Tinsley 1985, 24)

Jim McCluskey, a member of the New Church Extension committee, gave advice on church planting to this writer. McCluskey is the retired pastor of Wallace Memorial Baptist Church, one of the largest Baptist churches in Knox County, and the last church to intentionally plant a new church in the Knox County Baptist Association. Wallace Memorial planted Cumberland Heights Baptist Church in 1964. Thus, thirty years had elapsed since the last church was planted in Knox County. Based on his church-planting experience, McCluskey stated the principle on which this project is based: "A new church needs a strong sponsoring church." This advice prompted a number of questions.

What exactly did McCluskey mean? Did the sponsoring church have to be of a certain size with an operating budget that allowed it to allocate sufficient funds for a new mission church? While sufficient funding is significant both to a church that wants to start a new work and to the new church itself, it is this writer's proposition that it takes more than money to start a healthy church. This project will identify some guiding principles that are used throughout the Southern Baptist Convention in starting new churches with the "Sponsoring Church" model.

Relation Of The Project To The Writer's Ministry

WestLake Church is a five year old intentional church plant from First Baptist Church, Concord in Knoxville, Tennessee. Both churches are affiliated with the Knox County Association of Baptists, the Tennessee Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention. Located within five miles of each other, both churches are situated in a fast growing region of Knox County. Lyle Schaller writes that

churches will be organized when a substantial proportion of the residents do not attend church and/or there is a significant turnover in the population each year or the number of residents are increasing. (Schaller 1991, 34)

All three of these conditions exist in the target area of the sponsoring church and the mission church.

Doug Sager, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Concord has a vision for his church to reach 40,000 people in its area. When its church plant was conceived, First Baptist was averaging approximately two-thousand people in worship. William Tinsley writes, "mushrooming metropolitan regions dictate the need for more churches. As thousands move towards the metro centers congregations must multiply" (Tinsley 1985, 22). The pastor of First Baptist Church, Concord believes that, in order for it to reach 40,000 people, First Baptist Church, Concord must begin new churches. According to Lyle E. Schaller, in his book *44 Questions for Church Planters*, "instead of cloning mother, it might have been better to start a new mission developed

to reach and serve people who could not be reached by the sponsoring church" (Schaller 1991, 22). The leaders of First Baptist Church, Concord appear to agree with Schaller. They believed that, in order to reach more people in their area, a new church should be started to target a different segment of the population. Thus, WestLake intentionally targets the unchurched as well as the unsaved seeker. In the new church's first three years, over thirty percent of the members were conversions and sixty percent of the regular attendees were previously unchurched. The "unchurched" can be defined as those who have not been actively involved in a church in the last five years. To find such a number of unchurched persons is significant considering that this church plant is located in the Bible Belt South.

This author was the founding pastor of WestLake Church. Called by First Baptist Church of Concord in September 1994 to be the Associate Pastor of Church Planting, this writer faced a two-fold job: to serve part-time in pastoral care for the sponsoring church and to begin to develop the new church, one noticeably different from the sponsoring church. First Baptist is a large traditional church whereas WestLake was intended to be contemporary in worship and innovative in its approach to ministry. Serving in pastoral care at First Baptist enabled this write to develop a trusting

relationship with the congregation there, which encouraged innovation. The second part of the job involved casting the vision for the new church, enlisting a core group of people, and implementing the procedures necessary to begin a new church. Significantly, the connection with the sponsoring church was maintained during the entire "conception phase" of the church plant (Logan 1994, 52). However, while the connection with the sponsoring church was maintained throughout this initial period, as the target date for the public launch neared, the church planting project began to require more time. Beginning three months prior to the launch, the new church required a time commitment of one hundred percent.

It is this writer's vision for WestLake to be a reproducing church. Currently WestLake contributes financially to an intentional church start in the eastern portion of Knox County. Additionally, plans are now in progress for First Baptist Church, Concord and WestLake to jointly sponsor a new church in the area within two years. This writer has communicated Doug Sager's vision to WestLake Church, encouraging Westlake to partner with First Baptist Church, Concord in reaching reach 40,000 people in the region. The only way this will be possible is for both churches to be multiplying churches.

This writer feels it is paramount for sponsoring churches to support a new church plant not only financially but also relationally. Though First Baptist, Concord contributed significantly financially to the WestLake church plant, this writer feels that the success of WestLake is largely due to the emotional and spiritual support the sponsoring church gave to the church planter and the new church. Therefore, this writer hopes to show through a modified content analysis of written literature that the more emotional, spiritual, and personal support the sponsoring church provides, the healthier the church plant.

In addition to the church planter position currently held, this writer also served for a period of time as the East Tennessee Consultant of Church Planting for the Tennessee Baptist Convention headquartered in Nashville. The consultant ministry put this writer in the position to start Southern Baptist churches in the same region as WestLake Church. Westlake is the sixth church plant this writer helped to launch. The other church plants include two churches in Atlanta, Georgia and three in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area.

WestLake currently meets in a school; the church has approximately four hundred and fifty attendees with an average attendance of three hundred. WestLake owns a twenty-eight acre piece of property at a desirable location.

This piece of property cost 1.3 million dollars and was purchased by the sponsoring church: First Baptist Church, Concord. WestLake has just completed its first phase building of the master plan for the property and is constructing its first building.

### **Limitations To The Project**

The purpose of this project is to help sponsoring churches plant healthy and reproducing churches that will further the kingdom of God by reaching unchurched and/or unsaved people in the United States. This writer wishes to state the following limitations.

First, it is assumed that "churches planting churches" is one model of church planting. This is known as the daughter- church method of church planting (Vajko 1996, 5). This method of church planting is validated from a theological perspective that new churches should be started in order effectively to spread the gospel to an unsaved world. "In this method one congregation breaks off part of its members and sends them to another section of town and constitutes them into a New Testament church" (Feeney 1988, 24). C. Peter Wagner uses a different term, "Hiving Off," which he notes is the most common way to plant to a church (Wagner 1990, 60). Wagner further states that "the members of a local congregation are challenged to form a nucleus and at a predetermined time the people will move out under the

leadership of a church planter and become charter members of a new congregation" (Wagner 1990, 60).

Second, the principles put forth in this paper will essentially apply to a suburban-dominant ethnic church that starts a church within its own geographic region. It is this writer's hope that these principles will enhance the effectiveness of a regional church planting movement.

Third, it is assumed that the church planter will meet competency levels as required by his or her sending agency or church. It is not important to this project who initiates the church plant. The unifying element is that the church planter has a sponsoring church actively involved in the church plant.

Fourth, it is assumed that the sponsoring church supports the church plant financially. This paper focuses on the total relationship between the sponsoring church and the church plant. This writer's research is focused on ways a sponsoring church can support a church plant in addition to the giving of financial resources; thus, the focus of this project is relational rather than financial. This project wishes to underscore the value of "partnership" between the sponsoring church and church plant.

Fifth, it is assumed that the churches being started are what the Southern Baptist Convention defines as "Church-Type Missions." A Church-Type Mission is a separate

congregation with its own identity that engages in regular Bible study, worship, evangelism and fellowship (Tidsworth 1991). The Church-Type mission is designed to become a church that will be self-governed, self-supporting, and self-propagating (Steffen 1993, 13).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BASIS FOR STARTING NEW CHURCHES

Why bother starting new churches in America? There are plenty of churches! The United States has been called the most "churched" nation in the world. Indeed, in some parts of the country, one can find a church on almost every corner. However, even if one believes these statements, there are many valid reasons for starting churches. There is both a theological basis and a practical basis for starting new churches.

#### The Theological Basis for Starting New Churches

One warm summer morning sitting on the sun porch at a favorite vacation getaway, this writer noticed a little boy throwing rocks into a still pond. Every time a rock was thrown into the pond there was an initial splash and then ripples expanded from the point of impact. It suddenly seemed appropriate to be reading the book of Acts that morning as the ripples of the pond reflected a simple representation of how the church expands as it did through Paul's travels documented in the book of Acts.

One of the primary purposes of the New Testament church is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Acts 1:8 states "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." In *A Theology of Church Growth* George W. Peters stresses five points concerning the Acts 1:8 passage.

1. The Holy Spirit is the Divine agent who initiates, empowers, oversees, and ensures the accomplishment of God's church-building program.
2. The apostles of Christ were the initial agents of the Holy Spirit in the fulfillment of this portion of God's purposes.
3. The major, though not exclusive, means of accomplishing the Acts 1:8 mandate was to be witnessing or oral communication.
4. Jesus Christ himself is to be the content and focus of the Christian message.
5. The entire inhabited world is to be the sphere for this gospel proclamation. (Feeney 1988, 7)

The Acts 1:8 passage asserts that the message of Christ is continually to be spread outward from the point of impact to the entire world.

It was the pattern of the New Testament church to spread from region to region. Believers made disciples, and the new community of believers became the church in that region. Peters maintains that

the apostles seemingly did not go out to "plant" churches. They were not commissioned to launch out toward that goal. They were sent forth to preach the gospel. Yet, wherever Acts 1:8 was faithfully discharged, a church was born. (Feeney 1988, 7)

It seems that, in New Testament times, the natural result of evangelism was a church plant. History confirms that the most effective form of evangelism is church planting.

To relate this theological principle to the United States at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is this writer's belief that there is a generation of people in this country who were born and raised here, yet have little Christian or church exposure. This further creates an urgency to reach people with the message of hope found only in Jesus Christ.

Dr. David Hesselgrave states that

the primary mission of the Church and therefore, of the churches is to proclaim the gospel of Christ and gather believers into local churches where they can be built up in the faith and made effective in service, thereby planting new churches throughout the world. (Hesselgrave 1980, 20)

#### The Practical Basis for Starting New Churches

Mendal Taylor writes that

evangelism is the church's primary task; it is a fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20). It presupposes the lostness of men, then universal salvability in Christ and the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit in working through witnessing and preaching bringing about awakening and conversion. (Tinsley 1985, 2)

Charles Chaney, retired vice president of the Home Mission Board (currently North American Mission Board), states that "church planting is crucial not only because of its biblical basis but also because of its evangelistic effectiveness" (Feeney 1988, 13).

One often quoted observation on church planting comes from C. Peter Wagner: "the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches" (Wagner 1990, 22). The apostle Paul pursued such an evangelistic method. Paul's missionary work begins with the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a proclamation Paul used to move individuals to conversions. "It moves to an appeal to respond. He organizes new believers into self governing churches. . ." (Williams 1996, 242). Thus this writer firmly believes that evangelism and church planting are inseparable.

The Project as It Relates to the "Three Self  
Formula" for Maturity in New Congregations

Henry Venn's "three self" formula for a mission postulates that a church reaches maturity when it is self-supportive, self-governed and self-propagating (Hesselgrave 1980, 59). It is one of this writer's core beliefs that reproducing itself should be inscribed into the DNA of a church. "Reproducing" or "making new disciples" is a natural part of discipleship when it comes to individual Christians discipling one another. A disciple of Jesus Christ should seek to tell the gospel message to a lost individual who may be saved through God's grace. Just as it is the responsibility of the individual disciple of Christ

to see lost people won to Christ, it should be the desire of a community of believers to reproduce themselves by starting new communities of faith with new converts. This should happen wherever the community of believers is centered.

Therefore, wherever the point of impact occurs, the church should spread the gospel message in its locale, in its region, in its state, in its country, and in its world. Again, one is reminded of a rock thrown into the still waters of that South Carolina pond. Just as one small rock caused a ripple effect in the entire pond, so a church can also cause a ripple effect in its area for the cause of Christ.

Donald McGavran writes that

it is definitely the purpose of God that His churches become instruments of salvation and discipleship for the entire world. We must live in light of that hope. . . . let the church be all that it was created to become. This call for reproduction, is part of the church's basic function. (Feeney 1988, 3)

G. Caird, writing about the responsibility of all believers, asserts that

the building up of the body of Christ is not achieved by pastoral concentrations on the interior life of the Church but by training every member for his part in the Church's mission to the world. (Caird 1976, 174-175)

A church's goal is not to be merely a church that meets its budget and growth expectations year after year. A mature church is a church that reproduces itself.

The Project as it Relates to the  
"Pauline Cycle" of Missions

In the book *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, David Hesselgrave illustrates what he refers to as the "Pauline Cycle" of missions. This particular project focuses not on the entire cycle but on the relationship of a sponsoring church to the church plant. This writer postulates that the new church convened is partly made up of missionaries (both lay and ordained) from the sponsoring church. What is of primary interest to this project is what happens "relationally" to the new church plant during elements "ten" and "one" of "The Pauline Cycle," where the sending church commissions missionaries, therefore participating in mission. "They are involved in the selecting, sending, praying, encouraging, training and supporting of the missionaries and thus the new church plant" (Faircloth 1991, 23). The Apostle Paul, acting in the role of what is termed today a "church planter," corresponded with and visited regularly the churches he planted. A significant portion of the New Testament is composed of letters written by Paul to the churches he was involved with through ministry.

The Relationship Between A Sponsoring  
Church and A New Church

The letters that Paul wrote to the churches in the New Testament demonstrate that he was not content to plant and

to move on, despite some of his comments in that direction. He felt a personal responsibility for the communities he had started and had no hesitation in sending specific directives for them. Donald Senior writes, "Paul did not present himself as a mere evangelizer but as one who retained authority over these communities and who intended to help shepherd them toward the day of final salvation" (Senior and StuhlmueLLer 1988, 185). There are several examples in the New Testament where the church planter, Paul, connects the new church with the sponsoring church.

Paul established connections most notably through letters to these churches. The key word in understanding the connections he established is the word "partnership." In Philippians 1:5 (NIV) Paul says that "I am grateful for your active participation in the gospel from the first day until now." P.T. O'Brien suggests that Paul had a proactive endeavor in mind when it came to the church and its mission. O'Brien says,

their active partnership was with him in his ministry of the word of life to Gentiles and is to be understood in a broad sense. Their cooperation is not limited to their financial help, though clearly this was in the apostle's mind, . . . their participation also included their actual proclamation of the gospel message to outsiders and their suffering along with Paul for the gospel's sake. Furthermore, it involved their intercessory activity in his behalf. . . . (O'Brien 1995, 116)

Don Howell echoes the same sentiment when he writes,

even as God himself is Paul's co-worker (1 Cor. 3:9), the Gentiles are active participants and helpers through the

intercession for him. Paul directly links his own welfare and the ongoing success of his mission with the prayerful engagement of the churches on his behalf. (Larkin and Williams 90)

The churches Paul planted became "sponsoring" churches to the mission of Paul for Jesus Christ.

This conclusion prompts a question. What is Paul's understanding of the relationship between the churches that he planted and his on-going mission? What can the reader learn about the relationship of a sponsoring church to a new church plant? In response to this question, W.P. Bowers writes,

1. The churches themselves are the goal of his missionary activity.
2. They are encouraged to support his mission by prayer and financial help, thereby becoming partners with him in it.
3. By their attractive behavior and positive response to inquiries they will encourage others to join their congregations.
4. They are to carry on Paul's nurturing work so that they and others will grow into Christian maturity.
5. They are to maintain cordial relationships with other congregations founded by the Pauline mission. (O'Brien 1995, 112)

What are some of the ways that a sponsoring church can partner with its daughter church? In the following chapters this question will be addressed by a modified content analysis of written literature specifically relating to sponsoring churches and their new church plants.

## CHAPTER 3

### RELATIVE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WRITTEN MATERIALS USED IN THE PROJECT

In his book *Basic Content Analysis* Robert Weber defines "Content Analysis as a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text" (Weber 1990, 9). These inferences can be made about the sender(s) of the message, the message itself, and/or the receiving audience of the message. Two of the purposes Weber notes in his discussion are worth applying to this chapter. He states that ". . . a content analysis can identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicator and it can describe the attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications" (Weber 1990, 9).

A modified content analysis of currently used written resource materials can be beneficial in determining how the leadership of the denomination communicates to its churches that sponsor new church plants. This chapter will use such an analysis to review the value of various written materials being used by sponsoring churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

## Written Resource Materials

### Methodology for Gathering Written Resource Materials

The reader should note that the writer did not research a list of written resource materials and obtain them specifically for the purpose of a content analysis; rather, in an effort to discover what resources were being used by the church planters themselves, the writer sent a questionnaire to the forty-two State Conventions and/or Fellowships of the Southern Baptist Convention. This questionnaire was addressed to the State Directors of Mission (SDOM's) of various states. He or she was asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What written material have you used as resources regarding the relationship between sponsoring church and church plant? *Please list the title of the book, author, date and publisher.*
2. Have you written or produced a document for sponsoring churches to use in regard to the relationship between a sponsoring church and church plant? *If yes, please mail it to me at Larry McCrary, PO Box 23894, Knoxville, Tennessee 37933.*

Twenty-five State Directors of Missions responded to the questionnaire.<sup>1</sup> The adjusted response rate for the

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questionnaire is 60 percent, and the written documents are on file with the author of this project.

Materials Published Outside  
the State Conventions

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<sup>1</sup>The following State Conventions participated in the study: Alabama State Convention; Alaska State Convention; Arkansas State Convention; Baptist Convention of New England; California Southern Baptist Convention; Colorado Baptist General Convention; Florida Baptist Convention; Georgia Baptist Convention; Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention; State Convention of Baptists in Indiana; The Baptist Convention of Iowa; Louisiana Baptist Convention; Baptist State Convention of Michigan; Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention; Missouri Baptist Convention; Montana Fellowship; Nevada Baptist Convention; Baptist Convention of New England; Baptist State Convention of North Carolina; Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma; Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey; South Carolina Baptist Convention; Tennessee Baptist Convention; Baptist General Convention of Texas; and West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists.

Out of the 25 responses from the different state conventions, 15 books were recommended as materials for sponsoring churches to use in establishing new churches:

1. *Guide for Planting Congregations*, Home Mission Board, 1991
2. *Investing in Eternity*, J.V. Thomas, 1991
3. *House Church Handbook*, The Fellowship of Church Planters, 1990
4. *Planting New Churches*, J. Redford, 1978
5. *The Church Planter's Handbook*, Larry Lewis, 1992
6. *Church Planting in the African Community*, Ratcliff, 1993
7. *Worship Evangelism*, Sally Morgenthaler, 1995
8. *Multi-Housing Congregations*, David Bunch, 1993
9. *The Purpose Driven Church*, Rick Warren, 1995
10. *Planting Growing Churches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Aubrey Malphurs, 1992
11. *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, Peter Waggoner, 1990
12. *Guide for Planting Congregations*, Texas Edition, BGCT, 1991
13. *Nine Steps In Starting New Churches*, Home Mission Board, 1982
14. *Guide for Establishing New Churches and Missions*, Home Mission Board, 1969
15. *Reach People--Start Churches*, Home Mission Board, 1984

While the majority of the books related to church planting specifically, two books, *Worship Evangelism* by Sally Morgenthaler and *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren, were recommended as well. While these are significant works for contemporary churches, they have no relevant content concerning sponsoring churches' relationship to their new church plants. However, these books will help a traditional sponsoring church understand their new church plant if the new church is more contemporary in nature than the sponsoring church.

There was minimal overlap in what was recommended; in only one instance did SDOM's recommend the same material, the *Guide for Planting Congregations* written in 1991 by Home Mission Board, SBC and, significantly, reproduced by the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Ten of the state conventions that responded (40%) did not recommend any published materials in regards to the relationship between a sponsoring church and new church plant. In five cases the state conventions asked the writer to provide a list of books once it was compiled. They specifically stated that they did not know of any published material that dealt with that subject.

Materials Produced Within  
the State Conventions

The SDOM's responded to the second part of the questionnaire with a list of twenty-two publications produced within the State Conventions:

1. *Six Simple Steps for Starting Sound Churches*--Arkansas
2. *How to Be A Responsible Sponsoring Church*--Arkansas
3. *Responsibilities of Sponsoring Churches*--Florida
4. *Characteristics of a Sponsoring Church*--Iowa
5. *Sponsoring Church Policies*--Missouri
6. *New Church and Sponsoring Church Relationship*-  
Pennsylvania/South Jersey
7. *New Church Development Ministries*--Georgia
8. *New Church Development Guidelines*--Texas
9. *Benefits of Becoming A Sponsor Church*--Texas
10. *Church Starting Principles*--Texas
11. *The Unique Qualities of New Churches*--Texas
12. *How to Constitute*--Texas
13. *Mobilizing Your Core Group*--Texas

14. *Contextual Sponsorship*--Tennessee
15. *Sponsoring An Ethnic Mission*--Tennessee
16. *What Kind of Sponsoring Church Are You?*--Louisiana
17. *Partnership Guidelines for New Churches and Sponsoring Churches*--Texas
18. *Sponsoring New Work in South Carolina*--South Carolina
19. *Florida Baptist Convention Guidelines for Planting Churches*--Florida
20. *Becoming A Sponsoring Church*--California
21. *New Church Start Up Orientation*--Texas
22. *Sample Covenants*--Texas, Tennessee, Pennsylvania/Jersey, Minnesota/Wisconsin, Hawaii, Colorado

Several significant initial observations can be made from the initial listing of the materials that the State Conventions produced: six state conventions (24%) reported that they do not have their own materials in regards to the relationship of sponsoring churches and new church plants, and four of the conventions (16%) that responded to the questionnaire did not recommend either published material or their own written material on the subject of sponsoring churches and new church plants. This is significant information in that almost one quarter of our state conventions seem not to provide education in regards to sponsorship.

Other information gleaned from an initial examination of these resources includes the fact that only two state conventions (8%), the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the South Carolina Baptist Convention, provide any type of formal training or seminars for the sponsoring church, while the Tennessee Baptist Convention is in the process of

establishing a training program for sponsoring churches. In addition, only three State Conventions (12%), the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, the Georgia Baptist Convention, and the Baptist General Convention of Texas, provide a list of written resource materials for the sponsoring church to consider as it prepares to sponsor or as it sponsors a new church plant.

#### Methodology for Analyzing Written Resource Materials

Applying Weber's definition to this project, the "sender" is the State Director of Missions, the "message" is the written literature itself and the "audience" is group of churches that sponsor new church plants. Each of these components plays an important role in this particular research.

Today, most content analysis projects are aided by the a computer that scans the written material and finds particular data. This is necessary to aid in the process of analyzing thousands of pages with often hundreds of variables to be coded (Hodson 1999, 24). However, this project is narrowly focused, relating only to literature that State Directors of Missions use, not to an exhaustively researched list of literature published on the subject of sponsoring churches and church plants. There was

approximately four notebooks worth of literature to analyze. Since written resources were limited to those provided by the responding State Directors of Missions and intricate computer aided analysis was not required, this writer was able to use "modified content analysis" as a research methodology to closely examine the strengths and weaknesses of the materials submitted.

Once the materials were collected, the researcher took a first step towards developing a coding instrument by arranging the data in alphabetical order according to participating State Conventions then reading the literature and marking text related only to sponsorship issues.

The next step was for the researcher to write out a set of questions that would become the coding instrument for a modified content analysis (Hodson 1999, 24). These questions were used to analyze the content of the text, thus providing objective data for the researcher.

1. What materials published independent of the State Conventions were submitted?
2. What materials produced by the State Conventions were submitted?
3. What topics were addressed in the published materials, including the number of publications submitted and space allotted to each article?
4. What topics were addressed in State Convention materials, including the number of publications submitted and space allotted to each article?
5. What type of control measures and number of written literature pieces concerning control measures for the sponsoring church or state convention could be found in the submitted written resources?

Once these questions were answered by data, strengths and weaknesses could be identified in the materials, and seventeen guiding principles were extracted for sponsoring churches to consider implementing when establishing and nurturing a relationship with a new church plant.

### Strengths of Written Resource

#### Materials Used By the SBC

Following are some of the strengths that can be recognized in the literature that the questionnaire produced. While these strengths are presented in no special order, they reflect the results of the modified content analysis by applying the data generated by questions three, four, and five of the coding instrument to the practical problems of establishing and sustaining a relationship between sponsoring church and church plant.

#### The Importance of Employing Contextual Methods

After evaluating the submitted written resource material, this writer observed that many of the State Conventions have sought to identify methods that work best in the context dictated by the distinguishing characteristics of their congregations--a good strategy because, as the reader knows, Alaska is different from Texas

and California from Tennessee. Most state convention offices have attempted to contextualize their material to fit the needs and structures of their state convention: 18 of the 25 state conventions (72%) use only those written resource materials that they themselves have produced. This observation becomes clear when one reviews the sample covenants between sponsoring church and new church plant that the state conventions provided.

The North American Mission Board has compiled a general yet comprehensive guide to starting new congregations. The *Guide For Planting Congregations* is produced by the North American Mission Board of the SBC and is available to all state convention offices and local associations. *Guide For Planting Congregations* is also printed for various groups such as Deaf, Korean, Haitian, Ethnic, Filipino, American Indian, Vietnamese, Laotian and Hispanic populations. However, only 5 responding state conventions (20%) use this guide and other materials that the national mission agency for the Southern Baptist Convention has produced.

Most of the material employed by the State Conventions focuses on methods rather than on principles. While this will be addressed as a weakness later in the paper, it can also be seen as a strength. Since much of the material is written for the church planter or sponsoring church, the state conventions in their written literature have chosen to

give step by step guidelines for church planting. This can be very helpful for the sponsoring church and church planter who want to find out what needs to be done in order to obtain funding and start the new church. Many of the steps are listed in short, easy to read and understand forms. These lists are often shortened versions of one found in the *Guide For Planting Congregations*.

For example, it is noted in the state convention materials, that, regarding the relationship of the sponsoring church and new church plant, the sponsoring church should:

1. Prepare their church plant a church.
2. Pray for the new congregation.
3. Call a mission pastor.
4. Secure a meeting place.
5. Advertise through direct mail.
6. Keep records of evangelism events.
7. Send monthly reports to sponsoring church.
8. Support the new congregation through regular events.

One will note that while these are clear concise steps, they deal with methods not principles.

#### The Importance of Strong Covenant Agreements

There is abundant concentration on covenant agreements in the written material that was collected. This result was predicted by Charles Chaney, former Vice President of the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board), when this writer discussed with him the idea for this project. He said that much of the literature would concentrate on the

covenant nature between the church planter, sponsoring church, local association, and state convention. Chaney was correct when making this observation. The modified content analysis shows that 16 of the state conventions (64%) mention the word covenant when referring to the relationship between the sponsoring church and new church plant.

There is an emphasis on the covenant because it is the covenant which addresses what the new church should and should not be doing. It is in the covenant where the sponsoring church identifies what they are actually responsible for during the mission phase of the church plant. Covenants are extremely important for all parties involved. This researcher was encouraged to discover that 8 of the state conventions (32%) promote the idea that the covenant should be negotiated when the mission pastor/church planter arrives so that he will have some input. The downside of this statistic is that 68% did not see the necessity of doing this. It is the church planter who has to live with the covenant on a daily basis. This writer will look at more specific results of covenants later in this chapter.

Most state conventions have some form of written covenant between sponsoring church and church plant. In order to obtain funding from a local association or state convention, the church planter must have a sponsoring church

and be endorsed by the local association and state convention. Past experience tells the agencies that having a covenant is best for all parties. The Church Starting Center of the Baptist General Convention of Texas states that it expects the sponsor church(es) and the new church to enter into a written covenant. "This is necessary for good relationships and good understanding of the roles" (*New Church Development Guidelines* 1998). Jack Redford, formerly of the Home Mission Board, says that relationships and responsibilities should be clarified before the mission is begun. A covenant written prior to the church start is best for everyone involved. It is at the beginning where everyone sits at the table praying for God's vision for the new church where relationships are developed, and it is there that a covenant can work to solidify those relationships.

#### The Importance of an Emphasis on Prayer

Another positive aspect about the written material is that there is a trend toward an emphasis on prayer for all parties involved. This is vital in church planting and should not be assumed. In dated literature it was observed that this step was often overlooked or assumed, but in the most recent publications there is growing appreciation for the power of prayer when planting a church, in particular on the part of the sponsoring church. Nine publications from

nine different state conventions (36%) cited prayer as a vital part of their strategy. The reason this writer states this as a strength is that most of the written literature speaks of prayer in its opening.

In his book on church planting, Malphurs highlights prayer as the most important foundation (Malphurs 1992, 388). In the *Guide For Planting Congregations*, prayer is listed in almost every phase of the church planting strategy. Prayer is a key principle in church planting, which will be discussed later in the project. One is reminded of the apostle Paul's words to the church at Ephesus. Paul teaches them:

For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms. Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere. (Ephesians 6:12,18 [NLT])

Church planting brings about spiritual warfare. Satan does not give up without a fight. Church planters, the sponsoring church, and members of the church plant all need to pray and be prayed for during this ministry.

#### The Importance of an Abundance of Written Resource Materials Focused on Educating the Sponsoring Church

Several of the state conventions have spent a lot of time, energy, and resources in producing their own

literature. The state conventions of Tennessee, Texas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania/Jersey have each developed a great deal of material for the sponsoring church and new church plant. These states have seventy-five percent more literature than the other states combined. The states that have produced the most literature all seem to feature a common element: their information is targeted to educate the sponsoring church prior to starting a church. In so many cases new churches are started by division, thus being reactive in nature. These states that have produced written material realize that the goal is for healthy sponsoring churches to plan the birth of new churches.

*Church Planting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Aubrey Malphurs was recommended four times by respondents to the questionnaire. More than any other mentioned by respondents, Malphurs' book addresses the relationship between a sponsoring church and the new church plant. Malphurs' section on sponsoring a new church is the most principle-centered literature this writer observed. However, it should be noted that there was not one published book listed that dealt solely with the relationship between a sponsoring church and new church plant. The lack of published literature on the subject has created the need for leaders in the State Conventions to write their own

materials out of past experiences and in their specific contexts.

Two state conventions have done outstanding work in the area of writing principles that relate to new churches and their sponsors. These written principles were compiled by Stan Smith of the Pennsylvania/Jersey Convention and Leon Hyatt Jr. of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Each of these writers has done excellent work in teaching about the nature and purpose of the sponsoring church beyond the issue of finance.

Smith's writings are published neither for national distribution nor for sale, but are given out to potential sponsoring churches in his state convention. Hyatt has printed pamphlets entitled *What Kind of Sponsoring Church are You?* and *What Kind of Sponsored Mission Church are You?* In these pamphlets Hyatt gives cute titles for the different and misguided approaches that have been observed from sponsoring to sponsored church and vice versa. The purpose of his work is to show faulty approaches toward creating effective sponsorship relationships and then to detail the responsible approach. A strength of the document is that it gives responsibility both to the sponsoring church and the mission church in maintaining a healthy relationship. It should be noted that this pamphlet is used by other state conventions across the country.

## The Importance of Exploring New Methods of Delivering Resource Materials

One of the most encouraging works was presented by Shuford Jones of the Georgia Baptist Convention. His response to the questionnaire encouraged this researcher to visit their web site at [www.gbc.org/](http://www.gbc.org/). When one goes to this web site, one finds Jones' department of New Church Extension. This site is full of information for the church planter and sponsoring church. The site answers frequently asked questions about church planting, and gives a brief assessment for the potential church planter to take. Also, one can visit a section that tells the reader what must be done to start a new church and to obtain funding from the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Creating interactive web sites can be a great source of training and educating the church planter and sponsoring church. While this area still needs to be developed by most state conventions, it has the potential to be an important resource to the church planter. If each church planter who is funded by the state convention is able to have access to the internet on a regular basis, the internet could be an interactive learning center as church planters are linked up across the world.

The Importance of Confronting Legal  
and Administrative Issues

Another strength of the written literature is its emphasis on legal and administrative issues that are becoming increasingly complex. The state conventions and North American Mission Board have done a good job of getting information into the hands of church planters and sponsoring churches and as a result much literature has been written which clearly establishes the necessary relationship between sponsor and church plant. This is another example of how each state has to adapt its written resources to its context. Tax laws and incorporation laws vary from state to state and thus each state has to write out the legal and administrative issues pertaining to that states' laws. Fourteen of the state conventions (56%) sent material included in their packets on how to constitute and incorporate a new church. This information is helpful for both the sponsoring church and new church plant.

#### The Emerging Importance of a New Emphasis on "Partnering"

In the past the code phrase for the relationship of the sponsor church and mission church was "to be a parent to the daughter church." While this is a helpful analogy, especially in the early stages, it can communicate subconsciously that the daughter church is always subordinate to the parent even after the daughter church becomes a constituted and incorporated church. This

mentality can limit the new church and give its members a sense of inferiority. Today, this is changing as nine of the state conventions (36%) are writing about the sponsoring church "partnering" with the new church. Stan Smith of the Pennsylvania/Jersey Convention gives the most space of any author on this topic: three pages. This writer believes that the emphasis on "partnering" today is a positive movement. The term partnering will be discussed more specifically in the next chapter as the guiding principles are described.

#### Weaknesses of Written Resource

##### Materials Used By the SBC

As a whole the literature does not address the training issues confronted by the church planter.

##### Problems with the Specifics of Church Planting

Only five state conventions (20%) gave resources that outlined methods of church planting. However, most of the state conventions have what is called "Basic Training" offered by the North American Mission Board, SBC. This training is a week long workshop that walks a church planter or church planting team through the planting of a church. The church planter's mentor and spouse are also encouraged to attend in order to help the church planter to come up

with a personalized strategy. It is this writer's opinion, based upon the statistical data that state conventions provided, that the conventions assume that the church planter is either trained or knows how to get training such as the Basic Training.

One convention, The Baptist General Convention of Texas, includes in their literature many pamphlets instructing the church planter and sponsoring church in how to employ methods and tools properly to plant a church. If it is a goal of the state conventions for churches to initiate new church starts, then the sponsoring churches must have a plan to train the church planters they bring on to start churches. It leaves too many risk factors exposed if training opportunities and/or literature is not provided to the church planter and sponsoring church. For example, what if the new church planter comes from the sponsoring church and has not had basic seminary training or church leadership training? Will that person be prepared to start a new work? The interesting aspect about this weakness is that plenty of written resources on how to plant a church exist.

Most of the books on church planting deal specifically with church planting methodology. The challenge is getting those resources into the hands of the church planter. It is this writer's simple point that the sponsoring church must

take on some of that responsibility in getting those resources to the planter and getting him trained in the area of church planting. This writer does not feel that the church planter should bear all of the responsibility of acquiring the necessary training but that the sponsoring church and denominational powers should be more actively involved in providing the church planter with the resources and materials necessary for him and the new work to succeed.

Problems with Focusing on a Method Oriented  
Rather than a Principle Centered Program

Another weakness in the written literature is that the material is method based not principle centered. Fourteen of the fifteen books that were recommended by the state conventions were slanted towards the church planter using the right methods in planting a church. Malphurs' *Church Planting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* was the only book recommended that addressed the importance of how the church planter needs to think and pray about his values, vision, and mission in regards to the church plant. Once this has been accomplished, then the church planter should use some guiding principles that will enable him to understand and communicate his strategy.

While the methods presented by many publications and pamphlets are helpful in showing what needs to be done in order to start a church (setting up sound financial

procedures, selecting a good building site, praying for the new church, enlisting a core group from the sponsor church, etc.), by addressing only the "to do" list of a church plant these publications lack general guiding principles on how a sponsoring church should relate to the new church plant. However, as this writer will demonstrate later in this paper, there are several principles to help the sponsoring church and new church plant in their partnership.

#### Problems with an Emphasis on Control Issues

The written literature seems most concerned with what this writer terms "control" measures. It must be said that these control measures are not bad in and of themselves. They help maintain accountability for the new church as it relates to the sponsoring church. What this writer finds, however, is an overabundance of these measures placed upon the new church. The reality of this issue for the church plants funded either by the sending church or a denominational entity is that, if the new church plant does not agree to these "control" measures, it will not receive funding. Modified content analysis of the resource materials found the following control measures in the received resource materials:

Five written resource materials that focus on the active participation of the new church plant in the local

association, state convention and Southern Baptist Convention;

Eight written resource materials requiring a mutually agreed upon covenant prior to sponsorship;

One written resource that asks about or mentions the importance placed upon the new church in regards to the authority of scripture;

Seven written resource materials that refer to certain doctrinal standards that should be held by the new church plant;

Twelve written resource materials that require the new church to be in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message;

Five written resource materials that talk about how the new church should use Southern Baptist curriculum for teaching;

One written resource that addresses whether or not the new church should refer to itself as Baptist;

Fourteen written resource materials that dictate how and when the Constitution of the new church should be created;

Sixteen written resource materials that discuss SBC polity;

Five written resource materials that propose covenants asserting a pre-determined time that a sponsoring church will help the new church;

Eleven written resource materials that deal with the new church plant giving to the Cooperative program for missions; and

Five written resource materials that discuss how and when the new church should acquire property.

Again, the research demonstrates how the emphasis is on the control measures not on the principles necessary to achieve an effective church plant.

This control focus can have an adverse effect on a relationship between the sponsoring church and new church plant. Sadly, this reduces many potentially powerful relationships to one where the sponsoring church is cast as the "great provider of resources" and the new church plant as "the needy fledging upstart" that has to obey all of the rules. It makes finance the main point of the relationship. It is this writer's purpose to show that the new church plant needs more than its sponsoring church's money to be successful. The principles discussed in the next chapter will help the reader in this understanding.

Some Preliminary Conclusions: A Proactive  
vs. Reactive Relationship

In much of the literature sent by the SDOM's, the burden for initiating communication, arranging meetings, generating reports, etc. is placed on the church planter and new church plant. The modified content analysis discovered that, out of 25 state conventions participating in this research project, only a few sent or mentioned materials which discussed the sponsoring church acting proactively. Indeed, this project received only four written resources that mentioned the sponsoring church taking a proactive role in the area of finance, two each in the areas of prayer and

leadership, and only one each in the important areas of communication and accountability.

The next chapter concentrates on certain guiding principles derived from the research conducted above. These principles propose that the sponsoring church should be proactive in its approach to the church plant. Current written resources on the subject seem to be written with the convenience of the sponsoring church in mind. Both the sponsoring church and the new church plant should bear responsibility for taking a proactive rather than a reactive approach.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL SPONSORSHIP OF NEW CHURCHES BASED UPON A MODIFIED CONTENT ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN RESOURCE MATERIALS

If one applies the "parenting" metaphor often used in church planting writings, in order to create a proactive rather than reactive church plant, sponsoring churches need to reexamine how they "parent" their new church plant. Likewise, the church plant needs to take a closer look at how they respond to such parenting. One of the most informative pieces of literature that can be used to address this issue came from Leon Hyatt, written while he served at the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He noted various approaches from the perspective of the sponsoring church to the new church plant and the new church plant to the sponsoring churches. Hyatt first addresses the sponsor church, noting several stereotypical roles the sponsor (Hyatt uses the term "partner") plays:

1. The "Doting Grandparent Approach"--This is where the partner church celebrates the joy of having a new congregation but does not exercise the responsibility in guiding its development.
2. The "Rich Uncle Approach"--This is the pattern where the partner church fails to offer an appropriate helping hand to the new congregation, even though it is able to do so. This "make-it-on-your-own-like-I-had-to" attitude discourages the new congregation and will probably cause its failure.
3. The "Over-bearing Father Approach"--This is the approach where the partner church assumes the role of the authoritarian and dictatorial parent. The partner church mandates all decisions and demands obedience by the new congregation. The new congregation must submit

or is driven to rebellion. The anger and bitterness which ensues thwarts the healthy development of the new congregation.

4. The "Jealous Brother Approach"--This is the pattern where the partner church feels threatened by the success of the new church. This attitude may show itself by subtle attempts to lure members from the new congregation to the partner church or by refusal by the partner church to channel needed encouragement or assistance to the new congregation.
5. The "Bored Stepfather Approach"--This approach is when the partner church is inactive in the relationship. It is a partnership in name only. (Hyatt n.d.)

Hyatt proceeds to give insight on how the relationship should be:

A true and healthy partner church is more like a "concerned parent." The partner church seeks to help the new congregation to grow to its fullest potential, while offering appropriate assistance without being patronizing or paternalistic. (Hyatt n.d.)

Hyatt also observes some unhealthily ways new church plants relate to their partner church:

1. The "Spoiled Child" Approach--This pattern is where the new congregation acts out of the belief that all its needs should be met by the partner church rather than first drawing on the resources of its own members.
2. The "Rebellious Teen Approach"--This pattern is where the new congregation assumes that it does not need advice or counsel from the more experienced partner congregation. However it still insists on financial and other resource assistance.
3. The "Isolation Approach"--This pattern the new congregation seems to isolate itself from the lost around them and acts as if the new congregation is for their enjoyment alone.
  
4. The "Apron Strings Approach"--This pattern is where the new congregation seems to be content to staying identified with the partner church indefinitely. This kind of dependency makes little impact on the community

that needs to hear the gospel and does not mature to autonomy. (Hyatt n.d.)

Hyatt responds to this list of common problematic relationships by stating that "the responsible new congregation acts out of appreciation for the relationship with the partner church while striving to autonomy and maturity" (Hyatt n.d.).

Hyatt is but one of several writers among those submitted in the survey whose work forms a foundation for the guiding principles introduced later in this chapter. One way of analyzing the written literature is to note the occurrence of certain topics the writers deemed essential for a successful church plant. The following pages present in table form topics mentioned in both the published books and materials that state conventions published on their own.

The tables identify topic discussed, number of books or publications, amount of space given in that book or publication, and percentage of space in the total amount of submitted material given to the topic. The first two tables deal with the materials separately, while the third combines the two.

Table 1. Topics Appearing in Published Material

Topic	Number of Books	Space Used	Percent
Prayer of sponsor church	1	1 paragraph	4%
Supplemental	1	1 paragraph	4%

leadership provided by the sponsor church			
Financial support for a pre-determined time	1	1 paragraph	4%
Communication	1	1 paragraph	4%
Commitment to evangelism	1	1 paragraph	4%
The need for reproduction	1	1 chapter	4%
Credibility supplied by the sponsor church	2	1 paragraph	8%
Partnership between the two churches	2	1 paragraph	8%
Sponsor church respects autonomy of the church plant	4	1 paragraph	16%

Table 2. Topics Appearing in State Convention Material

Topic	Number of Pubs.	Space Used	Percent
Churches located in same geographic area	1	1 paragraph	4%
Mentoring of the church planter	1	1 sentence	4%
Proactive communication between the churches	2	1 paragraph	8%
Sponsor church respects autonomy of the church plant	2	2 paragraphs	8%
Spiritual insight	2	1 paragraph	8%
Sponsor church committed to the success of new church	3	1 paragraph	12%
Accountability measures built in	3	1 paragraph	12%
Financial support for a pre-determined time	4	1 paragraph	16%
Sponsor church assumes responsibility for new church	4	1 paragraph	16%
Commitment to evangelism	4	2 paragraphs	16%
Mutually agreed upon covenants	5	1 page each	20%

New Church Sponsorship Committee holds new church plant accountable	5	1 paragraph	20%
Sponsor church provides doctrinal foundation	6	2 paragraphs	24%
Sponsor church gives emotional support	6	2 paragraphs	24%
Sponsor church pastor has "kingdom view"	6	1 paragraph	24%
Supplemental leadership provided by the sponsor church	7	1 paragraph	28%
Partnership terminology used by the state convention	7	1 paragraph	28%
Sponsor church adequately prepares itself	8	2 paragraphs	32%
Prayer of sponsor church	8	1 paragraph	32%

Table 3. Topics Appearing in Both Book and State Convention Publications

Topic	Number of Books	Space Used	Percent
Churches located in same geographic area	1	1 paragraph	4%
Mentoring of the church planter	1	1 sentence	4%
The need for reproduction	1	1 chapter	4%
Credibility supplied by the sponsor church	2	1 paragraph	8%
Spiritual insight	2	1 paragraph	8%
Proactive communication between the churches	3	1 paragraph	12%
Sponsor church committed to the success of new church	3	1 paragraph	12%
Accountability measures built in	3	1 paragraph	12%
Sponsor church assumes responsibility for new church	4	1 paragraph	16%
Commitment to evangelism	5	2 paragraphs	20%
Mutually agreed upon covenants	5	1 page each	20%
New Church Sponsorship Committee holds new church plant accountable	5	1 paragraph	20%
Financial support for a pre-determined time	4	1 paragraph	16%
Sponsor church respects autonomy of the church plant	6	2 paragraphs	24%
Sponsor church provides doctrinal foundation	6	2 paragraphs	24%
Sponsor church gives emotional support	6	2 paragraphs	24%
Sponsor church pastor has "kingdom view"	6	1 paragraph	24%
Partnership terminology used by the state convention	7	1 paragraph	28%

Sponsor church adequately prepares itself	8	2 paragraphs	32%
Prayer of sponsor church	9	1 paragraph	36%
Supplemental leadership provided by the sponsor church	7	1 paragraph	28%

Seventeen topics are discussed at least two times or more in the submitted literature, thus being present in at least 8% of the documents analyzed. The topics "Accountability Measures Built In" and "New Church Sponsorship Committee Holds New Church Plant Accountable" will be woven into one principle because The New Church Sponsorship Committee is an accountability measure that is built into many church plants.

Reasoning for Revising the Ways We View the Relationship between Sponsor and Church Plant

The written resources that were collected have been put together over the years by leaders who are experienced in the field of church planting. They have had countless experiences either planting churches themselves, supervising church planters, training sponsoring churches or training church planters. While each resource may differ in its

emphasis, one can pull together collectively the wisdom of the writers into a coherent and easily understood set of principles that will enhance the possibility of effective relationships between sponsoring churches and new church plants.

Strictly adhering to the following set of principles does not guarantee success. However, these principles build a case that there is more to sponsoring a church than providing financial resources. These principles will help both the church planter and the sponsoring church to start a healthier church plant.

#### Seventeen Principles for Planting a Healthy Church

The following principles are presented here in writing; some objective examples of these principles will be included at the conclusion of this paper.

##### Principle One: The Sponsoring Church Views the Church Plant as a Partner in Ministry

A new word in church planting has begun to appear: "partnering." Nine publications (28%) of the written literature submitted mentioned this term. In the past the Home Mission Board, State Conventions, and Sponsoring Churches preferred the term "parent" or "mother church" for the sponsoring church. These words, while still used today, hint at the superiority of the sponsoring church in its

relationship with the new church plant rather than asserting that the two churches are on the same level as partners in ministry. These paternal words can be descriptive of the relationship and offer a good analogy for people to understand, but there is a danger. The Baptist General Convention of Texas states that

a partner who enables the new church will create a positive self-image and an attitude of commitment, maturity and optimism. In contrast, a sponsor with a "parenting" attitude can create inferiority and dependence on the new church. (Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1993)

Therefore, the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) uses the word "partnership." In fact, they see the new church as a partner with the sponsor church, the local association and the BGCT.

The first principle is that the sponsoring church should view the church plant as a partner in ministry. This is a philosophy of church planting where the new church and sponsor church join together to implement God's vision to expand His kingdom. Stan Smith of the Baptist convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey says that the relationship is a temporary one, not one of superiority. Smith says that "at the core the partner church is a congregation that assumes the responsibility for all or part of the initiating, developing and encouraging of a new congregation" (Smith n.d., 1). This is close to the language that the Apostle Paul uses in Philippians when he writes "I thank my God

every time I remember you. In all of my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. . ." (Phil 1:3-5).

In many cases the written literature analyzed in this study focused on control issues of finance, doctrine and polity, not the unique partnering relationship established between sponsor church and church plant. Based on the evaluation of the written literature and from personal experience, more effective relationships occur between the sponsor church and new church plant when they see each other as partners on the same team. Following is an example from the Colorado Baptist Convention of this partnering put into a covenant between a new church and sponsor church.

The spirit of this covenant agreement is to build the mission into a functioning New Testament church according to the teaching of the Bible through the diligent and faithful work of the mission, and the loving guidance, counsel, encouragement, and support of the partner church. The partner church recognizes the sovereignty of God to lead and direct the mission through the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Bible. The mission recognizes the wisdom of God for the need of a partner church to help her confirm the leading of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Bible. Through the spirit of cooperation, open communication, and mutual respect, the partner church and the mission church shall labor together with Christ to build His church." (Colorado Baptist Convention n.d., 1)

When the sponsoring church is referred to as the partner church, a sense of teamwork rather than a sense of superiority is implied. This principle is a necessity if the kingdom of God is going to grow. From the theological

perspective, we have learned that churches planting and supporting other churches is Biblical and necessary. Today, we know that churches must plant churches that plant churches. It is the most effective evangelistic method. In order for this to happen, sponsoring churches must partner with their new church plants to spread the gospel.

When one assumes the view that the sponsoring church is a partner with the new church plant, the two churches can work together on mission projects, other church plants, evangelistic events, social ministries, and so forth. Instead of one church in the city, the new church becomes part of a movement of churches that all started when a church decided to partner with another church.

Principle Two: The Sponsoring Church Should Be Able  
to Give Spiritual Insight and Direction  
to the New Church Plant

Though this principle is closely related to the idea of accountability that one may find in the "steering committee" of the sponsoring church, spiritual insight and direction are of utmost importance when issues of accountability aren't necessarily at hand. It is surprising that only two publications (8%) mentioned this topic, but it has extreme importance. The reasoning behind this principle is rather simple. The sponsoring church should be the more spiritually mature of the two. Since it is the most mature,

the sponsoring church should have the spiritual maturity and wisdom to share with its partner church. The sponsoring church should also take the lead in promoting a spiritual atmosphere for the new church and in particular for the core group of the new church plant.

In only a few instances did the literature mention an important event for the new church: the commissioning service. This service proves to be a significant service for youth groups as they go on mission tours and for adult missionaries as they leave the country for international missions. Why not have a commissioning service for the new church plant and the church planter? While this is an obvious service for some, it is left out of many new church plants. It is not even mentioned in most of the literature that was analyzed.

This service can serve as a launch for the new church. It provides prayer and power to the church plant. It provides a sense of recognition and accomplishment to the team that established the new church. The service also gives an opportunity to elevate the value of missions in the sponsoring church while at the same time providing an ownership opportunity for the partner church. Services such as these provide spiritual direction and set the tone for the work of the new church.

Another aspect of this principle is the spiritual direction the partner church can give to the church plant. While this may often take place in the context of a "steering committee," it is still worth noting. A church planter may have a problem arise early on in the process of establishing the new church. Perhaps it is a case of spiritual discipline in the new church. Because the new church does not have many mature believers and may not have structure to handle such an issue, the steering committee of the sponsoring church can provide spiritual direction and insight on how best to handle the problem. This same arrangement can apply to doctrinal issues. The steering committee is able to help the church planter and its members to maneuver through a potential problem area.

One other aspect of this principle is that the partner church can help enhance the spiritual life of the church planter. Though Kelly O'Donnell is addressing the needs of the international missionary, she writes that the mission sending agency can help support the spiritual life of the missionary by organizing special retreats, approaching leadership for special times of prayer and providing Bible study opportunities for the church planter. (O'Donnell 1991, 18). This same principle can be true for the sponsoring church. Careful planning and attention from the staff person in charge of the new church or from the steering

committee could allow for spiritual development times for the church planter and his family and the new church's leadership. Though this principle is not addressed directly in the written literature, it holds a high degree of value to the relationship between the church planter and partner church.

### Principle Three: The Sponsoring Church Prays for Its Church Plant Regularly

Nine publications (36%) mentioned prayer as being important in relation to the sponsor church and new church plant. This is the foundation of the new church plant. In the context of this paper, the sponsor church (FBC Concord) started a prayer ministry specifically for the new church plant. This prayer team met every Wednesday night for the first year of this writer's ministry there. From this prayer team came specific requests for the new church plant, for its role in developing relationships with lost people, and for strategy for the new church. These requests were then forwarded to the sponsoring church's prayer ministry and distributed amongst their prayer warriors. Once WestLake began meeting on its own, a prayer team was established with core members from WestLake praying regularly and sending out prayer requests to interested people committed to praying for the needs of the new church. This team also continued to forward specific prayer requests

to the sponsoring church during the mission phase of the new church.

The written publications agree with the new church being founded in prayer and having a strategic prayer ministry. In their *Guide for Planting Congregations*, the Baptist General Convention of Texas states that the "sponsoring church should give prayer support" (Baptist General Convention of Texas 1998a, 2). In the California Baptist Convention, Lon Chavez says that every new church and new church sponsor should have a prayer plan" (Chavez 1994).

Some of the strongest words come from Shuford Jones of the Georgia Baptist Convention. Jones writes that "prayer support serves to bind the supporting church closely to the mission congregation and unleashes God's endless resources for the needs at hand" (Jones, 1998). This was particularly true in the case of WestLake and FBC Concord. Numerous times a member of the sponsoring church met at random asked about the status of specific prayer request, conveying the idea that the sponsoring church had a genuine interest in the their mission church.

The prayers of the sponsoring church not only helped WestLake Church but also affected the sponsoring church. Keith Draper from the Illinois Baptist Convention says that prayer give benefits to the church planter, an obvious need

for God's power, but also benefits the sponsor church. "It enlarges their heart" (Keith Draper n.d., Illinois Baptist Convention).

The obvious implication of this principle is that each person who plants a new church should develop a written prayer strategy for the sponsoring church and new church plant. In addition, the church planter should enlist a group of believers to prayer specifically for him and his family during the church plant.

Principle Four: The Sponsoring Church Provides  
Doctrinal Foundation and Stability

Six publications (24%) mention that the sponsoring church provides doctrinal stability for the new church plant. As previously mentioned in this paper, seven articles specifically address the notion that the new church should use the Baptist Faith and Message as its guiding belief statement. Most state conventions include this in their covenant agreement between the sponsoring entities and the church planter.

During the interview process at FBC Concord, the sponsoring church asked questions regarding this author's belief in the Bible and *Baptist Faith and Message*. It was the personnel committee's opinion at FBC Concord that though the church planter may hold a different notion of what happens in church, the planter's doctrinal stance should stay consistent with theirs. The Baptist General Convention of Texas states in their *Guide for Planting Congregations* that "while the theology is constant methodology will vary and this is a key to developing an indigenous church" (Baptist General Convention of Texas 1991, 4).

The logical conclusion drawn from this principle is that the more consistent the theology between the sponsoring church and new church plant, the greater the chance of their working together in the future. The church plant at

Westlake never deviated from conservative theology though our methods were extremely different from those of FBC Concord. This consistency in theology allowed us to work together on some mission projects and other church programs.

Principle Five: The Sponsoring Church Gives Emotional Encouragement to the New Church Plant

In Exodus 18:8-13, one reads a classic battle scene in the Old Testament dealing with the leader of the Israelites, Moses. Moses was growing weary from his role in the fight with the Amalekites. When he lifted high his staff the Israelites began to prevail; however, when he let his hands from the weariness of the battle, thus letting the staff down, the Israelites would begin to lose. His helpers Aaron and Hur found a stone for Moses to sit upon to help him rest and they got on each side of Moses and helped him keep his hand raised high and steady, thus assuring the victory for the Israelites. This can be used as a metaphor in church planting. The church planter will grow weary from the everyday wear and tear on the body, mind, and soul. The church planter needs emotional helpers. The sponsoring church should be in the best position to help out their new church plant. The research showed that six publications (24%) cited information about the importance of the sponsoring church giving emotional support to the church planter.

In his book *Church Planting for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Aubrey Malphurs offers one such example, saying that "even Paul, who was a church planter par excellence, faced times of intense discouragement" (Malphurs 1998, 382). Malphurs later states that "this is where a mother church can be extremely helpful. They can give encouragement and counsel" (Malphurs 1998, 382).

Another example comes from Shuford Jones of the Georgia Baptist Convention. He states that "obviously financial support is a chief need for the new congregation, but not even a surplus of financial support can overcome failure to support the infant church with encouragement, guidance and warm intentional love" (Jones 1998). Jones writes the following about his experience in directing church planting in Georgia for seventeen years.

A high percentage of church planting pastors experience burn out within 15-24 months of initiating a new work. The reasons include personal and missional financial needs, absence of sufficient trained leaders, the lack of resources for site purchases and building construction, lack of supplies and equipment, the need to be an evangelist, husband, father, counselor, administrator, building superintendent. . . . Church Planting is one of ministry's most demanding roles and it produces fatigue. (Jones 1998)

Jones and Malphurs demonstrate what much of the research shows, that the sponsor church needs to provide emotional support to the church plant and planter; however, there are few actual recommendations on how a sponsoring church can go

about doing it. This led to the inclusion of Appendix A: "Ten Lifelines That You and Your Church Can Use To Help Your Church Planter."

Principle Six: The Sponsoring Church Helps Provide Supplemental Leadership to the New Church Plant

Forty-Four percent of the material researched mentioned the need for the sponsoring church to provide supplemental leadership to the new church plant. This need ranked highest amongst materials analyzed in the modified content analysis. Aubrey Malphurs, who contributed eighteen pages of written literature in his book *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century*, notes ten advantages for churches to be reproducing churches. Two of those reasons relate to this principle: talent and personnel (Malphurs 1998, 382). Malphurs writes that often "a problem for new churches, especially at the time of inception and later at the 'birth event,' is coming up with enough good talent to put together a quality worship time" (Malphurs 1998, 382). Often, sponsoring churches have people who are more than willing to help out on a temporary basis.

Malphurs also mentions that the sponsoring church can offer professional staff support and office staff support. "The sponsoring church can make their staff

available to help with the new work" (Malphurs 1998, 382). The burden of this principle of supplemental leadership rests on the ability of the church planter to identify the needs of the new church and implement a plan to recruit necessary help.

The church planter must know the sponsoring church at a deep level and have established substantial relationships within that congregation that he can draw upon. It also takes a sponsoring church pastor that is willing to let his people go into the new mission field.

The pastor of FBC Concord, Doug Sager, was an excellent example of this very principle. He stated multiple times from the pulpit that he wanted his members to go and help WestLake either for a year or forever. This was of vital importance to the sponsoring church and the new church plant. The church planter had an open door to the sponsoring church's office and equipment. For the first three years of the church's existence, FBC Concord provided for the majority of the new church's printing needs.

Principle Seven: The Sponsoring Church Helps with the  
Financial Support of the New Church Plant for a  
Predetermined Time with Determined  
Financial Support

Twenty percent of the literature reviewed dealt with setting up financial support time limits. In each instance,

the state convention offered written guidelines for the sponsoring church, local association, or state convention concerning how long support is offered to the new church plant. This issue is best addressed before the covenant is signed and the new church planted. The church plant should know the expectations prior to beginning, but there is one area of concern with this principle that should be noted.

In today's society many new church plants try to reach specific people groups in urban areas. There are special strategic challenges when it comes to finances. For instance, in some ethnic church plants here in North America there may be a need to extend the financial policies in order for the church become self supporting. In a lecture to students at Trinity Evangelical Divinity school in July 1999, Roger Greenway states that many of the financial policies set by mission agencies were written when the church was in a more agricultural culture. Greenway's concern is that in urban areas these policies may not work. In the researched material, several conventions did offer some flexibility but for the most part they had firm financial policies for the support for the new church plants.

Principle Eight: The Sponsoring Church Provides Credibility  
to the New Church in the Community

This principle was extremely significant in the development of the new church plant in Knoxville. However, only eight (8%) of the materials in the study mentioned this topic. Though largely ignored by the written literature, this principle should be elevated to a greater level of importance.

At WestLake there were several instances where people in the community who did not know much about the new church knew the sponsor church, therefore giving WestLake a chance to minister to them. One example of this was a Parent's Night Out event that the new church hosted for the community once a quarter. A mass mailing was sent to the community advertising "free" childcare for the evening for families in the community. One hundred people could register and only members of WestLake who worked the event could bring their children. This was an event focused entirely on outreach. The challenge for this new church was that no one in the community really knew much about WestLake.

WestLake Church did not have land or a building. The event was held in rented facilities in the community. The leadership of WestLake decided that, with the permission of FBC Concord, we would include in the mailer that WestLake was a new church sponsored by First Baptist Church of Concord. FBC Concord was a strong church with a positive reputation in the community and in particular had a strong

children's ministry. The response was incredible. Each time the building was full of young children whose parents gave us a chance because of the credibility that FBC Concord brought to the new church. At one time in the history of the church plant, the leadership of WestLake could identify twelve families that were reached through this ministry.

Malphurs addresses this principle:

How do people who might get involved in some way know that the work is legitimate? How might people distinguish this work from some fly by the night operation? These are the questions that people will be asking, and they're good questions that demand an answer. This could be difficult without a sponsor church. It conveys credibility to that work. . . . The best solution is the sponsoring church. When a known, established church births another church, it conveys its credibility to that work! (Malphurs 1998, 383)

Principle Nine: The Sponsoring Church Assumes Responsibility for the New Church Start

Sixteen percent of the researched materials discussed the need of the sponsoring church to assume responsibility for the new church plant. Stan Smith from the Pennsylvania/South Jersey Convention states that the "sponsor church should assume the responsibility for all or part of the initiating, developing and encouraging of the new congregation (Smith n.d., 1). In a recent non-published study compiled by Bill George of the Tennessee Baptist Convention in the Fall of 2000, nine of eighteen responses wished that the sponsoring church had taken more responsibility for the new church plant.

Principle Ten: The Sponsoring Church Pastor Has a Vision  
of the Expansion of the Kingdom of God  
Through Church Planting

Twenty-four percent of the literature addressed this topic, which could very well be one of the most important in the list. The pastor of the sponsoring church is in the best position to promote the vision of church planting. The multiplication of the church through church planting is a way the kingdom of God can expand to reach masses of people. Pastors need to believe this and live this through their actions.

Stan Smith is right in voicing a concern that "the pastor must be careful that the new ministry is not seen as solely the work of the pastor, it is fulfilling the purpose of the church (Smith n.d., 1). The pastor of the sponsoring church should communicate to and celebrate with his congregation the concept that their church is actively involved in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Principle Eleven: The Sponsoring Church Adequately Prepares  
Itself to Start a New Church

Thirty-two percent of the materials dealt with the topic of the sponsoring church adequately preparing for the new church plant. The West Virginia Baptist Convention writes that the sponsoring church should be prepared to become a parent church: "The pastor should preach

motivational sermons that present the needs of a new church. Church groups should visit the area and discuss ways that they can help" (West Virginia Baptist Convention 1997).

Stan Smith states that the sponsoring church must be proactive in getting ready for a relationship with the new congregation. Smith says that the sponsoring church's preparation is spiritual, mental and organizational (Smith n.d., 3). He further writes that the

spiritual and mental preparation help to create a climate that is conducive to and supportive of beginning a new congregation. Through preaching and teaching the pastor saturates the partner church with an identity of the real mission of the church as it seeks to carry out the purpose of Christ. (Smith n.d., 165)

One method that seems to be evident in most of the literature is that the sponsoring church should establish a "New Work Sponsorship Committee." This committee would have the responsibility of overseeing the new work and would work alongside the sponsoring church pastor and new church plant leadership. Further detail about the work of this committee will be discussed when addressing the principle regarding accountability.

Another way that a sponsoring church prepares itself and the new church plant is to hold a Commissioning service. This service is just one way the sponsoring church can prepare spiritually for the new work. Only four State Conventions recommended this service in their literature;

each sponsoring church should have a "Commissioning" service to launch their new church.

The Baptist Convention of Texas seems to be the most specific in addressing the necessity for the sponsoring church to be prepared. In their literature they recommend six stages for the sponsoring church to go through in planting a new church:

The Discovery Stage, to locate a group that needs a church;

The Preparation Stage, to prepare to be a sponsoring church;

The Cultivation Stage, to establish credibility in the community;

The Fellowship Stage, to develop a core group;

The New Church Stage, to develop a self sustaining New Testament body of believers; and

The Church Stage, to fulfill the purposes of a church that reproduces itself.

There are many ways in which a sponsoring church prepares. While this idea of preparation seems obvious, it should never be taken for granted. There is too much at stake for the sponsoring church not to be prepared to launch its mission. Often, planting a new church involves moving an organizing pastor into the field from another location. There are finances that must be taken into consideration. There are organizational issues for the sponsoring church to consider and work through. The

new church becomes a new ministry for the sponsoring church and much attention has to be given to the new church.

Principle Twelve: The Sponsoring Church is Totally Committed to the Success of the New Church Start

When Doug Sager introduced us, the church planter and his family, to FBC Concord and stated his vision that they would reach 40,000 people in the greater Knoxville area, he said "we are at 2000 now; we want you to start a church that will reach 38,000." The pastor said this in a humorous sort of way but as he explained it to his church, Sager empowered the church planter and family to be successful in the new church plant. Over the ensuing years, at times when we were at FBC Concord for special events, Sager recognized us in front of the church. The pastor always spoke fondly of our work and celebrated WestLake's victories. Correspondingly, Sager was invited to attend several of WestLake's special events such as the groundbreaking for the first phase of the building. Each time Sager attended WestLake and spoke, he talked about how much the sponsoring church loved WestLake Church, how much they supported our ministry and how they prayed for our success. There was never a doubt that FBC Concord was fully committed to the planting of this church and to the success of its ministry.

When FBC Concord was going through a building program, raising money for a greatly needed worship, administration, and education facilities, they also wanted to purchase and secure 28 acres of property for their new church plant. Their master plan called for nearly 8 million dollars to be pledged. They fell a little short of their ultimate building goal, but put off building the education and administration space and instead built their worship center and secured the land for their new church plant. FBC Concord made a sacrifice due to their commitment to the success of their new church plant.

The written literature supports such acts from sponsoring churches. The Baptist General Convention of Texas states as their goal that they want to see the sponsor church enable the development of a healthy, cooperative congregation that practices biblical evangelism, develops disciples, works in Christian fellowship, ministers in Jesus' name and reproduces itself. This is what they call success and they believe that the sponsor church is to be committed to that (The Baptist General Convention of Texas 1995a, 2). They further believe that the sponsoring church can promote cooperation between the two churches.

This principle is more attitudinal than methodological. It is much like the coach who believes that the best way to get the most out of players is to encourage them and to help

them feel like they can win. This was the feeling received whenever I, as planter of WestLake, visited the sponsor church. This is in contrast to what occurred in a previous church planting situation when I was met with an attitude that indicated that the sponsor church felt threatened by their church plant.

Ken Neibel, formerly of the Home Mission Board, writes that "the commitment on the part of the sponsoring church must be more than starting the new work, it must provide guidance for the continued growth and development of the new church. Parenting a new church is like parenting a child-- it may take a long time for maturing" (Neibel 1995, 2). A sponsoring church must be prepared to plant a church not in name only, but with a commitment to the success of the new church. This may mean sacrifice on the part of the new church, but with that sacrifice will come God's blessing on the sponsoring church.

There are many ways that the sponsoring church can make the new church plant and church planter feel like the sponsors are committed to the work. The literature mentioned only one, the commissioning service. This service serves as a time of celebration for the plant and commitment of the sponsor.

There are many additional ways that a sponsoring church can show its commitment to the success of the new church

plant. The following examples are some of the ways that FBC Concord supported its new church plant. The sponsor church can

1. pray regularly for the success of the church plant;
2. articulate to its members a commitment to the success of the church plant;
3. share a worship experience or fellowship together at least once a quarter;
4. enlist people to help at the new church;
5. plan to give the new church additional money for start up expenses;
6. help the new church secure land if possible;
7. let the new church use office supplies and equipment if possible;
8. invite members of the new church to mission events;
9. publicize the new church's special events;
10. make key leadership available for assistance and wise counsel.

Principle Thirteen: The Sponsoring Church (and Related Entities Such As the Local Baptist Association, State Convention, and North American Mission Board) Has a Covenant Agreement With the New Church.

Having mutually agreed upon covenants that are written with both the church planter and the sponsoring church occurred only in twenty percent of the received literature. The idea of this principle is that both parties need to be involved in the covenant agreement. The covenant should state the responsibilities of the sponsoring church and the responsibilities of the new church plant in the relationship. The Baptist General Convention of Texas says this is "necessary for good relationships and good understanding of the roles" (Baptist General Convention of Texas 1995, 1). Redford from the Home Mission Board notes

that the relationship and responsibility should be clarified before the calling of the mission pastor (Redford 1978).

In the written literature there seemed to be an effort to make the covenants ascribe to a certain formula. Ken Neibel warns against such an approach: "No model will work for everyone. While some principles may be common to all, each sponsoring church will need to work carefully with the new church to put together such an agreement" (Neibel 1995, 2). While there may be many similarities in covenants from case to case, a covenant needs to be written to reflect the context in which each particular sponsoring church and new church plant operate.

Principle Fourteen: The Sponsoring Church and New Church Plant Communicate Proactively with Each Other

Church planters often hear that, if there is to be communication between a church planter and the sponsor church, it must be initiated by the church planter. This is all too true in the life of the church planter. Only a small percentage of the written literature discussed the need for the communication to be pursued from both ends.

However, this need for equal effort in communication is an important principle in establishing the relationship between the new church and the sponsoring church. No one should assume that the other will always be the one pursuing the relationship. Both entities should be proactive in the

communication. Two of the state conventions note that if each member of the relationship values partnership then a functional communication system will be created. The North Carolina Baptist Convention states further that "communication is accomplished through regular meetings with the sponsoring church, Mission Development Council and selected leaders from the new church" (North Carolina Baptist Convention n.d.).

If the sponsoring church proactively communicates with the new church plant in a variety of ways then it can communicate to the new church that it is valued and loved beyond the check it receives in the mail each month. A commonly used aphorism is that one way to way to spell love is t-i-m-e. This can be especially true with a new church plant. One of the best ways to demonstrate support and love to the new church is to spend time with them by communicating with them. Below is a list that shows how both the new church and sponsoring church can communicate with one another. This list should be seen as exhaustive "to do" list but instead should be used as a baseline for communication. One person from the sponsoring church or new church sponsorship committee should have the specific responsibility for communicating with the new church.

Table 4. Suggested Means of Proactive Communication

For the Sponsoring Church	For the New Church Plant
Leaders periodically attend	Planters deliver prompt

the worship service of the new church	monthly reports
Sponsor members drop in to the new church office just to say "hello"	Planters deliver attendance and report at Deacon's Meetings of the sponsor church
Sponsor members write letters of encouragement to the new church leadership	Planters deliver attendance and report at Staff Meetings of the sponsor church
Leaders call even when no information is needed	Planters communicate prayer requests to prayer team
Sponsor members and leaders attend some events of the new church	New Church members and leaders attend some events of the sponsor church
Sponsor members and leaders for the new church publicly	Planters write articles for the sponsor church newsletter and put sponsor church leadership on mailing list

Principle Fifteen: The Sponsoring Church Places  
a High Value on Seeing Lost People  
Come to Christ (Evangelism)

Twenty percent of the materials contained literature about the sponsoring church placing a high value on evangelism. In an excellent research project on the Annual Church Profile (ACP), Allaire S. Posey from the South Carolina Baptist Convention reports that 68% of churches sponsoring new work schedule regular outreach activities (Posey 1997, 9). This should come as no surprise--sponsoring churches are interested in making an impact on a lost world. Pastors and leaders of sponsoring churches realize that planting new churches is an excellent way to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. One recognizes in the life and ministry of Paul that, as he

presented the gospel and people responded, he formed churches. As they did in Paul's time, effective evangelism and church planting go hand in hand.

The written literature seems to echo the evangelical responsibility of the sponsor church. Stan Smith says that "at the heart of the spiritual preparation is the acceptance by the partner church of the responsibility to evangelize a specific geographical or cultural area" (Smith n.d., 4). Lon Chavez of the California Baptist Convention states that the sponsoring church needs to care about what Christ instructed the church to do and care about the needs of lost people (Chavez 1994).

Principle Sixteen: The Sponsoring Church and the New Church  
Have Mutually Agreed Upon Accountability Measures

Thirty-two percent of the literature encouraged built-in accountability measures, supporting the idea that the sponsoring church initiates and implements a new church sponsorship committee. While some churches may call this committee a "mission development committee" or some other similar name, the reason for the committee is clear. This committee serves as liaison between the new church and sponsoring church. This committee finds unmet mission needs and creates strategies to respond to them (NCBC).

One article from the North Carolina Baptist Convention discussed what the leaders of the sponsoring church should look for in a new church sponsorship team:

- individuals with a missionary vision
- concern for the people
- ability to gather information and analyze it
- an ability to work with people
- demonstrate leadership skills (NCBC)

It would be helpful to see more materials published in the convention that deal specifically with what the new church sponsorship team should do. Based upon this research, the training for a sponsoring church to become a good sponsor is a weak element in the convention. As previously mentioned in this paper, only two conventions offer any sort of training for the sponsoring church.

The new church sponsorship committee should meet prior to the start of the new church to develop strategy for the new work. This much is clear from the research. However, from this point there is not a lot of specific direction. Hopefully, in the future sponsoring churches will make use of these seventeen principles to build a strategy to make them an effective sponsoring church, thus increasing the chance of the success of their church plant.

The new church sponsorship committee should also write out what it expects of the church planter and the new church, and what the church planter and new church can expect from the sponsorship committee. This list of expectations for the church planter should include requirements to attend staff meetings of the sponsoring church on a regular basis if distance permits, and to find a mentor and be committed to developing that mentor relationship. Currently, the North American Mission Board offers training in the state conventions for the mentor, and most state conventions recommend and often require a mentor for the church planter. This mentor is not usually the sponsoring church pastor, who rather is considered the supervisor. The sponsoring church should also require that the church planter be involved with a network of church planters and spouses in the area.

Finally, the new church sponsorship team should have a member that is in charge of the care of the church planter and family. This designated person might refer to the appendices of this project to help make sure that basic support systems for the church planter and family are in place.

Principle Seventeen: The Sponsoring Church Respects the  
Autonomy of the New Church

When the research was being conducted and it became apparent that control issues play a large role in the written literature, it came as a pleasant surprise to discover that twenty-four percent of the written material encouraged the sponsoring church to respect the autonomy of the new church plant. The sponsoring church can help a new church to thrive or can allow the new church to choke based on this principle alone. William Tinsely states that sponsoring churches are like some parents who never want their children to leave home. Their own paternal instincts threaten to stifle the new church (Tinsley 1985, 101).

The Baptist General Convention of Texas writes that

From the beginning it will serve everyone's best interest for the core group to make as many of its own decisions as possible. It must sense both ownership and partnership in starting the new church, nevertheless, the sponsoring church needs to provide guidance. (Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1993, 2)

This principle speaks to problems for both sponsor and new church. If left un-addressed, the new church plant could become dependent on the sponsoring church instead of growing to become an independent church. William Tinsley says that one reason for the failure of church plants is that they "never grow up." They remain as dependent children unable to make decisions or take responsibility for their actions. Any church that falls into the trap of depending upon someone else (the sponsoring church) will never mature (Tinsley 1985, 101).

The opposing danger is that, if left unattended, the new church can make careless decisions in its finances, doctrine, personnel, and many other important areas. There must be a careful balance of letting the new church make decisions and helping it understand that it is accountable to the sponsoring church as well.

The new church sponsorship committee from FBC Concord respected the autonomy of the new church, but at the beginning this church planter had to run most decisions by them. As time progressed, this process became one of simply communicating with the sponsor church and asking for their counsel on more urgent and important matters. In this case, the sponsoring church helped the new church grow up by allowing its planter to choose some of the individuals to be on the new church sponsorship Committee, thus helping turn

over all the affairs of the church at a certain point in time.

Conclusion: A Healthy Church Planter  
to Plant Healthy Churches

Over the last ten years I have been involved in planting seven churches. To some degree, each one of these churches had a sponsoring church, some that did not adhere to many of these principles and some that have adhered to most of them. I will conclude by sharing some church planting experiences as they relate to one or more of the specific principles noted above.

... and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth. (3 John 6-8)

These verses from the latter part of the New Testament summarize much of what this project hopes to communicate. The Apostle John writes to Gaius in this quote, but it is true for believers in churches today that we "ought" to care for the ones who go out for the sake of the Name. Tom Stellar, as he writes the concluding chapter for John Piper in the book *Let The Nations Be Glad*, uses these verses to share a vision of the importance of supporting and caring

for our missionaries. His hope is to "elevate the role of the sending as high as can be imagined" (Piper 1993, 226).

The church planter in North America is a "home" missionary with the privilege of serving in country, but often the planter is not from the specific part of the country in which the church is planted. Additionally, many of today's church planters in urban areas are internationals; the United States is not their homeland and they may not be near relatives. This is an increasingly important issue that is arising in North American missions. Kenneth Williams is quoted in the book *Missionary Care* as saying:

From the day one enters the process of becoming a missionary, spiritual, emotional, interpersonal and physical stresses begin to multiply, and these stresses usually continue unabated throughout ones career. Thus more than normal support is required by most persons. (O'Donnel 1991, 47)

We need to provide for our church planters more than financial support; this is an issue that needs to be addressed in our current system of missionary organizations here in North America. Again, Kelly O'Donnel writes, "as a missions community, we need a growing willingness to provide needed support at every stage of service, given the growing complexities of missionary life" (O'Donnel 1991, 47). Regardless of whether the missionary is from the region or

not, the church planter is a home missionary with a different set of circumstances and stresses than pastors of existing churches. This project does not advocate preferential treatment for church planters but rather seeks to define them as missionaries sent from a sponsor that provides holistically for the missionary and family.

The case this project has made is that the home missionary needs to feel the total care and emotional support of the sponsoring church. When the sponsoring church or sponsoring entities meet the needs of the missionary's family then the missionary is assured that they are loved and valued, that the missionary is as important as the work being done. A healthy church planter will plant healthy churches. The missionary needs more than money to be what God intends.

I hope that this project and the principles included herein will prompt Southern Baptist churches and other denominations and missionary groups to provide more missionary care and nurture for the men and women who are sent out to plant churches. Stellar writes that

The Name of God is at stake in how we treat our missionaries. God is glorified when we support them substantially with our prayers, our money, our time, and myriad other practical ways. (Piper 1993, 227)

Stellar goes on to write that "God is not glorified when our missionaries are simply a name on the back of the church bulletin or a line item in the budget (Piper 1993, 227).

The following appendices are attached to sponsoring churches or mission organizations to introduce some practical applications to this research project.



## APPENDIX A

### TEN LIFELINES THAT YOU AND YOUR CHURCH CAN USE TO HELP YOUR CHURCH PLANTER

Often when we think of supporting our church planters, we think in terms of giving them money to help them financially. The truth is that they need more than your church's money. They need your prayers, your love, your friendship and your actions. Below is a short list of ten ways you can help the church planter that you support.

1. Send the church planter and spouse to a marriage retreat once a year.

Church planting takes an enormous amount of energy and time. It often takes a toll on the marriage relationship. If you can provide a "getaway" weekend for the church planter and his spouse, it will provide a great opportunity to enrich their marriage.

2. Recruit a deacon and his family to provide pastoral care for the church planter's family.

Enlist a deacon to take the responsibility of calling the church planter and his family on a regular basis to check on them and let them know that they have a fan club. Invite the family over for dinner. Pray for the church planter and family. On special days (Easter, Christmas, etc. . .), take the church planter and his family a small present such as cut flowers, plants, or candy.

3. Give the wife of the church planter a scholarship to place her children in a Mother's Day Out program during the school year.

Being the wife of a church planter can be tiresome and lonely at times. If she is a stay at home mom you may consider sponsoring their child(ren) for your "Mother's Day Out" program. Most new church plants do not have the luxury of such a program in their new church, but if you do, this would be a special treat for the wife. By providing this, she could run errands, meet with other women, start a women's Bible study, and develop relationships in the community.

4. Provide a babysitter once every other week in order that the church planter and his wife can go out on a date.

Many church planters have expressed to me the need for date nights with their spouse. Often, the church planter

and spouse lived in another city prior to his arrival on the field. They do not know anyone in the new city. They will not trust just anyone to keep their child(ren) in order to go out on a date.

5. Include them in your staff Christmas party. This can go a lot further than simply inviting them to your church staff Christmas party. I know one church that invites and pays for their church planter and family to attend their church staff family retreat. The point here is to make them feel a part of your team.

6. Recruit a prayer team to pray for each of the church planter's family daily. Ask the prayer coordinator at your church to include them on your church's ongoing prayer list. This prayer list should include personal needs and the needs of the church plant. This is one way to get your entire church in on planting the new church.

7. Invite the church planter to preach at your church on a Sunday or Wednesday that you will be there. Obviously there is nothing wrong with your inviting the church planter to preach for you while you take a much deserved Sunday or Wednesday off. Think of what it would say to the planter, his church plant, and your congregation if you were present and introduced him at your church. The church planter would love to hear how proud you are of him and his family, but he will never ask for you to do this. Your church needs to hear how you support him and his work.

8. Invite the church planter and his family to your house for dinner. One of the best things you can do for your church planter is to help him feel like he has value. This will provide emotional support that will help him function better in his role as a church planter.

9. Let him know the door is always open but you do not have to wait on him to knock. The church planter needs to know that you are available for him. He may know how to start a church but may need to learn how to pastor. You are a tremendous resource for him. For extra credit show up at his office door some. He respects your time and if you show up to just say hello, it will do wonders for him.

10. Encourage the new church sponsorship committee (team) to be his advocate.

This committee needs to be a functioning committee that meets regularly in order to provide support, direction and serve as a communication conduit between the new church, church planter and the partner church. This committee needs to know that you expect them to give this new church top priority. You want this to succeed and this team can help ensure the success of this new church plant.

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF PRINCIPLES FOR THE RELATIONSHIP OF A SPONSORING CHURCH TO A NEW CHURCH

1. The sponsoring church views the church plant as a partner in ministry.
2. The sponsoring church should be able to give spiritual insight and direction to the new church plant.
3. The sponsoring church prays for its church plant regularly.
4. The sponsoring church provides doctrinal foundation and stability.
5. The sponsoring church gives emotional encouragement to the new church plant.
6. The sponsoring church helps provide supplemental leadership to the new church plant.
7. The sponsoring church helps with the financial support of the new church plant for a pre-determined time with determined financial support.
8. The sponsoring church provides credibility to the new church in the community.
9. The sponsoring church assumes responsibility for the new church start.
10. The sponsoring church pastor has a vision of the expansion of the kingdom of God through church planting.
11. The sponsoring church adequately prepares itself to start a new church.
12. The sponsoring church is totally committed to the success of the new church start.
13. The sponsoring church (and related entities such as the local Baptist Association, State Convention and North American Mission Board) has a covenant agreement with the new church start.
14. The sponsoring church and new church plant communicate proactively with each other.
15. The sponsoring church places a high value on seeing lost people come to Christ (evangelism).
16. The sponsoring church and the new church have mutually agreed upon accountability measures.
17. The sponsoring church respects the autonomy of the new church.

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