

A General Approach for Church Planting by EFCGV

Background

In 2015, the Council and Elders approved a Long Range Plan to establish and maintain a Church Planting Culture at EFCGV to help implement our vision of “Sharing the Gospel in the Santa Cruz River Valley”. In 2017, the Elders created a committee to begin the work of implementation. The Church Planting Culture committee also formed a focused Prayer Team to uphold all church planting efforts in prayer. On many occasions, the overall church also prayed for the Holy Spirit’s leading in our church planting discussions. After nearly 12 months of studying the scriptures, praying and examining various church planting resources it became apparent that **an intentional church planting effort should first be preceded by focused prayer and targeted evangelism.** Based on that perspective, the Houses of Prayer Everywhere (HOPE) was selected as a methodology to guide the development of this approach.

Objective

- Prayerfully establish networks of small groups meeting in homes in potential outreach areas/communities. Over time and if desired, EFCGV would help these networks come together for corporate worship and eventually coalesce into fully functioning churches.

Strategy

- Consistently pray that the Holy Spirit will make it clear to the church leadership and congregation where He is working to grow the Kingdom of God and how we can join Him.

Implementation

- After a potential outreach area is revealed, meet with the congregation to share the vision for a church planting effort in that area (illustrate with a map or other graphic) and the specific implementation plan to be followed. Request their support.

- Determine if any current EFCGV attendees reside in the outreach area. Bring them together socially in appropriate neighborhood gatherings to get more fully acquainted and to share the outreach vision.
- Ask them to see if they have interest in participating in a Church Planting Launch Team.
- Form a Church Planting Launch Team consisting of a pastor (either reassign an existing pastor or hire a new church planting pastor), an elder and 3 to 5 attendees who all have an interest in prayer-cell ministries. As many team members as possible should live in the outreach area. Ask one of the team members to serve as an initial House of Prayer Coordinator.
- Complete training in the Houses of Prayer process for the Church Planting Launch Team.

A House of prayer is a cluster of two or more believers who are banded together to pray and convey Christ's blessings upon their neighbors. Typically, this involves initial groups of believers agreeing to come together in various houses to intercede for their neighbors on a regular basis such as weekly for 30 minutes.

- The Church Planting Launch Team, the Church Planting Culture Committee and Prayer Team plus the whole congregation, in its many prayer venues, should regularly entreat the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts and minds of those in the outreach area to hear and receive the gospel.
- The Church Planting Launch Team begins to pray for homes in the outreach area which might become Houses of Prayer.
- Complete Houses of Prayer training for those who might participate in the process. At the end of the training, ask for a 3 month commitment to be a member of a House of Prayer. After 3 months, participants can opt out or continue.

- The Church Planting Launch Team begins to identify Houses of Prayer and locate them on a map of the outreach area. Each House of Prayer should have an identified leader.

The objective is to eventually have a House of prayer for every 15-25 homes in the outreach area.

- Inform the congregation about those who have committed to host and lead Houses of Prayer. Pray over them and *Commission* them publicly.
- Launch Houses of Prayer:
 - Months 1-2.....Prayer Contact. Lay a strong foundation of prayer for each member of the neighborhood. Pray that hearts will be made tender to the gospel, that doors will be opened for demonstrations of Christ's love, that evil forces will be overcome and that fruitful encounters with neighbors will happen at ripe moments. Begin prayer walks in the neighborhood by 1 or 2 members. Take turns talking to God about your neighbors. What you see will give you clues on how to pray.
 - Months 3-4.....Remote Contact. Distribute flyers or equivalent digital forms of communication acceptable to the HOA, if applicable, to each neighbor. It informs them of the House of Prayer, its purpose and invites them to call or make contact with any prayer requests.
 - Months 5-6.....Personal Contact. Make a personal visit to each home/business, inviting neighbors to give prayer requests for the neighborhood, for their family, or for themselves.
 - Months 7-8.....Gospel Contact. From day #1, share the gospel with neighbors any time God gives the opportunity. If that hasn't happened by this stage, become intentional. Simply share your testimony of what God has done in your life and ask the neighbor if that kind of experience is something they are interested in. If so, use resources like simple tracts, the Jesus video, etc. to help.

- Months 9-10.....Church Contact. Ask the neighbors if they would like to participate in the neighborhood House of Prayer. If so, add a new believers Bible study section (John, Romans, etc.) to the usual agenda. Begin connecting and working with other Houses of Prayer. If they don't already have a church affiliation, invite the neighbors to visit EFCGV during a Sunday Service, Men's/Women's Bible Study, monthly social, etc.

- The Church Planting Launch Team continues to identify potential Houses of Prayer and repeats the launch steps until ideally every home in the outreach area is being prayed over.
- Throughout the launch process, bring the House of Prayer Leaders together regularly to prayer for one another, share learnings/ideas/resources and generally build a network of support and a community of love.
- Similarly, build community by promoting various forms of interchange (social, prayer, worship, service, etc.) among House of Prayer groups.
- After the various Houses of Prayer participants approach a total of 50-60 people, periodically ask if there is interest among them to gather and worship together.
- If so, bring them together and support them for worship services at EFCGV (Saturdays or weekdays) or another temporary location.
- Over time, help that group grow and form into a fully functioning church plant. Develop their capabilities for teaching, worship, preaching, finance, administration, leadership, ministry, shepherding, outreach, etc.
- When appropriate, engage the Church Planting Facilities Committee to locate and pursue acquisition of adequate permanent facilities to support the church plant.

- Continue to support the church plant, as needed, until they have established their own leadership including an Elder Board. This support may include asking some EFCGV members to commit to being an active part of the church plant for the first year.

Repeat the Strategy and Implementation steps above.

Scriptural support

- Our Great Commission. **Mat 28:19** “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
- The Second Greatest Commandment. **Mat 22:39** “The second is like it ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ “.

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