



BIBLE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

# Incubator

**A nurturing, mother/daughter  
church plant relationship**

**CHURCH EXTENSION MINISTRIES**

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## Introduction

Just like an unhatched chick needs time in the incubator to stay warm and mature to viability before it hatches, a church planter and core group grows to viability at an incubator church before a mission church launch.

During the incubator period, the church planter moves to the target area, assimilates into the life of the mother church, receives training, gathers a core group, and makes detailed plans for the mission church. The mother church provides prayerful support for the planter and the core group each step of the way. In addition, they communicate to the congregation the missional concept of church planting and take initiative in creating the core group.

**This guide provides step-by-step instructions for an incubator church and a church planter entering into an incubator church planting relationship.** Every church plant has a unique story in how the Lord leads up to the launch of the mission church. This guide gives a general overview of this relationship.

If you have any questions, you can contact Church Extension Director David Gundrum or Pastors Jim MacArthur and Scott Allison from New Life Bible Fellowship Church of Oley, PA who recently were an incubator for Church Planter Dan Hoffstetter of Redeemer BFC in Tipton, PA.



*Pastor Scott Allison (at the pulpit) and the elders of New Life BFC Oley give glory to God during the commissioning service of Church Planter Dan Hoffstetter and the core group for Redeemer BFC Tipton.*

## Step # 1 - Assimilation into the Mother Church - 6-10 months

The items listed below are a general overview of the areas of involvement and responsibilities that the Mother Church will agree to facilitate for the Planter.

- The mother church will assist with the **church planter's residential move** to the target site.
- The mother church will encourage the **church planter's regular attendance** at Sunday services, mid-week groups, and miscellaneous meetings such as elders, deacons, mission committees, etc.
- The pastors and elders of the mother church will **assign ministry involvement** to the church planter such as teaching, preaching, serving, visitation, counseling, etc.,
- The mother church will **arrange "Incubator Training"** for the planter with a planting organization such *City-to City*, *Converge*, or *Multiply*.
- The mother church will **give opportunity for the church planter to cast vision** for the daughter plant. For example, the planter can report at elders' meetings, participate with the Mission Committee, teach in Sunday School, and give updates in the worship gatherings.
- The pastors/elders of the mother church will assist in **identifying core group members** from the congregation.
- The mother church will **provide time and space for the core group to meet together** for learning church planting principles, prayer walk through the target area, have fellowship times together, etc.
- The mother church will arrange groups from the church **to do *Community Surveys*** in the target site.
- The mother church will **arrange with the pastoral staff a "*Planting Sunday (Weekend) Conference*."**
- The mother church will **solicit twenty people to commit to being part of the church plant** for at least three years. These people are in addition to the core group.

- The mother church will **facilitate meetings** with BFC churches in the region to present the planting vision.
- The mother church will **organize with the Elders and Pastors a *Launch Celebration***.
- The mother church will **arrange a commissioning service** and send off the church planter and his core group.



*Pastor Ron Smith (right, blue shirt) and theMISSION Church in Townsend, DE had an incubator/daughter church relationship with the BFC of Newark, DE before its launch.*

## Step # 2 - “Incubator” training for the Planter

The planter without previous planting experience will need a diversity of training platforms in order to be equipped to launch a church plant. The following are the types of Training Platforms that will be involved during the incubator period.

- **Enrollment in a church planning training program:** City-to-City, Surge, Five-Two, Synergy, Exponential, Multiply etc. The planter, along with counsel from the Director of Church Extension, will select a training organization. Church Extension will pay for the costs of the training.
- **Coaching relationship:** In addition to the coaching the planter receives from the training organization, he will have an assigned coach by Church Extension.
- **Mentoring relationship:** The mother church will appoint a mentor from the elder board for the planter.
- **Transitional Leadership Team (TLT):** Church Extension will appoint a TLT made up of elders and pastors from the BFC region. The TLT is described in the *Transitional Leadership Manual* on the Church Extension web site under “Resources” on [www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources](http://www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources). The Planter will organize monthly meetings with the TLT during the Incubation period.
- **Church Extension Ongoing Training:** The planter will participate in the Training Days and Roundtables that Church Extension provides. Generally, there are two Training Days per year and one Roundtable.

## Step # 3 - The Mother Church Training: Planting & the Incubator Model

The Mother Church along with the BFC Regional churches will have an understanding of multiplication church planting and the incubator model and teach its congregations about multiplication.

- **The Mother Church will form a *Church Planting Resource Team (CPRT)*.** The planter could chair this team. The Team will study the *Multiplication Manual: Regional or Particular Daughter Church Planting Guidebook* particularly the sections on Forming a Church Planting Resource Team pg. 15-17 and Steps to Planting a Daughter Church pg. 12-14. It would also be beneficial for the Elders, Pastors, Mission Committee, and other key people to read through the Guidebook. At the end of the Guidebook is “*The 12 Steps to Parenting a Daughter Church*.” This will be very helpful for the elders and pastors to study, discuss, and plan how they will prepare the church for the launching of a plant. These resources are available on [www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources](http://www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources).
- **The pastor of the mother church will preach on multiplication and planting during the course of the incubation period.** The CPRT could arrange special meetings and fellowship times for further exposure to multiplication.
- **The elders of the mother church will determine what percentage of financial support they will give to the planter and the plant.** Church Extension will solicit the regional churches for participation in the planter’s financial support. Church Extension will also assist the planter in raising support from friends, family and associates.

### Note:

*The incubation period is very important for not only the church planter and his core group but also for the church. Most churches are not taught the missional concept of building the Kingdom through multiplication. The Multiplication Manual explains the Theological, Biblical, and Missiological rationales for churches planting churches.*

*Over the years the western church has strayed from this Godly model of building the Kingdom. Most of the world practices church multiplication and experiences great church growth. In the United States, church growth is in a steady decline. By God’s grace, educating the congregation about multiplication will go a long way in turning this trend around.*

## Step # 4 - Gather a Core Group and Initiate CGLT Training

Developing the church plant's Core Group Launch Team or CGLT is essential. A CGLT is the group of people who make up the team that will launch a new church. The members of the CGLT are the *pioneers* who prepare the launch so the church plant can begin with a critical mass of people as well as organized start-up ministries. The CGLT will rehearse the style, music, and format for worship services, and have a vision plan describing who the plant is and how it will grow. These are the church planter's core people around whom the church is developed. They provide the prayer, finances, and hard work for the new church plant.

### Who is on the CGLT?



*Stages of Core Group Launch Team (CGLT) Development are described in the Multiplication Manual Guidebook pg. 19-20, available at [ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources](http://ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources).*



## Step # 5 - Implementing a Prayer Action Plan

No great work for God will ever be accomplished without spending time in prayer. Jesus knew this truth and in the midst of many ministry opportunities He made time to pray. The planter must spend time in prayer and gather prayer warriors alongside him. *Getting others to join with you in corporate prayer will help even more.* Great power is released when the church comes together to pray. (Mark 1:35; Mark 3:27; 2 Corinthians 10:4; Matthew 18:18-20)

- *A Planting Prayer Team* of 6-8 people will be formed in the mother church.
- *Regional Prayer Teams* will be formed. The Planter and CGLT will develop a plan for organizing these teams in the regional churches.
- *A Prayer Calendar* or *Prayer Guide* will be circulated regularly to the ministries in the mother church and regional churches. The planter or CGLT member will create this resource.
- *Prayer Walks* in the target community will be organized by the planter.
- *Prayer Meetings* will be held by the planter in the mother church in addition to the planter visiting the regional churches to hold prayer times.

## Step # 6 - Construct a Value / Vision / Mission Plan

The planter and CGLT will formulate Value Statements, a Vision Statement and Mission Statement to submit to the Director and Transitional Leadership Team for discussion and review. The planter and CGLT will use Church Extension's *Core Values, Mission and Vision Statements Primer* as a guide for producing values and statements (available on [www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources.](http://www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources.)).

## Step # 7 - Understanding Culture and Contextualization in the Target Site

The planter and his core group will need time during the incubation period to learn the culture and community dynamics of the target site.

- The planter will do a fresh **comprehensive demographic survey** of the target community with the assistance of the CPRT and the CGLT utilizing the Church Extension *Demographic Survey Taskbook* (available on [www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources.](http://www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources.)).
- The planter will **live in the target community** and he and his family will begin to build relationships among his neighbors, businesses, professionals, schools, etc.
- If needed, the **planter may find a part-time job** in the community as a means of support, if not enough support is not raised.
- The planter and his family may become **involved with social or civic organizations in the community** as well as participate in events as long as these involvements do not distract from the goal of planting.
- The planter may be encouraged to **enroll his children in the public schools** but this ultimately will be left up to the family.
- The planter, with approval from the mother church elders, will **plan an outreach in the target community** during the Incubation period involving teams from the mother church.
- Eventually the planter and his core group will **decide on what initial events, studies, etc. to pre-launch** in the community.

## Step # 8 - Discipleship/ Leadership Development

The planter along with counsel from the Director and the TLT will work through Church Extension's *Leadership Training Manual*. Available on [www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources](http://www.ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Resources).



*Pastors Tim Schmoyer and Aaron Smith (left) and the joint elder board of Northern Lehigh BFC and Whitehall BFC went on a retreat to focus their vision and mission for the churches. Whitehall BFC was an incubator for the Northern Lehigh BFC multi-site church plant.*

## Step # 9 - Pre-Launch ➡ Launch ➡ Post Launch

### **LAUNCHING Resources**

A Book/web-site/blog/PDF directory for preparing a launch

The preparations that go into the public launch/re-launch of your plant and worship celebration are vitally important. Having a well planned launch will set forth the lasting impressions you want your core group and visitors to have when they leave your plant for the first time and every time following.

Below are resources about the launching steps and planning. **Pay special attention to the section in your DCPI Handbook and the Malphurs book.** If you do not have any of the books recommended, you can find clickable links for each resource on our website at [ChurchPlantingBFC.org/launchingresources](http://ChurchPlantingBFC.org/launchingresources).

#### ***Book Sections on Launching:***

1. [DCPI Handbook](#) - Pages 209-240  
The “DCPI Handbook”, along with the “BFC Church Planting Guide” is your assigned guide through your church planting experience - reference it often. This section on preparing for the launch is required reading when preparing your launch or re-launch. You can download the DCPI Handbook at [ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Handbook](http://ChurchPlantingBFC.org/Handbook)
  2. [Breaking the Missional Code](#) by Ed Stetzer and David Putman, pages 153-169
  3. [Planting New Churches in a Post-Modern Age](#) by Ed Stetzer, pages 258-265
  4. [Planting Growing Churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#) by Aubrey Malpurs, pages 317-340
  5. [First Steps for Planting a Church](#) by Gary Rohrmayer and Lee Stephenson
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#### ***Web-site / Blogs / PDFs on Launching***

1. [Free Launch Plan Strategy Documents](#) - Church Planting Solutions has put together four sample documents for new church plants.
2. [Church planting timeline](#). See the **Church Planting** Timeline in all its glory!
3. Planter Tutorial step by step <https://church-planting.net/church-planting-tutorial-getting-started/>
4. [PDF] [Developing a Launch Plan](#) by Todd Wilson

5. [PDF] [Seven Steps for Church Planting](#) from North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention
6. [PDF] [The Year Leading Up to Your Launch](#)
7. [Launching a Church: Vision and Goals](#) from Building Church Leaders
8. [PDF] [Multiply Newsletter](#) from Mission to North America, PCA
9. [Launching a Church: Vision and Goals](#), from Building Church Leaders
10. Launching Your Church with Servant Evangelism  
[garyrohmayer.typepad.com/yourjourneyblog/2008/02/launching-your.html](http://garyrohmayer.typepad.com/yourjourneyblog/2008/02/launching-your.html)
11. Planting a Church with a Small Launch Team (or none at all)  
<https://newchurches.com/episode-451-planting-a-church-with-a-small-launch-team-or-none-at-all/>
12. BFC Church Planting Guide – [www.churchplantingbfc.org/Resources](http://www.churchplantingbfc.org/Resources)

## Conclusion

Pray with your elders, small groups, and congregation about the mission of church planting to see if the Lord leads you to become an incubator for Church Extension Ministries' next church plant. It is a joy to see the Lord at work in building His church and to see Him use the people in your church to do it.

If you have any questions or would like to talk through the possibilities of becoming an incubator church, please contact Director David Gundrum at [office@churchplantingbfc.org](mailto:office@churchplantingbfc.org).