

The Vision and Strategy of Church Revitalisation

It is now widely accepted that there is a great need in Europe for church planting, and that a new church plant often sees growth through conversions. But if for every church planted, an older evangelical church disappears, then overall we are not seeing much real progress in penetrating a given country by establishing a network of churches.

In France, the National Council of Evangelicals (le CNEF) has the objective of seeing "one for ten thousand" i.e. the existence of one evangelical church on average for every ten thousand inhabitants. A good deal of effort is dedicated to church planting but we are becoming more aware that some churches planted as recently as the 1980s are slowly declining. The evangelism commission of the CNEF has been looking at this question and doing some research with the help of several denominations. This workshop will share some of our initial findings and enable the participants to contribute their thoughts and their experience concerning this vital issue.

David Brown has been involved in church planting in France since 1976, and has planted three churches (two in Nancy and one in the Paris suburbs). At present he is “replanting” a church in central Paris (Église Protestante Évangélique de Paris-Villiers). For the last ten years he has also been involved with the GBU (Groupes Bibliques Universitaires), the French student movement affiliated to IFES, firstly as General Secretary, now as chair of the board. He also chairs the Evangelism Commission of the French “National Council of Evangelicals”, and teaches church planting at the Geneva Bible Institute. He is married to Mary and they have four adult children and five grandchildren.

I. The need for revitalization

A. Statistics

1. In North America

2. In France

B. The prerequisites to revitalization

II. Suggested responses

A. The church in difficulty is supported / taken over by a successful church

B. The Ephesus church model (Revelation 2.5)

- C. Improving the health of the Church as a prerequisite to growth
 - D. Issues of leadership must be resolved
 - 1. Better involvement of members
 - 2. Delegation
 - 3. Staff
 - E. Better integration of new people
 - F. Strategic planning
 - 1. Defining the vision of the Church
 - 2. Introducing new ideas into the culture of the Church
 - G. Focusing on a few things and doing them well
 - H. Identifying with the community / the needs outside the Church
- III. Is this applicable in Europe? What models have been tried?

Suggested Readings:

- Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2007)
- Ranier, S. Thom and Eric Geiger. *Simple Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2006)
- Ranier, Thom S. *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005)
- Frazer, Randy w. Lyle E. Shaller. *The Come Back Congregation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995)
- Harry L. Reeder, *From Embers to a Flame* (P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ 2004)