

God's plan for reaching the lost centers on the ministry of local churches that make an impact, with the Gospel and through the faithful teaching of the Word. The need for such churches in America is greater than ever. Clearly the local church where you attend needs your primary financial support. But as you prayerfully contemplate where YOU can fit into God's plan for church planting; consider these pieces of the big picture:



The number of un-churched Americans nearly doubled from 1991 to 2001. ^[1] With an estimated 360,000 churches and an average attendance of about 125 persons per church, every church in America could double its attendance and there would still be 190 million people not in church to hear the gospel on an average Sunday. Even in most small towns, there are not enough seats if even half of the people decided to go to church on a given Lord's Day.



The number of churches in our land has decreased in proportion to our overall population. In 1900 there were 27 churches for every 10,000 Americans. By 1950, this ratio had dropped to 17 churches for every 10,000 people. ^[2] Since 1950, we actually have 30 percent fewer churches to reach the growing number of un-churched people in America!



New churches reach lost people better than any other form of evangelism. Roughly half of all U.S. churches did not add one new person through conversion growth last year. The majority of newcomers to most established churches are simply a circulation of the saints. Research shows that new and younger churches, on average, reach more people for Christ each year per capita than older churches. They have an excitement and vitality which attracts the unsaved and previously un-churched people. They grow because they are very intentional about discovering culturally relevant yet biblically sound ways to reach secular people. ^[3]



Many established churches are now in survival mode and will eventually close. Most churches have a lifespan of 70 to 100 years. With the spiritual deadness of our North American culture showing up in many churches, 80-85% of U.S. churches are on the downside of their life cycle – many of them Bible-believing congregations. ^[4] It is estimated that between 3,500 and 4,000 churches dissolve every year in our nation. Yet at best only about 1,300 new churches are being planted annually. ^[5] The net result is that there are fewer opportunities for people to hear the Gospel than before.



Half of all people in the U.S. and Canada live in just 43 cities with populations of over one million, yet, only about one out of nine Bible believing churches are found in these cities. Millions of people in the most densely populated places have the fewest opportunities to hear about Christ. Yet many fundamental and evangelical churches have fled to the comfort and safety of the suburbs.



New churches are needed to reach the growing number of ethnic people in America. Immigration is the greatest source of population growth in the United States. Today one in ten Americans was born in another country. Ethnic Americans now comprise one third of our nation's population! We are the most ethnically diverse nation in the world. The mission fields are no longer overseas; they are next door. We are responsible to reach our —Samaria, those who are geographically close but culturally distant (Acts 1:8). Ethnic believers often have trouble fitting into existing English-speaking, mostly white congregations that do not understand their culture, music, and special concerns.



Many existing churches are not effective in reaching today's young people. The vast majority of Christians are saved before reaching age twenty, yet researchers estimate only 4% of all young people below the age of 22 are saved. ^[6] We are losing a whole generation of young people. We need Word-based churches who will adapt their methodologies to reach the millions of unsaved, secular youth in this high-tech generation.



Our children and grandchildren need churches with room for them to become responsible Christians and leaders. People feel connected and committed to ministries they help lead. Leadership positions are usually filled in existing churches by longtime members, shutting out younger believers from decision-making. New churches depend upon and raise up new leaders, helping immature disciples grow up in the Lord through service.



False religions are on the rise in America. Immigrant newcomers have brought with them their pagan religions. As a result, we are now not only the most ethnically diverse nation in the world but one of the most religiously diverse nations.

- Christianity is declining and cults and traditional world religions are up 400% from 1950.
- Both Muslims and Mormons now outnumber Jews and Episcopalians in America.
- Islam now claims an estimated six million followers, making it the second largest faith in our nation. Buddhists now number 2.5 million adherents; Hindus, some 1.2 million. False cultists have increased from one million in 1900 to over 26 million today. ^[7]

New church plants, focused upon the lost, can help reverse the tide.

Midwest Church Extension is on the front line of Great Commission ministry as we seek to permeate every identifiable Midwestern community with the hope of the Gospel through the biblical ministry of a reproductive IFCA International church. The fields ARE white unto harvest and the laborers ARE few! Our ability to continue this ministry, however, will depend upon the financial help of people like you and churches like yours. Please give prayerful consideration to becoming part of the MCE support team!



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1. George Barna:
<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=163>.
2. Richard Harris in —Church Planting Today, page 2. Harris is VP of the Church Planting Group of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB). See also Lyle E. Schaller, *44 Questions for Church Planters* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 14-26.
3. For confirmation that younger, newer churches grow more than older ones, see Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 44; and Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 46-48.
4. Win Arn, cited in Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches*, 32.
5. Win Arn, *The Pastor's Manual for Effective Ministry* (Monrovia, CA: Church Growth, 1988), 16. See also Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, *Lost in America* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001), 30.
6. In the U.S., the percentage of each generational group professing to be Christians is in serious decline:
 - Builders WW2 generation: 65% professed to be Christians
 - Baby boomers: 34% profess to be Christians
 - Busters/Generation X: 17% profess to be Christians
 - Current teens: 4% will profess to be followers of Christ if current trends continue. See Thom Rainer, *The Bridger Generation* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 169.
7. For stats on religionists in America, see Clegg and Bird, *Lost in America*, 30-32.

Statistical information adapted and used with permission from "Ten Reasons for Church Planting" by Ken Davis, Director of Project Jerusalem at Baptist Bible Seminary (Clarks Summit, PA).

Midwest Church Extension is an official church planting organization for IFCA International. Our field includes the Midwestern states of Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin and the Greater St. Louis area. Our aim is the permeation of every identifiable Midwestern geographic community with the hope of the Gospel through the biblical ministry of a reproductive IFCA International church.

- ✚ Pre-placement internships available.
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When it Comes to Church Planting...

Where Do YOU Fit



In GOD's Plan?

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