

A FILIPINO CELL CHURCH

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A Paper

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by

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## A FILIPINO CELL CHURCH

At the very center of Christ's heart lies the church for which He died in order to save, sanctify, redeem, and one day present as His eternal bride. The Apostle Paul describes Christ's passion for the church saying, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph 5:25b-27). So great was Christ's passion and concern for the Church that His very last words to His disciples commissioned them to dedicate their lives to the building up and expansion of the church. Therefore, this paper is a church planting proposal aimed at reaching the Filipino people for Christ.

Included in the proposal are a theological evaluation as to why churches should be planted, a theological analysis of the cell church structure, an evaluation of the Filipino society, rationale for target choice, and a strategic plan (which includes the Pauline Cycle) to accomplish this proposal.

### **Why Plant Churches?**

Biblically and historically it has been shown that church planting is the most crucial strategy for growing the church numerically while continuing to revitalize the existing church body in a city. No other programs (whether it is para-church ministries, expanding mega churches, congregational consulting, evangelistic crusades, and even outreach programs) have the same consistent impact on a community for Christ than dynamic and extensive planting.<sup>1</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy J. Keller, "Why Plant Churches," (2002), 1.

trumps all other programs when considering quantitative, qualitative, and lasting impact for the Kingdom of God.

### *Common Objections to Church Planting*

Despite church planting's positive benefits to the body of Christ, many reject the idea altogether. Here are some common objections towards planting new churches:

- a. There are already many churches that exist in the communities that can accommodate new people who move into the area, therefore the priority is filling these first before building new churches.
- b. Many churches in the community are already struggling to maintain their membership and a new church will only take away members and weaken the existing church bodies. Therefore, the focus should be on helping the existing churches become better churches, rather than planting more churches.

### *Arguments for the Criticality of Church Planting*

Though many of the objections for not planting churches seem very logical, they are based on wrong assumptions. The following section will explain why church planting is so critical.

### **Church Planting is Central to the Fulfilling of the Great Commission**

The final command of Jesus, the 'Great Commission' (Matt 28:18-20), sets the primary task for the Body of Christ. Within the passage are four verbs that are central to the understanding of the commandment: 'go', 'make', 'baptize', and 'teach.' Though the verb 'make' (or 'make disciples') is the sole imperative that demonstrates the central activity of this commandment, 'baptism' is referenced to the means or method by which disciples are made.<sup>1</sup> In the book of Acts, it is clear that baptism means incorporation into a worshiping community with

teaching, accountability, and boundaries (cf. Acts 2:41-47). Therefore, the ‘Great Commission’ is not a simple call to share the Good News, but to plant churches.

New churches reach new generations, new residents, and new people groups.<sup>2</sup> New residents are better reached by new congregations, because new churches do not create a high barrier of entry for those that desire to get involved in leadership and ministry. In older churches, organization and a hierarchy of leadership may be so established that it would require years of tenure before a new member is allowed to participate. Not so with newer churches, since most will be given equal power arising out of the many ministerial needs of the church.

Newer congregations seem to have a disproportionate number of younger adults who attend their church. Long-established congregations develop traditions (such as meeting times, sermon topics, lengths of services, leadership styles, emotional atmosphere, and many more customs and mores), which reflect the values of long-time leadership from previous generations. Having longstanding values and leadership not only influences and controls the church life, but creates an environment of conformity rather than adaptability and flexibility for younger generations to easily become a part of.

New socio-economic groups in a community are reached better by new congregations. For example, if blue-collar commuters moved into areas where the older residents were all professional white-collar workers, it is likely that a new church will be more receptive to needs of the new residents, while the older churches will continue to be oriented to the original social group.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, if new church plants are multi-ethnic from its inception this will also be the best way to reach new racial groups within a community. For instance, if an all-Anglo neighborhood experiences a 33% growth of Hispanics, a new, deliberately bi-racial church will

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Donald McGavran and George G. Hunter, *Church Growth: Strategies That Work* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980).

be far more likely to create a cultural familiarity than an older church in town. There will be the ability to minister in the same language, which in the case of brand new immigrants, a very effective way to reach them.

New churches best reach the unchurched. Denominational studies have shown that the average new church gains most of its new members (60-80%) from those who are not attending church, in contrast to existing churches over the age of 15 years which gain 80-90% of new members by transfer from other congregations.<sup>4</sup> There is a stark contrast between new churches that increase membership through reaching out in the communities and bringing new people to Christ, compared to older churches that increase membership through the recycling of members from one church to another. According to Keller, this translates to the average new congregation bringing in 6-8 more times new people into the life of the Body of Christ than an older congregation of the same size.

Though established congregations provide many things that newer churches can't offer, older churches will not be able to match the effectiveness of new churches reaching people for the kingdom of God. Often, older churches face powerful internal institutional pressures that cause it to allocate most of their attention, time, and energy towards members within, rather than outside its walls. This is natural and desirable, because it is what causes security and stability that many people need. Nevertheless, new congregations are forced to focus on the needs of its community and non-members, as a means to grow and survive. Yet, often the question is raised, "Should we try to renew older congregations to make them more evangelistic, or should we plant lots of new churches?" The answer is that it is not an either-or, but both.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

### **Church Planting Continually Revitalizes the Entire Body of Christ**

There should never be a choice between church planting or church renewal. Both work symbiotically to stay healthy and alive. The reason why church planting does not harm existing churches is because it: (1) is the best way to surface strong new leaders for the whole body, (2) brings new ideas for reaching the lost to the entire body, (3) challenges other churches to reexamine their traditions and goals, (4) reaches new people who may eventually become part of other congregations (either through relocation or need).

### **Church Planting Reinforces Kingdom-Mindedness**

Though starting new congregations may mean pulling a few members out from existing churches, the knowledge that six to eight times more people will be reached for the kingdom is worth the risk and pain of the new venture. Will the people of God be more resentful and bemoan the families that start new churches, or rejoice in the 80% new believers that the kingdom gains through planting churches? Thus, planting churches reminds Christians to think outside of their own lives and community to the large gains and expansion of the kingdom of God.

### **Target Area and People Groups**

Just as Christ taught his disciples to evaluate and weigh the cost of every commitment (Luke 14:28-33), the same principle can be applied to this plan to reach the selected target area and the Filipinos. This section includes demographical data; in order to develop an understanding of the target community, assess resources that can potentially be harnessed to spread the Gospel, and to understand potential difficulties of the mission as to properly count the cost of the endeavor.

### *The Land*

Off the southeastern coast of China, between Taiwan and Borneo, lies the beautiful archipelago of tropical islands which is today the home of the vigorous young nation known as the Republic of the Philippines. This compact group of 7,000 islands, (only 463 of which have areas of at least one square mile), has a total area of 115,600 square miles—a little larger than the State of Arizona. Luzon in the north is the Philippines largest and most heavily populated island. Mindanao in the south is the second largest island and today represents the frontier, (as it is still relatively under populated). Between these two is an important group of islands collectively known as the Visayan Islands. The mountainous character of much of the islands gives the general impression of a rugged topography. There are several plains, notably the central plains of Luzon, in which most of the agricultural production takes place.<sup>5</sup>

### *The People and Their Culture*

The people of the Philippines are racially of Malayan origin, but with quite an admixture of Chinese and European blood. The only exception is the Negrito group, which represents a vanishing minority. Although they have formed a surprisingly viable nation, the people are fragmented geographically, linguistically, and to some extent, religiously. There are about eight major language groups, of which Cebuano and Tagalog are the largest, and eighty or more minor language groups. The percentage of the population that belong to each language group are: Tagalog 28.1%, Cebuano 13.1%, Ilocano 9%, Bisaya/Binisaya 7.6%, Hiligaynon Ilonggo 7.5%, Bikol 6%, Waray 3.4%, and other 25.3% (2000 census).<sup>6</sup> Those that are considered to be the primary target to reach are those that speak Tagalog and Visayan who are 25,140,698 and 11,720,397, respectively, in number.

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur L. Tuggy, *The Philippine Church: Growth in a Changing Society* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971), 16.

<sup>6</sup> “The World Fact Book,” (Central Intelligence Agency, 2006).

### *Population and Religion*

The population estimated as of July, 2006 is 89,468,677 and is growing at about 1.8% annually (1,610,436 people per year). The religion of the country is divided among the Moros, Christians, and Pagans. The Moros are the Moslem peoples of Mindanao and Sulu. The Pagans are the predominantly animistic mountain groups. The Christians make up the majority of the population.<sup>7</sup> The percentage of the population that fall under each religion are: Roman Catholic 80.9% (7,238,015,969 people), Evangelical 2.8% (2,505,123 people), Iglesia ni Kristo 2.3%, Aglipayan 2%, other Christian 4.5% (4,026,090 people), Muslim 5% (4,473,434 people), other 1.8%, unspecified 0.6%, and none 0.1% (2000 census).<sup>8</sup>

### *Communications*

One of the practical ways of starting church movements in the Philippines (that will be discussed in more detail in a later section) is abundant gospel sowing, which typically relies heavily on mass media. This section is listed to show what kind of mass media can be used in the Philippines. There are close to 32,935,900 (2004 est.) cell phone users in the Philippines (this equates to over 30% of the population). The radio broadcast stations are: AM 369, FM 583, shortwave 5 (2005 est.).<sup>9</sup> There are 1373 channels available for viewing sponsored by 224 television broadcast stations (2004 est.). The internet is becoming one of the fastest growing technologies in the Philippines. There are over 7,820,000 internet users (2005 est.).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tuggy, *The Philippine Church: Growth in a Changing Society*, 16-17.

<sup>8</sup> "The World Fact Book."

<sup>9</sup> Each shortwave station operates on multiple frequencies in the language of the target audience (2004)

<sup>10</sup> "The World Fact Book."

### **My Passion—a Rational for Target Choice**

I have been blessed with a very unique up-bringing; I was raised in the Philippines as a child and I currently live in the United States as an adult. Growing up in the Philippines, I saw families struggle because of the influence of sin, corrupt government officials, strong economic pressure, and being indoctrinated by unhealthy traditions and ideologies of society and the Catholic Church.

In 1986, I experienced first-hand the paramount changes in the Philippine society as the people revolted against President Marcos' rule. Though the Philippine government is democratic (formed and shaped from and by the American government), many considered Marcos a dictator. Marred by personal health issues, political mismanagement, and human rights violations in the military, Marcos was removed from office by the "People Power" EDSA Revolution.

Consequently, my grandfather Josephus Q. Ramas, who was the commanding general of the Philippine Army, was imprisoned for five years since he served under Marcos' rule. Since then there has been a continual decline in the authority and power of the Philippine government. Presidents that have taken office since that time have not changed and are similarly corrupt. This corruption has caused the country to slide further into social, economic, and moral decay.

Though the Philippines were once ruled by a quasi "dictator", society was ordered, respect was given to lawmakers and law enforcers, and authority was obeyed by the people. Now, the country has lost its ability to rule and be ruled. The lack of integrity and morality in the government has caused the people to throw off all restraint. It is common for people to bribe officials when caught violating laws, and this bribery is so pervasive people no longer live with fear of punishment.

Moreover, the economy has dwindled in the light of this new government system. The economy has since fallen to its all-time low. The national deficit has climbed to historic

highs of \$67.62 billion estimated in 2005. Since 1986, the Philippine currency (the Peso), has nearly inflated 150% moving from an exchange rate of P20 (Pesos) per \$1, to approximately P50 per \$1. This has thrown the country in economic crisis and has ushered in a time of poverty that I have never seen in all of my life time.

To make matters worse, many families are being torn apart due to unbiblical values that have influenced society for many generations. It is a cultural norm for men to act “machismo” (often leading many down a path of adultery, licentiousness, alcoholism, and violence). This has caused men to become ineffective spiritual and moral leaders for their families often ending in divorce or separation.

Moreover, children are abandoned and confused; left to struggle with a Catholic faith that is contradicted by the actions of their parents and society as a whole. These same children find themselves later in life participating in the same vicious cycle (by either becoming the victimizer or the victim). With each family degenerating more and more over time, many children end up living in poverty, forced into prostitution, or addicted to drugs and alcohol.

These factors, coupled with the Catholic Church’s weak teaching and preaching of the gospel, has only disillusioned the society about the availing power of God to break this sinful cycle. The Catholic Church’s ineffective teaching has opened the door for Filipinos to be indoctrinated by ungodly traditions and false ideologies of many religions (primarily Muslims and the Iglesia ni Cristo). All of this has caused decay in the body of Christ and the institution of the family.

My hope and prayer is that God would use me as an ambassador of Christ to bring about reconciliation between God and the Filipino people, resulting in the salvation of the Filipinos and a transformation in the culture and society as a whole. As the Apostle Paul says:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of

reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us (2 Corinthians 5:18-20a).

Hence, it is my desire to bring about a ministry of reconciliation through God's ordained institutions: the church and the family.

*Winning the Family—a Key to Winning the Philippines*

The family is considered the center of the Philippine society. Often, close family relationships are formed extending from the immediate, to the extended (relatives of both the father and mother), and even to the over-extended *compadre* relationship.<sup>11</sup> These family-ties are so strong that it is very common in a Filipino home to find the children, parents, and grandparents living together. It is not uncommon to find children still living with their parents until their later years (late twenties or thirties). After children get married and buy homes, they often care for and house their aging parents. There is also a balance in the roles of the mother and the father in the Filipino family.

The father is typically viewed as the “authority figure” at home, but authority in society (in general) is more determined by age. In this case, the mother, older siblings, or grandparents are also given authority by virtue of their age. They in turn, care and discipline those that are younger. Older siblings are given respect by their younger siblings and are often addressed as *kuya* (older brother) and *ate* (older sister). This type of interaction may even carry over to the larger society as a whole, creating interconnectedness between families and friends. It is common for children to be cared for and disciplined by extended family or friends.

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<sup>11</sup> Tuggy, *The Philippine Church: Growth in a Changing Society*, 90. The *compadre* system or “ritual co-parenthood” describes the relationship between a parent and the person(s) whom he chooses to sponsor his child at baptism. Sometimes the persons is chosen because of his wealth or influence. IN this case the relationship tends to be merely formal. Often, however, the choice is a close friend and the affectional tie created is quite close. If the sponsor is a man he is subsequently addressed as *compadre* or *pare*, or if a woman, *comadre* or *mare*. A Tagalog child addresses his sponsor as *ninong* (ninang if female) and the child is known as *inanak*.

Religious life and influence often center more around the family than the church.

Tuggy puts it this way:

Whenever a big family event is occurring in the parish church, e.g., a wedding or baptism, even the anticlerical members of the family will attend. There are the ever-present family shrines in Philippine homes, and many wealthy families have their own private chapels. Filipinos will frequently go against canon law in asking non-Catholics to be sponsors at baptisms and weddings if they desire that some particular person be a *compadre*.

As a result, any strategic plan to evangelize Filipinos must have an approach that considers the family.

## **Strategic Plan**

### **What Are Cell Churches?**

There are very close ties between the word used for *home* (or cell) and the word used for *church* in the Bible. Examining passages that relate these terms provide a clear definition of a cell church and principles by which it should operate.

The *church* is defined as a congregation of believers. The Greek word **ἐκκλησία** or *ekklesia* translated *church* is described four ways in the Bible. The basic meaning is referred to as an assembly; often referred to as the *body of Christ* or a group of believers who gather for worship. This is demonstrated when Apostel Paul says, “Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the *church* [**ἐκκλησία** or *ekklesia* ], first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor 12:27). Erickson defines the church as, “. . . the whole body of those through Christ's death have been savingly reconciled to God and have received new life. It includes all such persons, whether in heaven or on earth. While universal in

nature, it finds expression in logical groupings of believers that display same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole.”<sup>12</sup>

The *home* is a place where the early church gathered. Comparatively, the term *home* or *cell* is referenced as a place of gathering for the church. Paul describes the gathering of the early church in homes when he says, “The *churches* of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the *church* that is in their *house*” (1 Cor 16:19).

The *home* is described as a family. Moreover, the *home* [ΟΙΚΟΣ] is also referenced not only as a place where the church gathers, but a personal community—a family. When giving instructions to Timothy, Paul uses the word ΟΙΚΟΣ as a reference to *family* when he says, “. . . but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own *family* [ΟΙΚΟΣ or oikos] and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.” Since ΟΙΚΟΣ can be described as personal community, it will usually consist of relatives and a few friends who are related either through work, recreation, or church. According to Neighbour, those that are considered to be part of an ΟΙΚΟΣ are people related to one another through talking, sharing and other activities. On average, Christians usually only have nine people in their ΟΙΚΟΣ.<sup>13</sup>

The *family* is considered to be both biological and spiritual. Besides, ΟΙΚΟΣ (*family*) referring to a biological family, biblically this family relationship is extended to the entire *church* (or spiritual family). Peter illustrates this phenomena stating, “. . . you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual *house* [ΟΙΚΟΣ or oikos] for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

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<sup>12</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 1044.

<sup>13</sup> Ralph W. Neighbour, *Where Do We Go from Here?: A Guide Book for the Cell Group Church* (Houston, TX: Touch Resources, 1990), 114.

Lastly, the *household (cell)* groups are the basic building blocks of the church.<sup>14</sup> Cell groups are what form the entire body of the church (which performs all the activity of the church). Therefore, having examined passages relating both cells and churches, it is critical to consolidate the biblical data into a clear and concise definition of what a cell church is, and to provide biblical principles that will guide its function.

### Cell Church Defined

The *CELL* is the basic Christian Community composed of three to fifteen people that gather weekly for worship, instruction, fellowship, edification, and evangelism (WIFEE). Consequently, the *CHURCH* is formed from *CELLS* and is the sum total of all *CELLS*.

### Why Cell Churches: Biblical Rational Working Within the Filipino Context

This list is a comparison of church structure and the resulting function of today's church versus the New Testament Home Church. The last column, expands on the ideas and give rational as to why cell churches are

Feature	Today's Church	N.T. Home (Cell) Church	(+) in Filipino Setting
Place of meeting	A Church-building	Moved from house to house--homes of the believers	Hospitality is a characteristic of most Filipinos; meeting in homes becomes an encouragement
Activities	Weekly worship services	Daily fellowship	Relationships are vital; a church structure that enables more time spent together is preferred
Support System	Got a problem? See the Pastor	Building one another up	Upholding the community is valued; therefore supportive participation by all is culturally more accepted

<sup>14</sup> Trent C. Butler, ed., *Holman Bible Dictionary*, ed. Marsha A. Smith et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 1991), 674.

Relationships	Remote; little transparency	Intimate; helping one another	Realness and authenticity is valued; this is more feasible in a cell group
Discipling	Classes, notebooks; little modeling; values not shaped	Modeling; personal values shaped	In the provinces, teaching is better received through modeling than through books
Finances	Tithes and offerings	Share everything	Filipinos typically share everything due to the emphasis of communal life in society
Ministry-style	Individual	Community	The Filipino's core value of community fits this biblical model
Evangelism	Actions, programs, specialists	Through building relationships with family and friends	Group decisions are culturally more accepted
Orientation	To get people in the church	Inviting people into homes a less intimidating environment	Unbelievers will be less intimidated to go to homes
Prayer Life	Individual choice; limited	Hours daily; heavenly emphasis	The more time is spent doing an activity in a group the more it will be culturally accepted

### A Biblical Imperative that Guides the Function of Cells

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

The cell community is marked by (a) sacrificially-loving Christ, (b) the church and neighbors (c) being united in prayer and ministry, (d) being centered on loving relationships, (e)

celebration and praise, (f) being transformed and impacting lives, (g) modeling and expanding the kingdom God through continual church planting.

### *Vision*

The family was designed as a means to exemplify the holy and loving community that exists within the Triune God of the Bible, and to produce godly offspring who are representatives for Him in this world (Gen 1:26-28; 2:24; 2 Cor 5:18-21). The church, on the other hand, is commissioned to make disciples for Christ (plant churches), spread the gospel, and equip the saints until all believers attain unity in the faith, a knowledge of the Son of God, and spiritual maturity (Eph 4:11-13). Both institutions are intimately connected and work to edify and build each other up. Each institution cannot carry out its responsibilities without the other properly functioning. Both are complimentary in establishing the kingdom of God and fulfilling His will on earth. Professor Howard Hendricks of Dallas Theological Seminary mentions:

It's like a student said to me some time ago. She said, 'Prof, my father was an outstanding leader. He was a leader in his corporation. He was a leader in the community. He was a leader in the church. But when he came home, he was out to lunch. And that's my most serious handicap as his child. He provided no model of male leadership, and subsequently destroyed the church...' And that's why we are as weak as we are, because we have no leadership, because leadership is basically developed in a family as God intended it to be. God's fulcrum is always the family...the disturbing thing, is that no society has ever survived after the breakdown of the family, which is exactly where we are; working wives, absent and passive father, and latchkey children. Every attempt you make to strengthen the home life of your church, of your ministry, will be the most significant contribution you make to the Body of Christ in this generation.

### *Mission*

To glorify the Trinitarian God of the Bible by cooperating with the Holy Spirit in bringing reconciliation to families, social justice, and spreading the Gospel through a movement of churches and ministries in the Philippines.

### *Core Values*

**Truth (the Word of God)** – we recognize the Word of God as the expression of God’s will to us, possessing the right to supremely define what we are to believe and how we are to conduct ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- 2 Timothy 4:2, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.”

**Love** – since God has first loved us so we will love Him and each other

- John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

**Community** – a body that nurtures individuals and reflects the Kingdom of God.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- 2 Timothy 4:2, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.”

**Family** – the church will work to preserve, edify, and strengthen the family unit

- Genesis 17:7, "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."
- Deuteronomy 6:6-7, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about

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<sup>15</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 267.

them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

- Titus 2:4, "Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children..."
- 1 Timothy 3:12, "A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well."
- Psalm 127:3, "Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him."
- Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

### **Pauline Cycle<sup>16</sup>—the Practical Side of Church Planting**

This last section will discuss elements central to planting churches, which have been formulated from biblical principles, reflections from church planters in the Philippines, and case studies on Church Planting Movements. These principles and practical guidelines are not exhaustive in nature, but incorporating them will form a strong foundation for establishing churches in the Philippines. There will be principles that will be left incomplete, since further research and study is needed in order to develop the methodology.

#### *(1) Missionaries commissioned*

### **Selecting & Sending**

#### **Prayer**

Prayer is fundamental to every Church Planting Movement.<sup>17</sup> Usually, prayer is the first pillar when strategizing to reach a certain people group. It is vital for church planters to build a strong prayer base before leaving to the selected target area. This can be done through

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<sup>16</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally : North America and Beyond*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000). (The Pauline Cycle along with the related principles were taken from several sections in this book.)

<sup>17</sup> David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention 1999), 33.

relationships in the family, at the church, work, or seminary, and by sending out monthly updates to everyone that is supporting the mission. Here are some things that I thought are important to pray for during the initial stages of planning the cell church ministry:

- Prayer for the Lord to start to reveal His plan for the Cell Church Plant (Jeremiah 33:3).
- Prayer for the Lord to raise leaders to carry out the vision as a team (Matthew 9:38).
- Prayer that the Lord would grant understanding, discernment, fear of the Lord, wisdom, and knowledge for those who serve in the Cell Church Plant (Proverbs 2:3, 5-6).
- Prayer of expectation that the Lord would glorify Himself through our service and daily save people through the Cell Church Ministry (Acts 2:47).

### **Encouragement / Training Support**

*(2) Audience contacted*

### **Courtesy Contact / Community Contact / Selective Evangelistic Contact**

### **Wide-sprad Evangelistic Contact**

According to Garrison, Church Planting Movements have not emerged where evangelism is rare or absent.<sup>18</sup> This method typically relies heavily on the use of mass media. As mentioned earlier, over 30% of the entire population of the Philippines uses cell phones. Most cell phone providers only charge P1 per text message that is sent. Therefore, many people text each other several messages a day. Text messaging has become so prevalent that cell phone

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

providers are now selling advertisements that are sent free to the cell phone subscribers who chose to receive these ads. Therefore, the church can use these advertisement services to send out the Gospel messages.

*(3) Gospel communicated*

**Message Contextualization**

**Method Determined**

Compared to the typical pattern in the West where emphasis on individualism and personal commitments are stressed, in the Philippines strong familial bonds exist and these bonds significantly affect the way evangelism should be done in more of a communal aspect. Here are several workable means of presenting Christ to entire families and appealing for group decisions. One way is to witness to the head of the family and challenge him (or her) to decide with his entire family (e.g., the Philippian jailor). Another is to hold a special meeting at a home at which all of the extended family is gathered together (e.g., the story of Cornelius). The third and probably most effective method is organizing a program of evangelistic home Bible Studies. The church planter, national pastor, and workers, collaborate and setup multiple Bible studies in the homes of interested families. Every effort is made to incorporate as many members of the family as possible into these studies. The pattern of decision expected is the family pattern. Bo Horlen, currently a missionary with World Venture who has planted churches for over 15 years in the Philippines confirmed the importance of this method in an email saying, “We have used multiple strategies over the years . . . but the most fruit has come through evangelistic Bible studies held in Filipino homes . . . where many members of a family can hear and think about Jesus' claims on their hearts and lives together. . . even though each family member will make their own decision for Christ.”

## **Media Selection / Measurement Implementation**

*(4) Hearers converted*

## **Instruction / Motivation / Decision / Confession**

*(5) Believers congregated*

Just as it is crucial for any child to be a part of a family who can help them grow and develop towards maturity, the same principles apply to those who are recently converted and have become a new child of God. It is essential that new believers are accepted and belong to a church family who can help them develop to become spiritually mature and fruitful members of the body of Christ. There are four primary principles that need to be considered so that an effective church planter can assure that believers are congregated in their respected target areas: belongingness, group size, meeting place, and meeting times.

## **Belongingness / Group Sizes / Meeting Place / Meeting Times**

Developing community is really essential to congregating believers and as a result it is critical for groups to maintain a size were each member can, at the very least, establish a face-to-face relationship with one another. Cell groups should seldom have more than three to fifteen members so that each individual in the group is able to participate in discussion and be cared for by others in the group. This also is made possible since most homes in the urban cities of the Philippines can typically accommodate a group of eight to thirty people. Moreover, group meeting times is also essential to the success in being able to congregate a small group of believers.

Since the Catholic influence is so wide spread through out most of the Philippines, it is very common for church service to be on Sundays during the morning or early afternoon

hours. This is the ideal time to congregate believers as most of the businesses and stores are closed during those hours. The time that is most suited to draw a young adult crowd is Friday or Saturday nights, because “gimmicks” or group outings are held during those nights. Likewise, the weekdays make it almost impossible to meet because it is packed with activities such as work, school, and time spent with the family that typically last from 7:30 a.m. till 8:00 p.m.

*(6) Faith confirmed*

**Stewardship / Witness**

**Service / Worship / Instruction**

Worship and teaching will be communicated through Tagalog and Visayan. When worship and teaching is conducted from songs and material that are translated into the Filipino language it enables all in the community to participate in the new church’s formation.

*(7) Leaders consecrated*

**Spiritual Discipline / Permanent Organization**

**Leadership Development**

Indigenous Leadership—missionaries involved in planting churches should focus on mentoring natives to do the job of church planting themselves. Usually, when missionaries establish an identity as the primary church planter or pastor, it becomes difficult for them to decrease involvement over time to start new churches. Once churches stabilize, the church planter should turn all the responsibilities over to local leadership. According to Tuggy, this step should not be taken:

In the Conservative Baptist Capitol City Baptist Church, for example, this step was taken in April 1967 as four American families left places of leadership in the church. The

church found the first four months rather difficult, but a year later it reported a 22 per cent increase in attendance.<sup>19</sup>

*(8) Believers commended*

**Continuation of Ministries / Transition of Leadership / Withdrawal of Church Planter**

*(9) Relationships continued*

**Church / Mission Relationships**

**Church / Church Relationships**

**Missionary / Church Relationships**

*(10) Sending church convened*

**Participation in Mission / Understanding of Mission**

*Goals*

**Short-term Goals**

1. Continue to develop spiritual gifts and leadership by directing the young adults fellowship at my home church (Aug 2005 to June 2007)
2. Begin to build a very close relationship with Pastor Lo director of Missions and Church Planting at Dallas Chinese Bible Church (June 2006 until Graduation)

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<sup>19</sup> Tuggy, *The Philippine Church: Growth in a Changing Society*, 159.

3. Begin to form a network with Professors and students at DTS who have done missionary work in the Philippines (Jan 2007 until Graduation)
4. Begin to build relationships with Filipino Churches locally (Jan 2007 until Graduation)

### **Intermediate Goals**

5. Find a missions agency to work with for the church planting project (Spring 2007)
6. Get supporters and a team of people who are willing plant churches in the Philippines (Fall 2008)

### **Long-term Goals**

1. Complete my seminary training at Dallas Theological Seminary (Fall 2009)

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