



Why Plant New Churches?



In September 2006 Lori and I began to meet in our home with 15 people (six were children) and a dream of planting a new church. During that time I had written an [article for Wineskins](#) magazine concerning planting churches in the Northwest. Kairos Church Planting director Dr. Stan Granberg had also written an [article](#) for the same magazine on the need to plant new churches in the US. Stan

and Gena have led Kairos for over seven years and have seen 14 churches planted in the US, Canada, and Australia.

We were trained by the Granbergs and the Kairos staff and were the third church plant for this ministry. With the financial support of the Park Plaza Church of Christ in Tulsa, OK we decided to stay in Portland and begin a new church in the city. In a city where 85% of the people report not belonging to a faith community, we knew we had great opportunities.

Sin is spreading like an epidemic in our communities. Books, articles, and other forms of research continue to sug-

gest that Christianity is declining in North America. Churches are also closing their doors at an alarming rate. Pornography, adultery, sexual and physical abuse, and addictions are not only claiming many Christians, they are taking hold of Christian leaders/clergy. Our spiritual leaders are falling at an alarming rate. Multnomah Bible Seminary, in Portland, tells their incoming seminary students that 1 out of 3 ministers will still be in ministry after 10 years. In some cases ministers are crucified in churches with leaders who look for comfort over becoming “friends of sinners,” as our Savior had done (Luke 7). The church has

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ Why plant new churches?
- ◆ Sin is growing
- ◆ Our communities grow faster than our churches
- ◆ Established churches struggle to reach new people
- ◆ New churches prepare more people for ministry

August Attendance

7	86
14	80
21	131
28	82
	Avg = 95

Agape Blitz Deux

Our final work with Agape Blitz happened the last week of August. As written in the last newsletter we have expanded the ministry from one day in August to two weeks in the summer. This month the Federal Way Church youth group and Park Plaza Church Portland Mission Team joined Agape to serve the community. We worked at Wilson High School to prepare the grounds and paint buildings for school. We worked on the old Cascade College campus to

weed, rake, and cut grass. Our crews also joined the Seasons of Service project in Portland to help Frazer Park break concrete to install a community garden. On Saturday the groups joined Agape as we handed out over 200 breakfast burritos to the homeless under the Burnside Bridge and Main City Park in Gresham. We connected with many living on the street or in the woods and built relationships as well. On Sunday we had a picnic

and worship with over 20 people from Couch Park joining us for lunch. Next year our desire is to have Agape Blitz run 6 weeks. This fall we will send out information to youth groups outside of Portland and offer them an opportunity to come do ministry for the community, connect with those on the streets, and experience Northwest Christianity as we seek to practice compassion, mercy, and justice in our communities.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Planting Churches</i>	1
<i>Agape Blitz</i>	2
<i>Weddings/Births</i>	2
<i>Women's</i>	3
<i>Youth</i>	4



Why Plant New Churches? (continued)

been called to engage the community and confront evil.

Cities are also growing at a rapid rate. Estimates suggest that in the next few decades 75% of people will live in urban areas. In 2004 the number of new churches begun outnumbered the number of churches that closed their doors. There is tremendous hope. Many urban churches are targeting urban areas and working with their communities to address social justice concerns and become a blessing to their cities.

I am often asked if the existing churches can reach the people.

I respond by asking, “Are they now?”

Yet some still ask, “Why should we plant new churches?”

First, *declining and traditional churches struggle to change their focus and reach out to their diverse neighborhoods.* It takes more energy to revive a declining church than

to start a new one. In addition to this, many of the older churches have found a niche and target group to whom they minister effectively. Changing the course of their ministry is very difficult and sometimes unhealthy for the church. New churches are more prepared to grow in a modern environment.

Second, *new people need new churches.* Newer churches are intentionally seeking to become ethnically, culturally, economically, and socially diverse. This is hard work but one that must be intentional. Newer churches are more comfortable with change, reaching their culture and environment, and can embrace “new wine” since they are “newer wineskins.” People who live and work in a culturally and ethnically diverse community are prepared to help a church become more diverse. Statistically only 7% of churches are ethnically diverse. New churches can begin with the DNA to replicate diverse churches and cultivate that environment much easier than other estab-

lished churches.

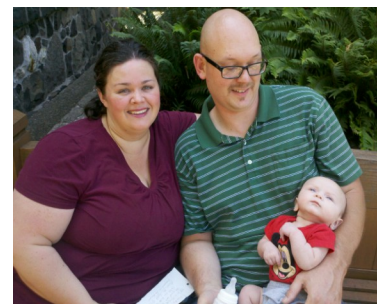
Third, *newer churches offer opportunities to train new leaders.* Many young people are seeking to be focused on their community and outreach to those who are hurting. They need new places to minister and lead. After spending over 20 years in established churches Lori and I realized that we were not equipped to take care of the needs of church members on a full time basis. Our calling was to the community and those disconnected from a relationship with God. We continually meet many ministers who feel the same way. Newer churches give our gifted evangelistic Christians the opportunity to engage the community and spend time and resources among those who haven’t heard many of the great stories of Jesus’ love for them.

Fourth, *new churches have a stronger emphasis on the Gospel of Jesus as opposed to tradition.* At Agape we have continually driven discussions to the Bible and called our

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Weddings and Births at Agape

Over the past few weeks God has blessed many people with new life and a future together. Babies have been born and vows exchanged which is always a sign that relationships are developing in many ways. We were able to welcome Samuel Lubke to the Agape family in July. Jeremiah and Leah are active at Agape and will be great parents to their son. This is their second church plant to join and they have helped in many areas of our ministry. Baby D’Angelo was born prematurely to Bethany and D’Angelo in the spring and was able to quickly gain weight and come home healthy and happy. Bethany came forward to share her desire to repent and confess to her church family, which was received with prayers, hugs, and affirmation. Bethany and D’Angelo were married in August and continue to work at Agape. Ken Naguchi and Katie Blake have been active in leadership, teaching, our finance team, and leading home communities. Ken proposed to Katie to the excitement of all at Agape and will be married September 17. Katie’s wedding dress was recently stolen and after a [local news story](#), Katie was able to replace her dress. In October we will also celebrate the marriage of Nathan and Kirsten. New life, new futures, and new relationships. As Agape grows, so does love.



JEREMIAH, LEAH, AND SAMUEL LUBKE

Why Plant New Churches? (continued)

leadership to study out issues. In the past I have sat in many leadership meetings where the study ended with making a decision based on what was “the safe choice,” or we did not want to cause problems with change. New churches have the calling and passion to take risks for the kingdom and base decisions on the interpretation of scripture.

Finally, *newer churches provide more opportunities for other people to serve and learn to grow in ministry and their spirituality.* At Agape we quickly realized that we needed trailer drivers, set up crews, teachers, small group leaders, recovery leaders, hospitality leaders, and other people. From day one Agape has involved others in ministry and serving. Due to this many others have risen to lead and become involved in our ministry to Portland.

This discussion is important as we move to our sixth year after launch. This month Allyn and Becky Bradley have moved from their ministry position in Longview, WA to Portland to prepare to lead our first church plant. Lori and I have mentored this couple for over a year and they have worked well with us and received instruction in reaching out to one of the lower income neighborhoods in their community. Allyn and Becky will work with us at Agape and, Lord willing, lead a church plant in SE Portland (Rockwood area). This area has had an increase in gangs, prostitution, and poverty in the past decade. It is also the



**ALLYN AND BECKY BRADLEY
WILL LEAD AGAPE'S ROCKWOOD
CHURCH PLANT IN 2012**

neighborhood where we live and this new church will reach those we have been ministering to.

Over the past six months we have expanded contacts through our neighborhood, our boys' sports teams, and the community organizations in Rockwood. Our monthly breakfast burrito handout to the homeless in a Gresham park and Agape people who live in the area has opened doors for a new church. We are also talking with local prostitution and homeless ministries to provide a hub for their outreach in the community.

Already Allyn and Becky have connected with the Rosewood Initiative and are working with neighborhood associations to support their work in the community.

Allyn and Becky have quickly raised much of their support and will be working in an associate position through the end of the year. As they lead this church plant we believe that this will extend Agape's ministry to people who cannot make the long trip downtown, and to neighborhoods that

need a church to stand for the “little ones,” also loved by Jesus. We do not believe this church plant is the only church in SE Portland, it is another church joining other churches overwhelmed by the presence of evil in the community.

With the planting of this new church we know that more opportunities will arise to train other ministers to plant new churches in the Portland area and beyond. Other sites needing churches in Portland are Clackamas, Beaverton/Aloha/Hillsboro areas, NE Portland, and the entire I-5 corridor. This interstate is a major route for drugs and human trafficking and our vision is to populate that corridor with churches and leaders trained to provide healing to the oppressed. This also is a launching pad to other cities throughout the world which pray to God daily for more churches, more help, and courageous Christian leaders.

Please continue to pray for us as we try to fulfill the vision God has given us and plant 40 churches by 2020.

Ron



**D'Angelo and
Bethany's Wedding
Photos**

*NEWER CHURCHES
PROVIDE MORE
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR OTHER
PEOPLE TO SERVE
AND LEARN TO
GROW IN MINISTRY
AND THEIR
SPIRITUALITY.*



**KEN NOGUCHI AND KATIE
BLAKE
WEDDING DATE
SEPT 17**

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**WE'RE ON THE
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WE'RE ON A MISSION
FROM GOD...

CORE VALUES:

- AGAPE LOVE
- RELATIONSHIP
- EMPOWERMENT

The shadows are starting to fall and with that summer will be ending soon. During our summer months at Agape our attendance isn't as consistent as it is other times in the year. Some of our women that come on a more regular basis from the streets often are absent a month or so, I try to call them if I have a number for them and just check to see if they are safe.

I had a chance to tour a new center that is a one-stop place for women that have been or are in abuse. We be holding two classes to

August has been packed with activities! I went on a 14 day vacation and returned at the beginning of August only to dive right into planning for something we call TNT. TNT stands for Tuesday nights together and it is a teen event that gathers all of the area wide churches of Christ's youth groups. These happen every Tuesday night and each week a different church hosts them. August 16th was our week. Last year we co-hosted one with another church plant and this year we thought we'd try to tackle it by ourselves! It was a success!

This year TNTs took on a bit of a different role. Usually it is only fellowship time between 200+ teenagers, but we decided to give it a little more purpose. We had each hosting church choose an organization that was doing something in the community either local or international. Every week, students would get together at different churches and hear

It is called the Gateway Center. It is a wonderful place for women to feel safe and do things on their journey that usually require multiple stops in the city. I was excited to see this and have decided to volunteer at the center.

Agape had a chance to bless this place by helping an individual that needed to go to another state. A contribution was taken and we donated enough money plus more to start a fund for others! God is good. In September we will be holding two classes to

about the amazing things that these organizations are doing to help people in their cities and across the world. After we praised God, listened to presentations, and watched videos and listened to scripture being read, we then took up a collection for that organization. All of these teens gave from their hearts.

Our teens specifically gave their time as well to host our TNT. We were able to use Cascade College campus as our meeting place and I had 100% participation from our teenagers. They came and helped me set up, read scripture and Nathan Clark presented a message. Our organization we chose was Dignity Village, which is a homeless tent community here in Portland.

We had three members from our church come and speak on a panel. All three had been homeless at one time, then transitioned to Dignity Vil-

Women's Ministry

introduce our members that want to volunteer in abuse areas. I am excited to share with our members ways they can bless our community and city and to show God's love.

Thank you for the prayers for this ministry. I feel them and so do the women that we work with!

Peace~Lori



Lori Clark
Women's Minister
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Youth Ministry

lage, and are now in housing. We spoke about the fears and dangers of the streets and how Dignity Village was a safe place for them to stay as they tried to find something more permanent. At the end we were able to raise \$336.00 for Dignity Village. The 250 kids that came, showed up with giving hearts and I couldn't be more grateful. I'm so proud of our teens for hosting this event and for being involved with all of it. I'm looking forward to hearing the final tally of how much Portland area teens gave this summer to support God's efforts in this world.



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