



Center for United States Missions

Mission Moments



September 1, 2015

Necessary – Not Simply Nice We MUST Start New Churches NOW

By Rev. Mike Ruhl

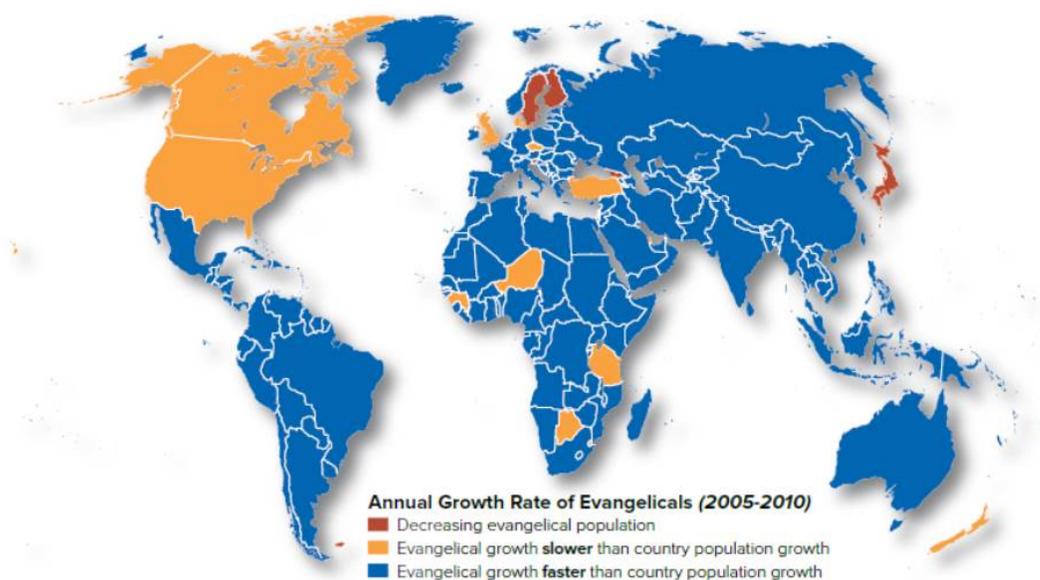
Alright. I confess. I do sound like a *broken record* (even though the younger generations may not know what a 'record' is). **Church Planting is the most effective strategy under heaven for reaching lost people.**

C. Peter Wagner said that a long time ago – and most missiologists continue to keep saying the very same thing. This fact makes new church development (church planting) something that is NECESSARY for making new disciples – and not just something that is NICE or optional.

That reality came thundering back to me recently through two sobering blog posts.

The first post is a global map which illustrates the growth of Evangelical (Good News proclaiming) Christianity in the world.

GROWTH RATE OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY



Other relevant statistics:

World population annual growth rate: 1.2%
World evangelical annual growth rate: 2.6%

Data from Operation World DVD-ROM 2010
Cartography by GMI
For more maps and additional GMI products, visit www.gmi.org



The nations shown above in **tan** are nations where the growth of Evangelical Christianity is SLOWER than national population growth. Note that the United States and Canada are in that category – along with Britain, Finland, Turkey, New Zealand and several African nations. The nations shown in **brown** (Norway, Sweden, and Japan) appear to have decreasing populations of Evangelical Christianity. Note that all the nations in **blue** indicate Evangelical Christianity growth **faster** than the national population growth.

The second post is from Church Planter and Dynamic Church Planting International (DCPI) Vice President, Mark Williams. First Mark reflected that ... *as churches grow older and more established, they typically lose their evangelistic passion and outreach orientation* than when that church was a new mission plant. Then Mark offered four reasons why the American Church, which includes the LCMS, MUST start new churches:

1. We must re-establish congregation focus on outreach. Many long-established churches focus primarily on their constituents. The church will always be a 'missionary enterprise' sent into the world to make disciples of and for Jesus Christ. Jesus gave us the GREAT Commission – not simply the Good (optional) Commission.

2. Birth is easier than resuscitation. Some saints argue that what we really need to do is convince existing churches to focus on outreach. After all, they have the resources, the buildings, the money and the people and the programs. Yet the reality is that a high percentage of US churches are declining, if not dying. Despite the valiant efforts of many missionaries and pastors to resuscitate a declining / dying church, some are learning the realities of what Jesus said in Mark 2:22 (CEV): *"No one pours new wine into old wineskins. The wine would swell and burst the old skins. Then the wine would be lost, and the skins would be ruined. New wine must be put into new wineskins."*

3. Replacing dying churches. Each year thousands of Christian congregations (all tribes) cease to exist. They die. This is a natural phenomenon because the church is fundamentally a *living organism* (not an inanimate organization) – and death is a natural part of the life-cycle. Often this precipitates from departure from the Word, shifting demographics, or lack of innovation. In short: aging. Therefore new churches must be planted to replace those churches which have died.

4. Reach a growing population in new areas. Recently Mark spent a few days in Temecula, California. It is a booming growth area. Mark claimed that when he first visited there 35 years ago, there was virtually nothing there. But now Mark marvels at how Temecula has grown from *Podunk Town* to a huge, bustling, thriving *Metropolis*. And in another 10, 20, 30, 40 years, there will be many more areas like Temecula.

Can you join your friends at the Center for United States Missions and listen again to that familiar '*broken record*' (or fractured floppy disk)? Planting new churches in these United States of America is not simply a *nice thing to do* ... it is absolutely NECESSARY in terms of the expansion of the Kingdom of God and the making of new disciples.



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Moment Extras

Questions for Discussion

Personal or Group Reflection

1. Why do the USA and Canada (much of North America) have an Evangelical Christianity growth rate **slower** than population growth?
 2. Why are so many nations of the world experiencing the growth of Evangelical Christianity at a rate **faster** than their national population growth?
 3. Why is birthing new churches best done by **local congregations** (instead of districts and denominations)?
 4. Why are missiologists so adamant about claiming that *church planting is the most effective strategy under heaven for reaching lost people*?
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Resources You Can Use

Related Books and Links

[Operation World](#) presents evangelical growth in an interactive format.

Access a [PDF of the map](#) included in the above article.

Read Mark Williams article [6 Answers to Questions About Church Planting](#).

Read Mark Williams article [4 Obstacles to Church Planting and the Myths Behind Them](#).

Read the original article by Mark Williams referenced above [4 Reasons We Must Start New Churches Now](#).

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