

Planting a church while on vacation

Contributed by John White
Wednesday, 13 February 2008

A couple of weeks ago my friend Paul Kaak mentioned in an email that he and his family were involved with planting a church while on vacation. Later that morning, it occurred to me what a wonderful picture this was - planting a church while on vacation.

Planting a church while on vacation 8/2001 Dear Church,

A couple of weeks ago my friend Paul Kaak mentioned in an email that he and his family were involved with planting a church while on vacation. Later that morning, it occurred to me what a wonderful picture this was - planting a church while on vacation.

Imagine that.

How natural.

How simple.

It seemed to me to be another prototype of what the Lord is beginning to do. Very soon we will begin to see this kind of thing as a normal occurrence for normal Christians. (Notice that that didn't just plant a church. They probably planted a "church planting movement".)

I asked Paul to write down what had happened. What he wrote is found below.

May his tribe increase!

John White
House Church Coach
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Our Favorite Vacation Activity: Church Planting!

Sunday, August 26, 2001. It was our last Sunday to be @ this church. This new church. This church we helped plant…on our vacation!

On the day before yesterday, in the woods near Weed, California we said goodbye to this new church and turned it over to Mike and Tana Macy. Our challenge to them as we laid hands on them and passed the "talking stick" was that they would be used by God to facilitate the start of many such churches throughout Siskiyou County…perhaps even all at once. "All at once?" Mike asked. "Absolutely," I said. He looked at me – bewildered, yet eager. "You’re gonna have to explain to me how to do that!"

It all started after leaving the Organic Church Planters’ GREENHOUSE Retreat in Oakland, CA on the first of July. I got in the car with my pregnant wife Kieva and three year old son Elijah. We headed North up I-5 for two months in a tent on property owned by my father-in-law.

As we were setting up camp, I said to Kieva, "Hey, we should plant a church while we are here." She smiled. It was a smile of agreement, not doubt. She knew we could and (probably more than I), she knew we should.

Our friends Mike and Tana are veteran organic gardeners. They grow practically all their food and give away more than they eat themselves. They have been mentors to me in understanding organic processes and I have mentored them in organic church planting. Mike and Tana are wonderful Christian people with a contagious faith. They are proven evangelists and disciplers. But they hadn’t yet planted a church.

During our first weeks up here, we talked a lot about the principles of organic church planting. In mid July, Mike said, "You know…I’ve had a lot of people talk to me about Christian leadership, outreach, small groups…now church planting. But no one ever does it with me and shows me how. Show me how!" I had arrived thinking we could. Kieva knew we should. Now Mike and I committed that we would!

Our first "service" out on the property was on July 29. That first one happened (more or less!) by accident. We got more purposeful in the next few weeks. One highlight – each week, actually – was what happened with the children. As we spent time in the Word…they played. As various adults felt led, they left they circle and joined the

little ones. Or the kids sat down in the middle of our circle and watched us pray. One little boy taught us all a song. One time a little girl got a bee sting! My son put his little hand on her knee and prayed that Jesus would heal her. (Which He did!)

Other highlights included the father who prayed out loud for his adult daughter for the first time. Then she prayed out loud for her husband for the first time. Or the prophetic insight that the Lord gave someone regarding the up-to-the-minute difficulties being faced by a single Mom. One morning we had communion with a pancake and cranberry juice. After a lectio divina exercise around the story of Jesus being anointed for burial by the woman in Matthew 26, each person brought incredible insights that were honest and helpful to everyone else in the gathering. A week later, one woman remembered everything that each person had shared! And there were vulnerable prayers of hurts, confession and repentance, and gratitude in some cases by people who were meeting others in the group for the first time.

Five weeks later there had been 33 people who participated in one of our organic church gatherings. Some had been family and friends, but others had been people in Mike and Tana's sphere of influence. Some non-Christians. Some fired up Christians no longer connected with traditional church. As of today, Tuesday the 28th, it looks quite possible that the Macys have the people potential to start 3 or more new churches in various parts of this community by the end of September.

What are some things we learned as a result of this experience?

1. Church planting is not-so-tough! In fact, it comes quite naturally as people bring the reality of Christ into their relationships. Mike and Tana do this as a way of life.
2. A simple team, with an outward-focused gatherer (Mike and Tana, in this story) and an inward-focused shepherd/teacher (myself in this case) provides the basics to get the a new church started.
3. Validating and commissioning godly, apostolically-inclined, ordinary (read: "unordained") people is a HUGE factor in getting the ball rolling in a region.
4. In an organic church, the ministry to, with, and of children is so integrated and impactful on everyone!
5. There are tons of people out there (non-believers and believers alike) who are chomping at the bit for church that is more like family than business or classroom. They are all over this community. I'm sure they are everywhere across America.

It will be fun to reflect with our son Elijah Wesley, in years to come, how he helped plant a church when he was three on our vacation just outside the door to our tent!

Paul Kaak 8/28/01
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