

Vision America

Everyone's Opportunity

— Les Lofquist —

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



In the book of Acts, Luke frequently mentioned the unanimity that existed among the disciples in Jerusalem during the events leading up to and after the founding of the Church. Several verses refer to a single-heartedness and spiritual accord, portraying a truly winsome display of those “ties that bind.”

- 1:14 “These all continued *with one accord* in prayer and supplication”
2:1 “they were in *one accord* in one place”
2:46 “And they, continuing daily *with one accord* in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, ate with gladness and singleness of heart”
4:24 “And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice *in one accord*”
4:32 “And the multitude of them that believed were *of one heart and of one soul*”
5:12 “and they were all *with one accord* in Solomon’s porch”

One of Luke’s frequent word choices to describe this deep spiritual unity was *homothumadon*, comprised of two Greek

words: *homo* which speaks of “sameness” or “togetherness” and *thumos* which means “passion, heat, glow, ardor.” The Jerusalem disciples had sameness of passion, sameness in heat, glow and ardor. The idea is that these believers not only shared mental agreement, but

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also agreement of spirit, heart, and passions. The things that defined them and the things they really wanted were possessed by all of them “in one accord.” The word *homothumadon* refers to more than mere mental agreement; it refers to having the same passions and values.

It seems difficult for a movement such as IFCA International to achieve the “critical mass” of *homothumadon* where every member – individual, church, organization – has a heart that beats, a soul that longs, and a corporate body that is yielded to a collective passion. With all of us representing our own God-ordained paths of life and

service, and given our notoriety for independence, it seems almost impossible that we could find unanimity about any pursuit no matter how noble! However, there are some things over which not a single IFCA member can disagree nor obediently dismiss. One concern where we should achieve *homothumadon* is in our devotion to fulfill the Great Commission. We are to be witnesses of Jesus Christ in our respective Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

In obedience to this command, we introduced at the 2007 IFCA Convention in Tulsa a strategic program to help us fulfill the Great Commission in the USA. It is called Vision America. This church planting initiative of IFCA International proposes that we engage all the individuals, churches, and organizations of our fellowship to reach our nation with the message of the Gospel by establishing new and effective IFCA churches throughout this country.

VISION AMERICA
A Strategy for IFCA Church Planting

Purpose: To generate a perpetual surge of IFCA International reproductive church planting efforts that incorporates the direct involvement of hundreds of IFCA related churches

and the IFCA Church Extension agencies throughout the United States.

Goal: To effect by June 2010 the initiation of as many IFCA International church plants across the United States as possible in which the direct involvement and cooperative effort of at least 100 IFCA related churches, each in proximity to one of those individual plants, plays a key role.

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In order to help follow through on leading IFCA International forward toward these ends, I asked several men to serve on a select Vision America Planning Committee. I asked three men from the IFCA Board of Directors Vision Implementation Committee to serve on the Vision America Planning Committee. I also asked four men from IFCA Church Extension agencies to serve on the Vision America Planning Committee.

This committee has been directly accountable to me in the performance of their work but they also communicated with, involved, and solicited full input and help from the Church Extension Council as they worked (thereby encouraging the full involvement of IFCA Church Extension agencies). I believe that working together in this way will help us do an even better job of planting churches here in the USA.

The Vision America planning committee has determined the following schedule of goals to enlist formal involvement in Vision America. These goals represent numbers of churches becoming involved in a church plant effort:

- By January 2009, we seek to have at least 30 IFCA Churches engaged in Vision America.

- By Convention 2009, we seek to have at least 50 IFCA Churches engaged in Vision America.

- By January 2010, we seek to have at least 75 IFCA Churches engaged in Vision America.

- By Convention 2010, we seek to have at least 100 IFCA Churches engaged in Vision America.

These goals seek to motivate churches to become involved in establishing a new IFCA church in whatever ways or with whatever means each church is able. Vision America is truly “Everyone’s Opportunity.” Here are some of the ways you can participate:

INDIVIDUAL INVOLVEMENT

1. Join the 9:38 Prayer Team (*see page 13 of this issue of VOICE Magazine for details*). Pray for church planters to lead new churches around the USA. Encourage pastors and churches to pray for the extension of the Gospel in the USA.

2. Participate materially in Vision America (*see the Vision America website at www.ifca.org for details*). Adopt a church plant and / or plant leader and contribute financially to the effort. Material items for the ministry (church furniture items, supplies and equipment, books, etc.) can all be put to use by a new plant project.

3. Attend the 2008 Annual IFCA Convention to be held in Eugene, Oregon to learn firsthand about Vision America (*see the convention ads throughout this issue of VOICE*).

4. Make a personal connection with a Vision America planting effort and contact a plant leader by letter, email, phone, or personal visit on site. Visit the Vision America website at www.ifca.org for a directory of planters and projects.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

1. Personnel: a church can commission individuals and families from its congregation to start a new church plant in a nearby community. Such a commission can be a short-term commitment sufficient for the church to begin, or it can be a long-term commitment.

2. Prayer: every IFCA church should place into its weekly prayer schedule a listing of updated Vision America items for praise and prayer.

3. Finances: a much needed and blessed way to participate actively in the Vision America program is to financially give toward those laborers in need. Church planters in the earliest phase of their projects are typically in the greatest time of financial stress. More IFCA churches actively contributing toward new church plants and the

church planting leaders will allow for more aggressive and effective efforts.

4. Plant Leaders: church plant leaders are needed. Perhaps someone in your church is a gifted communicator with a pioneering and people-oriented spirit. These gifted people can be used by your church to lead an outreach Bible class, and perhaps even become your very own church plant leader.

5. Sponsorship: there are several sponsorship models / strategies which are available for every church to consider. This menu of sponsorship opportunities is posted on the Vision America website at www.ifca.org. See what fits your church, and get involved!

6. Web-links: those IFCA churches that have websites for their ministries can provide significant networking help by including a Vision America link to our page. Vision America has already made some new ministry contacts through web connections made by links. Help us spread the word about Vision America through your church website.

7. Support Services: Your church may not be able to plant a new church and it might not be able to send a planter. However, your church may have someone with a career or expertise in a field or discipline that could be of great help to another church plant leader. People who have skills in business, medicine, law, construction,

planning, leadership, arts, technology, can all be utilized in valuable support ministries to church plant leaders and their projects.

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After your church has a cleaning day, that classroom lectern, set of folding chairs, flannel graph board or easel that never gets used anymore may be of use to someone planting a new church. For the cost of packing and shipping such items, your church could provide this equipment and be a great help in extending the ministry in another community.

8. Internship Opportunities: There are many churches with many gifted people. Mentoring and leadership training are key parts of the *IFCA 2020 Strategic Plan*. There is an obvious opportunity to blend these two areas of ministry development and accom-

plish a common purpose. The opportunity to invest in mentoring a young servant who has the goal of becoming a church plant leader is available to our churches. Materials for training church planters are available through a variety of sources. For example, Midwest Church Extension has partnered with Tyndale Theological Seminary of Fort Worth to offer as many as nine credit hours of Church Planting Curriculum with focus placed on six vital skills for planting churches: Teaching, Outreach, Leadership, Communication, Planning, and Teamwork. Contact Tyndale Theological Seminary in order to learn more about this curriculum at www.tyndale.edu.

ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Organizations such as Bible Colleges and seminaries can also participate in Vision America.

1. Recruiting assistance: A contact might be made in a church or school while the organization's representatives are traveling in their ministry. Routing pertinent information to the Vision America network can be a valuable ministry as we partner together to plant churches.

2. Staff/Faculty Involvement in Plant Efforts: Often the organization's personnel are not committed for mid-week or weekend ministries. These servants can offer their gifts and talents

to a new plant without any disruption to their normal ministry commitments.

3. Ministry Teams: Canvassing crews, VBS teams, or musical groups representing various organizations can also provide ministry at church planting projects as well. This is true especially for schools and institutes, but other organizations have these opportunities as well. Go to www.ifca.org and let the Vision America network know what you might be able to provide.

4. Promotion: Organizational representatives can easily add a Vision America brochure to the organization's display table, mentioning it to those you meet. Adding the Vision America weblink to your ministry website would also be a great help for IFCA church planting.

5. Support Services, Internships, Financial support: These as well can be a great source of blessing as we partner with one another to realize the goals of Vision America.

CONCLUSION

It is by no means an exaggeration or an over-statement to say that Vision America is Everyone's Opportunity! Individuals, churches, and organizations alike can find a place to participate in fulfilling the Great Commission by planting IFCA churches in the USA. Contact Vision America through the website, or contact our IFCA Home Office for more information. Let's display our homothumadon - our "one accord" - and get involved today!

This article was a collaborative effort of Les Lofquist, IFCA International Executive Director and Henry Vosburgh, Chairman of the IFCA Vision America Planning Committee.