

## **A Guide to Orthodox Church Planting\***

### **A Fruitful Past And A Promising Future**

The Great Commission can only be fulfilled by church planting. As neither the Old or New Testaments know anything of mere private religion, there is no other way. It is not enough for people to hear the Gospel, or even to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour; they must be grafted into the Church - the Body of Christ - where they can share in its sacramental and corporate life. As the Scripture says, "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Scriptural Christianity is not a private religion. It is ecclesiastical. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

### **An Introduction to Church Planting**

"The harvest is truly plenteous, but the laborers are few" (Matt. 9:37)

"Here am I; send me" (Is. 6:8)

There is no ministry more exciting or more rewarding than that of church planting, for it is through church planting that the mission of the Church is advanced and the Kingdom of God expanded; but it is never an easy task. The Church planter is a missionary, whether he is planting a church in central Africa or the central United States. Virtually all new congregations start out with severely limited resources, inadequate facilities and few prospective members. Often the newly established congregation begins with no more than the church planter and his family. Everything seems to be against the new church; yet, new churches are started every year, and many of them grow and thrive. While mega-churches get much of the media attention, they are not the norm. In fact, mega-churches have proven themselves much more effective in gaining members than in making disciples. It is in the myriads of smaller and little noticed congregations that the bulk of living and growing takes place. It is there that real disciples are formed in close knit, faithful and caring Christian communities.

There are a number of different methods that can be used to plant a new local church, including Pioneer Church Planting, Mother - Daughter Church Planting and Diocese Sponsored Church Planting. The Pioneering Church Planter plants a new local church from scratch with little or no outside financial assistance. Mother - Daughter Church Planting occurs when an established local church plants a mission congregation in another section of the city or in a neighboring community. Usually parishioners of the mother church who live in the section of town or community targeted become the nucleus of the church plant, and the mother church usually provides ministry, oversight and financial assistance until the new church is well on its way. Diocese Sponsored Church Planting is self explanatory. Pioneer church planting is the method found in the pages of the Acts of the Apostles, is the most practical for a smaller jurisdiction with limited resources, and holds the greatest promise for the rapid expansion and growth of the Church. This Guide is intended to provide step by step instructions for the Pioneering Church Planter. It is hoped that it will assist the Russian Western Rite Vicariate to make a better start, avoid many of the mistakes that often threaten a newborn mission-church, and to be more effective in establishing a faithful, thriving and growing parish.

## Pioneer Church Planting

The Pioneering Church Planter goes out into his community or a nearby community and plants a church from scratch with little or no outside assistance. This is the apostolic method and is as old as Christianity itself. Under this method the church planter is usually bivocational, working a secular job while he plants a mission-church. Bivocational ministry is often known as “tent-making” after the example of the apostle Paul. The Pioneering Church Planter must be a man of vision, a well disciplined self-starter who is not easily discouraged. He must feel the leading of the Lord to advance the Great Commission by planting a new local church, and have the faith to follow wherever the Lord may lead, no matter how difficult the path. He must be a man of prayer, a student of the Faith, a hard worker with a love for souls, and if married have a close and faithful family with a supportive wife. To be successful, the Pioneer Church Planter must conceive the new church in his heart and be determined to bring it to birth. Because he is literally out on his own the initial success of the new church will depend to a great extent on his prayer life, leadership, work ethic and commitment. While church planters are often thought of as priests, churches have also been planted by deacons and laypeople. Pioneer Church Planters are often dynamic newly ordained priests who, rather than taking a call to an established parish, go to a community or area that lacks a church and plants one. Sometimes a priest with years of pastoral experience decides to go out and plant a new church. Perhaps the call to missionary work has always been in his heart, or perhaps he feels the call to do greater things for God than he could do in his present circumstances in an established church. There are times when a retired priest, an assistant priest or a deacon may feel led to become a Pioneering Church Planter. Anyone can be a Church Planter if he has been called by God. God often does not call the equipped, but He does equip the called. However, feeling an inward call is never enough. It must always be confirmed by the Church. Nothing should ever be done without the approval of ones pastor and the permission of the bishop; and all church planting work must be done under authority of the bishop. In the months following the Minneapolis General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1976, and especially in the wake of the St. Louis Church Congress in 1977, many new congregations were successfully planted by laymen, sometimes with no priest anywhere nearby. Some of these lay church planters later went on to discern a vocation to the ordained ministry. Lay readers had been heavily involved in church planting in the old Protestant Episcopal Church. In 1883 the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, a laymen’s ministry, was established on St. Andrew’s day in a basement meeting room of St. James Cathedral in Chicago, Illinois. In 1886, the Brotherhood introduced a new program that was adopted by the Protestant Episcopal Church USA as the Lay Readers Program. “The missionary zeal and evangelistic thrust of The Brotherhood of St. Andrew excited the entire Church, resulting in an increase of over 100% in church membership and an increase of over 50% in the number of churches and missions...From 1883 through the 1930s, The Brotherhood of St. Andrew was considered the evangelistic arm of the Church, and it was heavily involved in every aspect of lay ministry. Brothers Andrew travelled the US and overseas, mostly at their own expense, spreading this ministry to men. Where the Brotherhood was established, they encouraged chapters to become involved in starting hundreds of new Mission Churches through the Lay Reader Program.

The ministry of Reader continues in the Orthodox Western Rite. Like the lay preachers of John Wesley’s day, or the lay readers of a century ago, lay readers of today could be doing so much more than reading the epistle at the Sunday Eucharist. Priests, deacons and lay readers can all be Pioneering Church Planters. Two thousand years ago God gave the apostle Paul a “Macedonia Call” to proclaim the Gospel in new areas and to plant churches where there were none. God is still giving Macedonian Calls today.

## Twenty-one Steps To Planting An Orthodox Church

The following twenty-one steps are an orderly step by step guide that the Pioneering Church Planter can follow to take a new church-plant from conception to birth. However, local situations sometimes differ, so the church planter must be willing to prayerfully adapt these steps to the situation at hand. Often these twenty-one steps can be followed step by step, but local circumstances may at times require altering their order, or even deleting certain steps, or adding new ones. The church planter should be flexible, but he shouldn't alter this plan too readily as it will help him to avoid many simple but costly mistakes, and to remain focused on reaching his goal step by step. These twenty-one steps presuppose that the Pioneering Church Planter has the approval of his pastor (if there is one) and the permission of his bishop, and that he is acting under the authority of his bishop, keeping him fully informed of his work.

**Step One.** Select a community. Many Americans commute to work today, driving 30 minutes or more each way. Likewise, most Americans regularly travel 15 to 30 minutes to go shopping, the theater, a ball game, or to church. Committed Christians looking for an traditional church will drive even farther. Do not try to plant a new church too close to an existing Orthodox church. Planting churches too close together will only cause duplication of effort, create friction and needless competition, damage bonds of fellowship, and hurt both congregations. Always remember that the mission of the Pioneering Church Planter is to plant Western Rite churches *where there are none*. The church planter should always be evaluating need. A new church plant should be at least a thirty minute (minutes not miles) drive from the nearest Orthodox church. The day will come for closer neighborhood churches, but new churches planted closer to an existing church are more properly planted using the Mother - Daughter Church Planting Method or by the diocese (if both the existing church and the new mission are in the same diocese). That way the established parish sees the new mission as an outreach of the parish rather than a competitor, and becomes its cheerleader and helper. There may however be legitimate reasons for planting a church closer to an established church than would be normally recommended. For instance, there may be a need for an ethnic community to have a church of their own even if there is an Orthodox church nearby as it is often difficult for people to comfortably cross cultural barriers. Other reasons may include planting a church in a very poor area, a high crime area, or developing a special Gospel ministry to the homeless. In these cases though, it is important that the Pioneering Church Planter keep in close touch with the pastor of the nearby church, keep communication open, and avoid even the appearance of competition. Orthodox churches are needed in the metropolitan areas, smaller cities, towns, villages and hamlets, everywhere where there is no local church and the nearest church is far enough away to make the drive difficult for the average person. With only around 1,000 churches for a population of more than 300,000,000 people, spread out for more than 3,000 miles from coast to coast, there is no lack of potential communities in which to plant a new mission-church.

Another factor to consider is the presence of one or more Orthodox churches. An important mission of the Western Rite is to rebuild Orthodoxy in North America and to restore the Church. The presence of one or more Orthodox churches means that there has been an Orthodox presence in the area and that there may be non-Orthodox longing for a church that still upholds historic Western Orthodox Faith and Worship. There is a moral obligation to reach out to those who have had their Faith stolen from them, and who are at risk of seeing their faith and that of their children and grandchildren left shipwrecked.

**Step Two.** Chose a name for the church. The name of the new church is of utmost importance. Be careful of selecting a name for the new church that may confuse people or throw up unnecessary

barriers. Never give the impression that the new church is a non-denominational or generic “community” church. Always use the words Orthodox in the name of the church. Names like Holy Cross, Good Shepherd, Resurrection or Grace are attractive choices, as are Biblical saints such as St. Paul’s, St. Mary’s or St. John’s. Saints with ties to the British Isles such as St. Aidan’s, St. Alban’s, St. Joseph of Arimathea or St. Patrick’s can also be good choices. Avoid names that may confuse people, such as the names of post-Reformation Roman Catholic saints. Always remember that should the Lord tarry the name of the church will outlive the church planter, so select a name that will be a good fit for the church, is well rooted in Western Orthodox tradition, and will be attractive to the people of the community. Some church planters think that a name should not be selected until after the new church is fully organized and the congregation can vote on it, or that only a temporary name should be chosen. Such ideas are mistaken. The new church needs a name with which it can be identified and that will give the new church an appearance of permanence. It is difficult enough to get people to visit a start-up church and to make a commitment to it without making it more difficult by giving the impression that the churchplant may not be permanent. The church needs a name for advertising and outreach purposes, and a name change later would cause the new church to lose the name recognition gained by previous advertising and media coverage, forcing it to start all over as far as name recognition is concerned. The church planter has conceived the new church and has committed to bringing it to birth. He should name the new church. The name of the church should be selected immediately after selecting the community and before any work begins.

**Step Three.** Get a local mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. As soon as a community has been selected and a name chosen for the church, the church planter should obtain a post office box to serve as a mailing address. The post office box should always be in the community where the church is to be planted, even if the church planter lives in another community. If the new church-plant is in a small suburb of a major city it may be best to have a mailing address in the city rather than the suburb if the church planter is planning to reach out to the entire metropolitan area. A local address such as a post office box may also be necessary to do such things as open a checking account and incorporate among others.

The church planters home phone number can serve as the church phone, but it would be much better to have a dedicated line. This will allow the church planter to record a church message and to answer the phone “N.\_\_\_\_ Orthodox Church.” Either a dedicated land line or a cell phone will work, but cell phones are more mobile and convenient. If the church planter does not live in the community where the church will be planted it is best that he gets a local cell phone number so inquirers can make free calls to the church number.

The church planter will also want to be sure that he has an e-mail address. Far more communication is done today via e-mail than by post or telephone. The church planter’s personal e-mail can do double duty for the church.

**Step Four.** Open a bank account. As soon as the new church has a mailing address and telephone number the church planter should open a checking account, deposit his initial start-up offering, and begin tithing to the new church. Any offerings that come his way should also be deposited into the account. If the bank recommends or the bishop requires incorporating as a non-profit before opening a checking account go to step nineteen. Always keep the bishop fully informed of each step about to be taken and act in accordance with his directives. The church planter or his wife will often have to serve as a temporary treasurer and sign checks until the church becomes better organized and a treasurer can be chosen. Be sure to follow basic financial rules:

A.) Do not spend more money than the church has, but remember that the church planter and his family will have to be committed to giving sacrificially if he is to see the new church take root and grow.

B.) Ask for offerings from other Orthodox and potential supporters (prospects, well wishers, extended family, friends, etc.), give a receipt for all money received and keep good records of all money spent.

C.) Always be aware of how much money the church has on hand.

D.) Pay all bills on time so that the new church will maintain both good credit and a good reputation in the community.

**Step Five.** Gather a prospect list. The church planter should make a list of any prospective members in the community. The list should include relatives, friends, and any isolated and unaffiliated Lutherans, Anglicans or traditionally-minded Episcopalians known to him. The church planter should also ask his prospects for the names and contact information of anyone they think may be interested in the new church. The diocesan office should be contacted for a list of any members or inquirers in the area.

**Step Six.** Locate a suitable meeting place. Selecting a good location is vital for the success of a new church-plant. Never begin in a declining or dangerous area, unless such an area is your target. Lower income people are generally willing to attend Services in a better area, but few middle and upper class people will travel to a declining or dangerous part of town. If the new church is being planted in a large community be sure to choose a location in a nice area and near a highway exit or main thoroughfare, allowing relatively easy access from as much of the community as possible. Make sure there is adequate parking. Parking lot access is much to be preferred over street parking. Do not focus on finding an inexpensive location. The church planter should get the best meeting place in the best location that he can afford. In order to get people to commit themselves to a new church-plant the church must look successful and give people the feeling that it will succeed. In church planting location may not be everything, but it is very important.

Most new churches will start out renting a meeting place from week to week. A wide variety of facilities can be, and have successfully been, used. These facilities include hotel meeting rooms, restaurant meeting rooms, clubhouses of apartment complexes, schools, YMCA meeting rooms, mortuary chapels, other churches, homes and more. Restaurant meeting rooms can work and are often free, but the restaurant generally requires a certain number of meals be purchased every week and this can put undue pressure on new members and create discomfort for visitors. Restaurant meeting rooms also tend to be noisy; singing is usually frowned upon; and the smell of food can be distracting.

Mortuary chapels seldom work well because many people feel uncomfortable using them. Other churches can work if they are significantly different from an Orthodox church and therefore will not be a competition for visitors, and provided they will allow the new church to meet at a good time on Sunday morning and have a place for fellowship. Seventh-day Adventist churches have often worked out best because they do not hold Services on Sunday. Schools can work if the location is good with easy access. The facilities offered though are often not very inviting, with school desks, or the cold

feel of a cafeteria. YMCA meeting rooms can work well *if* the “Y” is in a nice area of town, with easy access, and has a nice building with an attractive meeting room. The same can be said for clubhouses. Apartment complex clubhouses seldom have Sunday morning activities, generally have a parking lot, and often have a kitchen. Here again though, location and easy access are very important.

Home meetings seldom work in urban areas. City dwellers generally feel very uncomfortable going to the home of a stranger. Adequate parking and even zoning are also issues. However, home meetings can work in small towns where people tend to know each other and to feel comfortable and safe in their community. This is especially true if a semi-permanent home chapel can be set up in a finished basement or family room and if the church planter is already known in the community.

Perhaps the best all around choice is a hotel meeting room. Although they are often more expensive, they are generally worth the investment. Quality hotels tend to be in the better areas of town, and near a highway exit or on a main thoroughfare. Visit local Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, or similar hotels. Hotels can provide a table for an altar, a podium to serve as a lectern and pulpit, chairs for the congregation, and floors are generally carpeted which helps when kneeling. The hotel will even have the room set up before the church planter arrives on Sunday morning. The hotel can also provide tables in the back of the room for literature and to use for fellowship. Hot coffee for fellowship time can also generally be provided inexpensively.

Hotel meeting rooms are usually conservatively and tastefully decorated, warm, inviting, quiet and private, and there is seldom any problem with singing. Few prospects will feel uncomfortable coming to a hotel meeting room, parking is plentiful, the facilities are generally excellent, and set up and take down are done by the hotel staff. It is hard to beat a hotel meeting room for a new church-plant. Whatever kind of facility is rented, the church planter must be certain that he can reserve *the same room and the same time* every Sunday for at least three months, and preferably for six months. A church that has to frequently move from location to location or alter its Service times will seldom be successful. Only facilities that can be used on Sunday mornings should be secured, as Saturday or Sunday evening, or Sunday afternoon Services are seldom successful. They may suffice if there is already a committed core group, but real growth will be very difficult without traditional Sunday morning Services.

When the new church is ready to move beyond renting a meeting room, the next step will often be to lease a more permanent facility. Storefronts are very good choices as people are comfortable visiting strip malls and similar facilities. However, not just any storefront will do. Remember to look for a facility that is clean and attractive inside and out, a facility that the church planter can transform into a traditional Western Orthodox chapel. The facility must be in a good area of town unless the church-plant is specifically targeting a low income area or a special part of the community. If it is to reach out community-wide, easy access to a highway or main thoroughfare is essential, as is adequate parking. The facility should be large enough for worship, education and fellowship, with room for numerical growth. Initially, the church office can be located at the church-planter's home, and the adult Christian education class can meet in the chapel while the children meet in the fellowship area. The church should lease the best facility that it can afford. This is the time to take a step of faith and to stretch the budget as much as possible.

**Step Seven.** Set a date and time for the first Sunday Service. The church planter should plan to conduct his first Sunday Worship Service four to six weeks after he begins his outreach activities. The best times to begin holding Services are the Sunday after Labor Day, the first Sunday in Advent,

Christmas Day, the beginning of Lent, Easter Sunday, and during Eastertide. September is a good time because summer vacations are over, the kids are going back to school, and life is getting serious again. Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter Sunday and Eastertide are all good times to begin because even in secular America these are times that people think about God, often have good memories of going to church, and are more open to the Christian message. Other times will work, but these are the best times. The worst time to begin holding Worship Services is in the summer. Four to six weeks of outreach will give the church planter time to advertise, grow his prospect list, publicize the new church-plant, and prepare for the first Service. However, the church planter will have to make every moment of these four to six weeks count and will have to give the task his complete attention. The greatest initial dangers are conducting the first Service too soon and without proper preparation or delaying the first Service too long and having interest wane. Everything the church planter does to promote the new church-plant should focus on the day and time of the first Worship Service with the goal of getting enough people there to make a good beginning. Attendance does not have to be large, but a very small turnout can be a setback and hard on morale. The church planter should aim for an attendance of at least ten people from at least three households including his own. However, even if fewer attend, the church planter must be dedicated to his apostolate and determined to persevere.

The best time to schedule the main Sunday Service is between 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM. If the churchplanter is a priest the Service should be the Liturgy. If a deacon, with the Bishop's permission the Service could be Matins with a distribution of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament. If the Sacrament is not available then Matins would be the main Service. Similarly, if the church planter is a lay reader, Matins will be the main Service. Deacons and lay readers will need to rely on visiting priests to celebrate the Liturgy. The Bishop may be able to organize such visits. Readers should obtain from their Bishop sermons to be read at Matins. Initially, the church planter should focus on one main worship Service. If a priest, that would be the Liturgy. He can always add Matins or Terce to the schedule later. For a Reader, Matins would be the main Service. Christian Education classes (Sunday School) should not be established until the church is fully organized and functioning with a core group of committed members.

**Step Eight.** Get up a Website and print an introductory brochure. The single most important and effective means of outreach today is a good website. The four to six week countdown to the first Service should not begin until a website is up. The website should be as attractive, informative and professional as possible. If the church planter is not capable of designing and publishing a website he needs to locate someone who can. If he does not know anyone that can do this for him he should hire a professional. Every church needs a website. If all else fails, [www.netministries.org](http://www.netministries.org) offers very basic websites to churches for free. They are very simple to get up and anyone can do it. A good website is far more important than newspaper advertising, press releases, flyers on community bulletin boards or direct mail. Use as many pictures on the website as possible. Have a photo of the outside of the hotel or other facility where the new church will be meeting. Include a map to help people find it. Include photos of the church planter, and the church planter and his family. If there are any initial supporters of the new plant use some of their photographs. Use photos of individuals, couples or families and include quotes from them saying why they are looking forward to the new church being planted and how excited they are. Be sure to avoid anything that looks tacky or cheesy on the church website. Avoid holy card-like pictures, spinning crosses, flying Jesus' and similar "art work." The website must be reverent, professional, and appealing.

An example of an effective website is that of St Ambrose of Milan Orthodox Church in Putnam Valley, New York. The web address is: [www.saintambroseorthodoxchurch.org/](http://www.saintambroseorthodoxchurch.org/) Of course a new church-plant will not have nearly as many photos or as much information, but the church planter can learn a lot from it. A little web-surfing with visits to various church websites will give the church planter a lot of ideas as to what and what not to do. As soon as the website is up on the Internet be sure to get it listed on the Diocesan website. A quality website, linked on as many Orthodox websites as possible, will be the best and most effective form of outreach for the church. All brochures, mail pieces, flyers, press releases, business cards, and any other form of outreach should direct interested people to the church website. Social media has become very important today, so the church planter should set up a Facebook page for the new church as well. There is no cost for this service.

An introductory brochure should also be designed and printed immediately. Care should be taken to make sure that it is well thought out, appealing and creative. It may be helpful to obtain samples of what other churches are using. The brochure should not focus on Orthodoxy in general, but on the new churchplant. It is possible to produce a very nice trifold on a home computer and to get quantities printed inexpensively at a local copy shop.

The introductory brochure should include

- A.) The name of the church;
- B.) Mailing address, website address, phone number, church planter's name, location of meeting place and time of Services;
- C.) a brief introduction to the new church, why it exists, and its jurisdiction.
- D.) What the new church plans to offer, such as Biblical preaching, classical Orthodox Christian doctrine and worship, Biblical morality, reverent administration of the sacraments, historic Liturgy, Christian Education for all ages; refreshments and fellowship after Services, parish organizations, guilds, etc. - even if some of these may not actually be in place for some time;
- E.) A brief introduction to Orthodoxy and what the church believes;
- F.) Short and long term plans;
- G.) An introduction to the church planter and his family; and
- H.) A warm invitation to attend Liturgy or to contact the church for more information.

**Step Nine.** Begin to promote the inaugural Sunday Service. Begin to publicize the new church four to six weeks before the date of the inaugural Sunday Service. Use every available means to get the word out to as many people as possible. Send out a press release to the religion editor of every newspaper in the community, as well as to every Christian radio station heard in the community. The press release should tell about the new church-plant, the name of the new church, and the church planter's name; the date, time and location of the first Sunday Service; the type of Service (i.e. the Holy Liturgy or Matins, with fellowship and refreshments immediately after Services); the website address for more information and the church phone in case of questions; and finally an invitation for everyone in the community to attend.

Run newspaper ads on the church page (usually found in the Saturday edition) every week in at least one well-read newspaper for the four to six weeks leading up to the first Service, and continue to do so following the inaugural Service. The ads should announce the date, time and location of the first Service. Newspapers are happy to help with professional layout so the ads will be as effective as possible. Be sure to include prominently the website address of the church, as well as the phone number. Initial ads can be small, but the last two weeks before the first Service should be as large as the church planter can afford. Always advertise on the church page itself. That is where people



interested in finding a church will look. Newspaper ads are not as effective as they were before the advent of the Internet, but they are still an important way for a new church to become known in the community. The church planter may want to sign an advertising contract if there are substantial savings in advertising rates. While this means committing to a year of advertising it will reinforce in the church planter's mind that he is committed to planting a new Orthodox church in the community and that he is in for the long haul. Radio and television advertising can be effective, but are usually beyond the means of a newly forming church. The church planter will generally have to rely on press releases to this media. Print up 8 1/2" x 11" flyers and post them on bulletin boards in Christian bookstores, supermarkets, and convenient stores. Promote the inaugural Service and display the website address prominently.

The church planter should send out at least two personal invitations by e-mail or by post to everyone on his prospect list and to anyone who has responded to the press releases, advertising or other forms of outreach. The second invitation should be sent just a few days before the first Service. In fact weekly contacts would be even more effective.

A second press release should be sent out to all of the local print and electronic media just before the first Service. While the format should be different from the first press release, it should cover the same information.

**Step Ten.** Obtain necessary church supplies. Be sure to obtain any remaining church supplies that will be needed well in advance of the first Liturgy. Such supplies may include an altar cross and two candle sticks, a fair linen for the altar, communion set, cruets, communion bread and wine, altar linens, an alms basin (a wicker basket will do), offering envelopes, visitors cards and a guest book, vestments, a bell to announce that Services are about to begin, Liturgy booklets, and Propers Inserts.

**Step Eleven.** Prepare a temporary church sign. The church planter should prepare a sign to place on the door of the meeting room. The sign should be laminated to make it attractive and sturdy, and should include the name of the church and the time of Services. A friendly invitation such as "The Orthodox Church Welcomes You!" may be added. It is also helpful to include the words "Come in, even if Services are in progress." If this is not done visitors who are a little late may just leave rather than come in when they realize the Service has begun.

If using a hotel meeting room be sure to ask the hotel to list the church on a sign in the lobby with the name of the meeting room. They will be happy to do this. If using some other kind of facility ask permission to place a portable church sign on the side walk or near the street just before Services.

**Step Twelve.** Print a bulletin. The church planter should have an attractive and informative church bulletin printed for the first Sunday Service, and should continue printing a bulletin every week. The weekly church bulletin should include a warm welcome to visitors, important announcements, an outline of the Service with Prayer Book page numbers, and a listing of hymns to be sung. A quality bulletin will give visitors a sense that the church planter is serious in his efforts, and a feeling of stability. Bulletins can be printed on a home computer using colored paper, or professionally produced bulletin covers can be purchased at local Christian book stores.

**Step Thirteen.** Prepare the meeting place. Since the vast majority of new church-plants will be renting a meeting room on a week to week basis, all that the church needs for Sunday Services, Christian Education, and fellowship time will have to be carried in and out every week. Therefore,

the church planter should prepare a checklist of what will be needed and make sure that he has everything necessary securely packed in plastic or sturdy cardboard boxes. If the meeting room provider is going to set up the room, be sure that they provide a table in front for use as an altar, a podium to serve as lectern and pulpit (or better yet, two podiums), chairs set up in theater style, with tables in the back for literature and to use later during fellowship time. It can be very helpful to prepare a diagram of how the room is to be set up for the staff of the facility. If the new church will be meeting in a room that does not provide tables, chairs or a podium, these will all have to be brought by the church planter. Chairs and tables can be rented from a local rental company. Renting by the month rather than by the week can often save money. Do not set up too many chairs. It is far better to have too few chairs and to have to bring out more, than to have too many and have the room look empty and attendance disappointing. The church planter should make a realistic and conservative estimate of how many he thinks will attend based on response to his outreach and then set up chairs to accommodate about 80%. If the response to the outreach is small, the list of firm prospects few, and the number expected to attend wholly unknown, it is best to set up about twelve chairs in three rows of four chairs each, with a center isle between them. More chairs can always be added if needed, and adding chairs will be a morale booster. The meeting room will need an altar for the Holy Communion. A rectangular table with a white cloth will work. In fact, a simple white twin bed sheet works well. Better yet, green, violet, red and white sheets can be inexpensively purchased and make nice seasonal coverings for a temporary altar. The altar will need a fair linen, two candle sticks, an altar cross, and if the Eucharist is going to be celebrated a communion set and altar linens (two corporals, or one corporal and a pall, a burse and a purificator). The church planter will need to provide a small table to serve as a credence table. The credence table will need two cruets, bread box, lavabo bowl, and lavabo towel. Liturgy Books and Propers Inserts should be placed on each chair, with more at the ready should more chairs be needed. If the church planter is a deacon or lay reader, and the first Service is of necessity something other than the Liturgy, the meeting room should still be set up as noted above, with the exception that a communion set and credence table will not be needed. Regardless of the Service to be held, it is imperative that the meeting room be set up as a chapel with an altar, and that it have an ecclesiastical feel.

**Step Fourteen.** The first Service. The church planter should arrive at the meeting room well in advance of the first Service so that he has time to prepare the room for worship. The altar and credence table must be set up, prayer books and hymnals put out, literature set out, and coffee prepared. The guest book should be on a table in the back. The Greeter (often the church planter's wife) should be prepared to greet people as they arrive, hand them a bulletin, and direct them to the guest book. Every effort should be made to get visitors to sign in and give their address, phone number *and their e-mail address*. Introductory brochures should be placed near the guestbook or inserted in the bulletin. Offering envelopes should also be inserted in the bulletin. If an organ or keyboard and an organist are available, the use of hymns can be a real blessing. People love to sing, and singing helps everyone, especially those from non-liturgical backgrounds, to take an active part in the service. Initially at least, it is generally best to have only one hymn. Simple, well known, and easy to sing hymns work best. Liturgical music and chant should be simple and more demanding music saved for when the church is organized and better established. At first a simple Eucharist (Low Mass) with hymns is best. If there is no organ, or Leader of Song, a reverent and simple celebration of the Liturgy (or Matins if the church planter is a deacon or lay reader) is best. No music is better than poor music. If there are no older boys or men that are assisting the church planter, the Service can be conducted without an acolyte and/or lector or lay reader. In no case should an older boy or man who is visiting be asked to serve. Serving in the sanctuary are responsible ministries. Proven faithfulness and proper training are prerequisites, as well as proper licensing for a Reader. Even on a practical

level, to have people vest and serve that may not return risks hurting the morale of those who really are interested in joining.

The church planter's first sermon is very important as he will never have a second chance to make a good first impression. It is vital that he makes a compelling case for the establishment of a new church from Scripture (the need for orthodoxy, the necessity of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, the importance of properly catechizing the next generation and passing on the faith, Christ's command to evangelize and advance the work of the Great Commission, etc.), and that he shares with the congregation his vision for the future.

Someone should be prepared to take up the tithes and offerings. Again, this may be the wife of the church planter. An offering should be taken at the first Service and at every Sunday and Holy Day Service. The church planter should never be timid about this. God requires those who would serve Him to give as they are able (Deut. 16:17). It is an honor and privilege to worship God with tithes and offerings.

Fellowship time after the Service is very important. It should be a time of warm fellowship with refreshments. The church is not merely a house of worship or individuals gathered for worship, it is a community; and to build real community people must have opportunities to get to know one another and to bond with one another. It is also vital that the church planter mingles with and talks with everyone who attends. He must win their affection and their trust if he is to serve as their pastor or leader. The best practice is to have fellowship and refreshments every Sunday after worship, and (after a core group has been established) a potluck luncheon one Sunday every month.

**Step Fifteen.** Evaluate the first Sunday and follow up with those who attended. After getting a good night's sleep and giving his mind an opportunity to relax and reflect, the church planter should carefully and prayerfully evaluate the church's first Sunday. The church planter should be honest with himself but not overly critical. It can be helpful for him to conduct the evaluation with his wife or any initial helpers that were there.

A follow up letter should be sent to everyone that attended the first Service. The letter should be sent out immediately (Monday is best) by post or e-mail; and it should thank them for attending, share some good news about the first Sunday (attendance, enthusiasm, etc.), and future plans, invite questions or feed back by phone, e-mail or post, and close after inviting them back the next Sunday. Those on the e-mail list should receive an additional e-mail on Thursday or Friday, and on Thursday or Friday of future weeks. The e-mail should be a letter from the pastor, not a newsletter. It should contain news, upcoming events, vision, remind readers of Service times, and encourage them to invite family and friends to attend the next Sunday.

All follow-up letters and e-mails, updates and literature, should feature the website address prominently; and the church planter should keep improving the church website. A report of the first Service, along with photographs, should appear on the website and Facebook sites immediately. People love to see people, and visitors will be more easily attracted when they see pictures of other people who are already there.

**Step Sixteen.** Continue to reach out. Outreach does not end with the first Service. Weekly outreach must continue. Keep advertising on the church page, get in the next edition of the telephone book, continue to contact the prospect list by post or e-mail, and send out press releases and put up flyers

every time the church has a special event such as Christmas or Easter Services, an episcopal visit, the beginning of Sunday School, a change of locations, etc.

**Step Seventeen.** Get people involved. Invite those who attend for several weeks to get involved. Involvement brings with it a sense of commitment and ownership. But start slow. Making people feel “obligated” before they are ready could drive them away. Begin by recruiting people to serve as greeters and to take the offering, or put up a sign-up sheet to provide refreshments. Later a Sunday School, altar guild, women’s and men’s groups, and even a small choir can be organized, and older boys and men recruited and trained as acolytes and lay readers.

**Step Eighteen.** Formally organize the church, adopt by-laws, and appoint Trustees. The church planter should be working closely with his Bishop. It is possible that the Bishop may want some parts or all of this step to be undertaken earlier. When the new church has the minimum members required by the Bishop, the church should be formally organized. The church planter should seek his advice and counsel in regard to this meeting and to the business that it will conduct. The Archdiocese has sample parish by-laws and some uniform by-laws. Proposed by-laws should be prepared, and the by-laws should be adopted at a congregational meeting. The Trustees are appointed by the Rector after the By-Laws are adopted.

**Step Nineteen.** Incorporate the church and apply for a tax exempt number. This step may have already been undertaken earlier in the process, and once again the church planter must comply with all laws and regulations, and the directives of his bishop. In many states churches can easily incorporate without the assistance of a lawyer. It is generally a simple and inexpensive process. The office of the Secretary of State can often be very helpful. In addition, incorporation and tax exempt status will make the church “official” in the minds of the people and the community as a whole, and will make it easier for some to take the new church seriously. It may even be possible to incorporate before the first Sunday Service is held. Once again, the church planter should be working closely with his Pastoral Vicar.

**Step Twenty.** Financing the new church. Money is vital to the success of the new church. Without adequate funding the church cannot rent meeting space, advertise, purchase supplies, support a pastor, or advance to a more permanent building. The church planter should never be embarrassed to talk about money, or God’s plan for financing the work of the church - tithing. Tithing is repeatedly spoken of in the pages of the Bible. The church planter should teach and preach about tithing, and lead by example.

**Step Twenty-One.** The Priest’s support. The Holy Scriptures make it clear that the laborer is worthy of his hire; and the church planter and the vestry should be teaching this principle to the congregation. If the church planter is a priest and will be remaining as a Rector, his support must be planned for. If the church planter is a deacon or reader, the congregation must be planning how it will support even a priest. While the church planter may have to go for some time before drawing any financial support, his support should be a priority for the new church.

Although the Rector may be a bi-vocational “tentmaker” for some years, he should be paid a part time salary as soon as practical. Even a token salary will demonstrate a commitment to the priest and will be appreciated. Regular raises in his support should be given to the priest as the church grows, bringing him to half time and then full time support as quickly as possible. Here again, the church should work closely with the Bishop as many dioceses will have salary guidelines. Financial support

of the priest should be a priority, as a man who can give more and more of his time to the church can be a more effective pastor to his people, and can lead the church to growth more quickly. The priest who refuses to teach this important principle is doing his congregation a disservice. He may soon find that his family are the only ones that are really sacrificing, and that his congregation shows little concern for the financial needs of the church. The congregation needs to be taught to support the church with their time, talents and treasure (tithes and offerings).

## **Conclusion**

Church planting is an exciting ministry, and the only way that the Great Commission can be fulfilled. If the Western Rite of the Orthodox Church is to be a useful tool in the hands of the Lord it will have to continue to expand its ministry, outreach and influence by planting new churches.

Today there may be as many as two million former Episcopalians in the United States, plus more in Canada that have left the Canadian Church. These souls must be recovered. In addition, there are more than one hundred million unchurched in America, plus tens of millions more who are virtually unchurched, making the United States one of the largest mission fields in the world. Finally, there is a tremendous move of the Holy Spirit leading Christ-loving Evangelical Christians to Orthodoxy where they can find the Faith once delivered to the Saints.

The need for more churches is great, and many are answering the call to plant new churches, but the resources for church planters are few. The books commonly available on church planting are generically evangelical, which may be why some of the new "Orthodox" church-plants don't look very Orthodox. Many, trying to plant classical Western Rite churches are struggling due to lack of resources to guide them. Others, may feel the call of God to plant a new church but are hesitant because they feel unequipped, and recognize that most church planting guides available are not very helpful in an Orthodox context. This treatise was written to help Orthodox church planters to plant classical Orthodox churches, and to encourage those who are feeling led to plant a church to make a start. It is not the fruit of mere study or thought, but of years of experience. It is a short, easy to use and understand step by step guide that should help the church planter to conceive, give birth to, and begin to grow new Orthodox parishes.

\*The above has been heavily borrowed, and "Orthodoxized" at the invitation of, and with the permission and encouragement of the Reverend Victor E. Novak, of Omaha Nebraska, a friend of Western Rite Orthodoxy.