

good idea!

A resource for evangelism & congregational development

EDITORIAL Church Planting Revisited

"Everybody else is doing it, so why can't we?" It's the traditional children's complaint, but sometimes it feels that way in church planting. Other denominations—perhaps with a higher commitment to tithing and smaller denominational overheads—seem to be doing it in every new subdivision across Canada. But in mainline churches, and Anglican churches in particular, it is still a rarity.

In the Fall of 2000, *good idea!* devoted an edition to the subject of church planting, focusing on pioneering efforts in western Canada. This time we look at examples in eastern Canada—in Fredericton, Montreal and Toronto. The three are very different from one another—one a brand new beginning in a growing suburb, another a merger of eight previously existing congregations, and the third a "reboot", where members of a healthy congregation crossed town to help with a declining parish.

Church planting can mean many different things. Yet in every case described here, it means new life, and an effective outreach to those with little if any religious background. What it requires in every case is vision, good leadership, and a willingness to take a risk of faith.

Part of the impetus for this edition of *good idea!* was the recent visit to Toronto of Canon Kevin Martin, a seasoned leader and consultant in the areas of church planting and congregational renewal. We hope to bring him back before too long to explore these areas further. In the meantime he has given us a lot to chew on.



John Bowen



Church Planting: an Open Door to Evangelism

An Interview
with Kevin Martin

Canon Kevin Martin was responsible for church planting in the Diocese of Texas under Bishop Claude Payne. He is now on staff at Christ Church Episcopal Church in Plano, Texas (the largest Anglican church plant in North America), and Director of Vital Church Ministries in the Diocese of Dallas. He was recently in Toronto, speaking and leading seminars. Assistant Editor Elin Goulden interviewed him for *good idea!*

GI: Kevin, why do you consider church planting so important?

KM: The number one reason that church planting is important is that it's demonstrable that church plants are the church's most effective tool for reaching unchurched people.

Over the years I've consistently found it to be the case that the new church plant, by its very nature, is the most incorporating Christian community. If it's done well, a new church plant will start off at a good level, can double in two years, and can double again in five years.

When you start a church plant, you can often reach groups of people who are never going to get reached by an existing parish. For example, in the Diocese of Texas, there are a lot of people working in the high tech industry in Houston. We started a church plant among them with a pastor who came from that kind of background, and whose heart was to reach them. After *(continued on page 2)*

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Church Planting: Kevin Martin *(continued from page 1)*

a while, he created a congregation with people in it that you normally wouldn't see in the Episcopal Church—bright, articulate people who are very knowledgeable about technology but have no sense of spiritual roots or of spiritual need—and he created a whole church around these people.

GI: At a time when churches are closing, why are we talking about starting new ones?

KM: All parishes run through lifecycles. Some will regenerate in their lifecycles, but some congregations have just lived out their lifecycle and are going to close. Among Anglicans, our last great church planting endeavour was after the Second World War. All of those churches have run through a predictable 30-40 year lifecycle. Most are on a downward part of the cycle and in need of revitalization. Many of them won't make it. The effect will be a drop in the numbers.

New congregations are like new children. In the Diocese of Dallas, which experienced 12% growth over 10 years, if you took out the new church plants, the numbers would actually have shown a decrease of 5%. So the new church plants carried the growth. That's why I'm a big believer in new congregations. If you don't plant, as your churches go through their lifecycles, many will eventually die off and there won't be new ones to replace them.

GI: Could you take us step by step through the sequence of a church plant?

KM: A successful church plant follows a fairly logical sequence. First there is the conceptual phase. A planning group drawn

from churches in the region along with diocesan staff, ask questions such as:

- Who's out there? What are the demo-

graphics? For example, in Texas we found that only 3% of the target population were Anglicans or expressed any interest in joining an Anglican church. But 22% of the unchurched population said they would attend a mainline church if a member asked them to go.

- Who's the team leader? This person has to connect with the group you are trying to reach. It helps if they come from that target group.

- What size church do you want this church to be five years from now? If you're planting in a large area, why would you plan for a small church?

During the second stage, you need to train your leaders and begin to plan strategy:

- What are the three or four core values around which the church is going to be built? These are the areas of ministry which are going to be the focus of the church plant.

- Five years from now, what are the developmental staff you will need? Fund them now and put them in place around the team leader.

Gather a core group of lay leaders around the leadership team, about 15-30 people. More than that is not helpful because they tend merely to reproduce what they've always done. Fewer than that doesn't give enough of a financial boost. This core team is taught the core values around which the church is going to be created, and those ministries are created and practised.

The third phase is the official launch. You can do a telephone campaign, go door-to-door—whatever works—to get the word out. The important thing is to launch the first Sunday with as many people as you hope (eventually) to have regularly. In an urban church, this would be over 200 people. You don't start until you can get at least that many on *(continued on page 6)*

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Church planters absolutely have to believe in their heart that they were called to this work



“Rebooting” a Church

by Duke Vipperman

Church planting does not always mean starting from nothing. The insights of church planters can also be applied to situations where an older congregation is in need of an infusion of new life. One church in Toronto has modeled how this kind of “reboot” can work successfully.

IN 1999, the Church of the Resurrection had dwindled to 57 people. The Rev. Chris King of the nearby parish of Little Trinity released 10% of that church to go with me to what became known as “The Rez” to do a “reboot”.

God blended us together, the original congregation and the transplants, plus many new people who came, to be a more relevant mission-minded church. Though it is often more art than science, we applied the best in church planting thinking to shift our church culture to better reach our neighbours. Now 220 worship weekly, Sunday School is at capacity, and we are buzzing with activity.

We used a carefully planned and prayerfully executed process of transformation and re-shaping of our church culture. Many churches could use our model. A larger church (200 and above) could send people to help a smaller one turn around, if:

- 1) they share a similar theological outlook
- 2) there is a population near the receiving church that can be reached
- 3) they are determined to love each other over the

long haul, and

4) they are willing to adjust how they sing, worship and “do church community” to converge with what their neighbours respond to.

Rapid growth presented challenges and blessings. Our church in 1999 was more pastoral and family oriented than were our urban neighbours. Growing meant losing some of that intimacy, as we learned new ways of forming community that had more evangelistic potential. It was hard but it was worth it.



One neighbour who visited us before we changed felt there was nothing here for him. Fortunately, he came for a second try as we were in the process of changing, and now he follows Christ, is growing spiritually, and is in leadership. That kind of blessing—and the smiling faces of children in our large Sunday School—we see daily.

Pastor Duke Vipperman is Rector of the Church of the Resurrection in Toronto. He is currently writing a Doctor of Ministry thesis based on his experience at The Rez.

Though it is often more art than science, we applied the best in church planting thinking to shift our church culture to better reach our neighbours.

New Wine, New Wineskins

by Marsha Mundy

A church plant in suburban Montreal experiments with new forms of leadership and ministry in order to reach out to unchurched people.

THE first service I attended at Evergreen Anglican Community in November 2002 numbered five, including myself. That number jumped to eight, then to twelve. Today, our membership list exceeds fifty people coming on a regular basis, and we now rent a country church from the United Church at a cost of \$100 per Sunday.

Most of our members have either not been to church since Sunday School, or have never been to church.

Leadership

We began with no cash flow, one paid position, and we proceeded with few resources. Thus we became dependent on the most important component of the church struc-

ture—each other. The project (although shadowed by my leadership) belongs to the members, and they carry it. Thus they also enjoy the rewards of success.

In terms of formal structure, Evergreen has a normal Anglican Corporation, but instead of striking a Parish Council or Vestry we have a Visioning Committee, an Outreach and Evangelism Committee, and a Social Committee. People are asked to pray and then volunteer for these positions, rather than being elected.



Outreach

All activities are geared towards the unchurched. In Christian education, for example, we recently began an Alpha for Evergreen members, and we plan to reach out to the larger community in January 2005 to see if Alpha works in the St. Lazare area. We have also had a series of discussions based on contemporary films.

Evergreen is always outward-looking, so missions are a fundamental part of our existence. In the summer of 2004, for example, one member of the community offered her garden, and others grew squash and gourds there. Then, at harvest time, community members made soup for the local soup kitchen and sold the remaining produce at a local flea market. The profits of \$500 went towards a nutrition program for pregnant mothers in South America.

What have we learned?

Our vision needs to reflect our faith. If we wish to continue reaching out to those who need to know Jesus Christ, we have to walk in the faith of the early disciples. We believe that when we walk in this faith, God will provide for the rest of our needs. It's time to use new wine skins for the new wine.

The Rev. Marsha Mundy is Rector of Evergreen Anglican Community in St. Lazare, Quebec.



Eight into One: Addition Leads to Multiplication

by Vicars Hodge

Combining small, declining churches into one larger one is an increasingly popular form of church planting. It requires the same visionary leadership and entrepreneurial attitude, and faces the same kind of challenges as the more traditional models.



IN 2004, following three years of study and consultation, eight historic but struggling churches in New Brunswick were amalgamated into one new parish. A new program-size church now gathers each week in a local public school. Where our predecessor congregations were in steady decline, our combined attendance at this point is about 250 each Sunday. We decided that this new creation needed a new name, and the Church of the Resurrection topped our list—a name that perfectly reflects what God is doing in this new parish.

Why we did it

As in many places across Canada, shifting population distribution and urbanization have left us with church buildings in locations that can no longer support lively ministries. Increasing expenses coupled with reduced attendance have been a body-blow

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for many smaller churches like ours.

We have reorganized parishes again and again—tinkering with the multi-point and team-ministry models. But none of this has effectively stopped the decline. The decision to amalga-

mate and build again was a response to these challenges.

Where we are now

Amalgamation has enabled better multi-generational ministry. Our lively children's ministry has up to a dozen teachers at times. We have hired a part-time youth minister and have active ministry with middle and high school students. Our worship is both traditional and contemporary, and a multimedia projector is used instead of books. In the spring an Assistant Curate is to begin here.

We have now purchased four acres of prime land at the heart of the most populated area of the parish. The lot is a church planter's dream, located between the Post Office and the Subway on the main street. It is a highly visible lot and has a commanding view of the panorama of Grand Bay.

Questions & challenges

We are in the midst of the middle phase of this work of church planting and there are two challenges in particular.

The real long-term measure of our success will be how well we are able to attract, evangelize, and turn into disciples those who were not previously living for Christ. Many in our parish hold this vision, but there remains a tendency toward an inward-looking stance.

A second challenge on any long journey is fatigue. This enterprise *(continued on page 6)*

Eight into One *(cont. from page 5)*

has been demanding in every way of our large leadership team, and there is no let-up in sight! It is vital for the future of this project that we continuously invite others into leadership and pass along the vision which has led us to this point.

Our Lord is at work in this Parish, bringing new people to himself and calling a community to deeper faithfulness. It will be exciting ministry for many years to come as we seek to cooperate with Christ who "makes all things new."

The Ven. Vicars Hodge is Rector of the Parish of the Nerepis and St. John, and Archdeacon of St. Andrew's.



Our Youth & Children's Service at the school where we usually gather

Church Planting: Kevin Martin *(cont. from page 2)*

the launch Sunday. The advantage of starting big is that on that first Sunday, everybody sees the church at the size they're aiming for.

There is tremendous pressure from the bishop and the church planting team to launch early. But we found that the longer you delay the official start, the stronger the church will be when it eventually gets going. The lead-up period, in my experience, should be at least six months and preferably nine months to a year.

GI: What kind of person do you need to start a church plant?

KM: You have to be a team leader. But planters have to have two other characteristics that will get them over the difficulties and challenges involved. First, the church planter has to believe that people out there are lost and need God in their lives. How they express that can take different forms, but they need to have

a passion to connect people to God. They are normally impatient with the unwillingness of the established church to go after the unchurched.

Secondly, church planters absolutely have to believe in their heart that they were called to this work. It is hard and exhausting work, and it's often discouraging, and there are tough moments, including not knowing whether the stewardship will be enough. So they need that deep conviction.

Church plantings provide instances of miracle after miracle, of God providing every need. In existing churches, quite frankly, we often don't need God to do much, because we have our systems and history and heritage to fall back on. But in a new church plant, God has to show up every Sunday or there's not much happening!

No matter how skilled or gifted a person is, if they don't have those two fundamental things, they're just not the right person to be a church planter. ☒



During his visit, Kevin Martin gave the Halse Memorial Lecture 2004, entitled *Evangelism: The Challenge Before Us*. VHS tapes of this lecture may be ordered from Tracy Harper, by phone at (416) 946-3535, or by email at wycliffe.college@utoronto.ca. The cost is \$15, plus taxes & postage.

Remembering How Babies Are Made

By Connie Den Bok

*An experienced church planter from the United Church of Canada reflects on what she observes in this issue of **good idea!***

IF church planting is simply a matter of finding and operating the right technology, we have entered a new and frightening universe: a world where almost no one remembers how babies are made. Alarmed at the looming spectre of extinction, experts are called, seminars convened, machinery set into motion. In the end a few more of the species are brought into being, but many are sickly and cannot survive without continuous life support: a kind of bubble church.

Of course church planting is not biotechnology—although some denominations spend tremendous resources producing a few new congregations *in vitro* every year. No: in every time and place, new churches are a creative act of God through people gathered in Christian Community, doing what people in Christian Community have always done—unless we forget how.

Listen to these words:

...First, the church planter has to believe that people out there are lost and need God in their lives. How they express that can take different forms, but they need to have a passion to connect people to God.

—Kevin Martin

...carefully planned and prayerfully executed...

—Duke Vipperman

If we wish to continue reaching out to those who need to know Jesus Christ, we

have to walk in the faith of the early disciples. We believe that, when we walk in this faith, God will provide for the rest of our needs.

—Marsha Mundy

We have reorganized parishes again and again—tinkering with the multi-point and team-ministry models. But none of this has effectively stopped the decline... The real long-term measure of our success will be how well we are able to attract, evangelize, and turn into disciples those who were not previously living for Christ.

—Vicars Hodge

Do these sentences represent the western church of the 21st Century? To what era do they belong?

New churches cannot be created merely as a matter of priority for dwindling denominations and diminishing dollars. They are born of vibrant faith unable to contain its love for Christ and love of neighbour. Decide for yourself what propels the newest churches in our midst.

The apostles may have been on to something.

The Rev. Dr. Connie Den Bok is Team Minister at Alderwood United Church in Etobicoke ON.

This Issue



Sources of Resources

The Wycliffe College Booklets on Evangelism



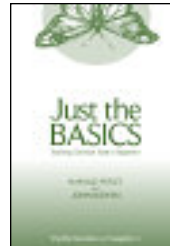
#1 Preaching the Church's Mission: Sermons Towards Self-Understanding by John Bowen

Many church members are not enthusiastic about outreach and evangelism simply because they do not understand the nature and calling of the church. This booklet offers 14 sermon outlines and two sample sermons on different aspects of the church. The series can be preached in sequence or as an occasional series, or used as a Lenten study outline.



#3 Unwrapping All Our Gifts: A Neglected Key to Evangelism by Judy Paulsen

Evangelism is not an extra program which can be added on to the life of an already busy parish. Rather it is the overflowing of life in a healthy congregation. Judy Paulsen shows us ways to grow a healthy congregation by helping members discover their gifts, so that as the congregation works together, there is an overflow into fruitful and lasting evangelism.



#2 Just the Basics: Teaching Christian Faith to Beginners by John Bowen and Harold Percy

In a world where many are “exploring their spirituality,” how can the church communicate the faith in ways that are faithful but fresh to those who have no background in church or Bible? The authors offer an outline of how an introductory course of four sessions can be planned and led, including passages for Bible study and leader’s notes. The booklet concludes with sample talks for the four sessions.

Booklets can be ordered from the college by contacting Tracy Harper, by phone at (416) 946-3535, or by email at wycliffe.college@utoronto.ca. You can also ask Tracy to set up a Standing Order for you, so that new titles will be sent to you as they are published.

Booklets are \$5 each, with a special rate of \$3 each for purchases of ten copies or more of a single title. Tax and the cost of postage and handling will be added.

In Sympathy

Many across the country will have heard of the death following a traffic accident of Kathy Percy, wife of Harold, in early November. On behalf of all readers of *good idea!* we extend our heartfelt sympathy to Harold and his family, and to the congregation of Trinity Anglican Church, Streetsville, and assure them of our prayers.

For the time being, Harold’s Centre for Congregational Development will not be offering seminars.