There were many important things that took place at the 2017 IFCA International Annual Convention in Kalamazoo, MI. This issue of IFCA NEWS highlights two of the more significant ones. As you may know by now, the delegates gave overwhelming approval to a change in the organization’s bylaws pertaining to membership requirements. In this issue of NEWS we’ve reprinted an edited version of two VOICE articles that were written by Les Lofquist in preparation for that discussion in the business meeting in Kalamazoo. These articles provide a substantial background and rationale for the changes that were approved. Within those articles you will find links to the issues of VOICE Magazine in which they appeared. Those linked issues of VOICE contain several related articles for your reading.

The other significant thing that took place was the public initiation of the newly formed IFCA Church Planting Commission and their endeavors in raising the profile of the IFCA Core Value of church planting. Two articles are featured in this issue of NEWS that were written by Henry Vosburgh, chairman of that Commission and Executive Director of Midwest Church Extension. These articles were previously published in the March/April and May/June issues of VOICE Magazine. Taken together, these articles “set the table” for a renewed focus on the Great Commission activity of church planting.

**Holiness and IFCA Membership - Les Lofquist**

In the Bible we are confronted with God’s absolute standard: “Be ye holy as I am holy” (Leviticus 19:2, 1 Peter 1:16). This basic statement is the central theme of the Bible pertaining to the lifestyle of God’s people. It gives the standard of life (holiness) and the reason for this standard (because God is holy).

Israel had been called to be a holy nation; the perfectly holy character of God was the model after which the Israelites were to live. “And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine” (Leviticus 20:26).

Holiness is also the standard of life for believers in this dispensation. We are a “holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5), a “holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9). We are set apart unto God from the people of this world: set apart in holiness (compare Leviticus 20:26 with 1 Corinthians 1:2). We are chosen in Christ and adopted into God’s family with a purpose: “that we should be holy and without blame” (Ephesians 1:4-5).
God’s Provision for Our Need
God calls Himself the “Holy One” 44 times in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 10:17 the context shows that as the Holy One, God’s character burns all that is not holy. Sin cannot stand in the presence of the Holy One (see Isaiah 6:3-5). We sinners are consumed by the holiness of God.

Compared to His purity, sinners in our natural state are clothed in the filthy rags that are used to sop up discharged bodily fluids (Isaiah 64:6). Yet the Holy One covers the repentant, believing sinner in His robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). The Holy One becomes “the Lord who sanctifies you” (Leviticus 20:8). The sinner who places genuine faith in the spotless Son of God as personal Savior, becomes the holy/set apart child of God! That is God’s provision.

But this provision also becomes the command: “Be ye holy as I am holy.” This is the need in the lives of our IFCA people who know Christ. We must live lives of holiness.

How This Applies to IFCA Members
How do the Biblical calls for holiness apply specifically to IFCA members? What kind of standards of holiness should we set for IFCA members? What do we expect from our members in this regard?

At the 2017 IFCA International Annual Convention, after more than two years of consideration and discussion, the delegates in the business meeting overwhelmingly approved a revision of the Fellowship By-law, Article II, Section 6 which relates to IFCA Membership requirements.

Here is how the by-law now reads:
Members of IFCA International must agree with our doctrinal statement, our philosophy of ministry and key values, and our stated purpose of working together for Great Commission objectives. Members must be committed to personal holiness and the application and authority of Scripture to every aspect of one’s life. Members must strive to live in a way that is holy and acceptable to God, transforming their thinking according to God’s Word rather than conforming to this world (Romans 12:1-2). Members must believe that the Word of God teaches that having denied ungodliness, worldly and fleshly desires (Galatians 5:19-21) they should live soberly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:11-13; Galatians 5:22-23). Expecting the imminent return of Christ, members must strive to purify themselves, just as He is pure (1 John 3:1-3), desiring to be blameless and harmless, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15). As such, members will abstain from evil and every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22), including drunkenness and enslavement to intoxicating and addictive substances (Ephesians 5:18). In addition, personal holiness must govern the use of all literature and media forms. This includes guarding against all temptations regarding inappropriate personal relationships (1 Timothy 5:2), pornography, and gambling. Instead, members will endeavor to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and to walk by the Spirit so that they do not carry out the desire of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). Since God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), members will honor marriage and seek to guard the sanctity of marriage, as it is a picture of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

This amendment was designed to address the doctrine, philosophy of ministry and life choices of our IFCA International individual members. It speaks to theological compatibility with the IFCA doctrinal statement as well as the kind of lifestyle we expect IFCA members would always strive to lead. It contains language directly tied to Scriptural language and Scriptural standards, which was the desire of the Board, and to seek in every way to be Bible-based in our standard of holiness.

At the 2016 convention, a similar amendment was discussed thoroughly for three hours and then
voted upon. It did not receive the necessary 2/3-majority vote of the convention delegates to pass. Based on the verbal comments made during the business session and written comments on the paper ballots, Paul Seger, President of the IFCA International Board of Directors, announced that the Board would continue to work on the issues involved in the amendment. He interpreted the day’s discussion and comments received as a mandate to reconsider the amendment in 2017 “and for the Board to do some more work.” Further discussion of this Amendment was placed on the agenda for the 2017 IFCA International Annual Business Meeting to be held during the 2017 annual convention in Kalamazoo.

Process for Distributing Information
The Board met in November 2016 and discussed further the issue of defining the expectations for members in regards to holiness and life choices. The Board asked me to prepare a series of VOICE articles addressing some of the issues that the amendment speaks to or does not speak to (compared to, what was then, the current By-Laws language). Specifically, I was asked to address the issues of what the Bible says about wine, beer and alcohol since that language is removed in the amendment. And then I was asked to address the issues of divorce and remarriage relative to church leadership and IFCA membership since that language is also removed in the amendment.

In the March/April issue of VOICE, you will find two articles addressing the Bible’s teaching on wine, beer and alcohol. You will also find a call to sexual purity in a wildly immoral world. Then you will find an article on legalism, since that is what the Board specifically desires to avoid when it comes to holiness and IFCA membership.

In this issue of IFCA NEWS you will find the second article, which appeared in the May / June VOICE, extolling the Bible’s teaching on the sanctity of marriage. In that edition of VOICE you will also find articles addressing two Scripturally defensible views on divorce, along with defining the 1 Timothy 3 requirement that an elder be “the husband of one wife.”

A Sobering Reminder
God, who made everything in the universe, interprets the meaning of all things and events. He has given to us His written revelation, which is necessary to explain man’s need for salvation and what He expects of man in this life. As humans, we were created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27) and therefore we are morally responsible beings. One day every human will stand before God (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15) to give an accounting of the things done in this life. And on that great day of accounting, we will not be able to make excuses before our Creator.

Christians will be held accountable for the lives we lead on this earth. This is a sobering reality all too often forgotten by believers. This is a truth that must be communicated by pastors and Bible teachers and embraced by all of God’s people.

Holiness in the Christian’s life must be grounded in the doctrine of sanctification, with conformity to the image of Jesus Christ the central goal. We believers battle against our unseen Enemy the devil + the world’s system which is organized and energized by Satan and his army + the flesh, which is the last remaining remnant of our days before Christ (Galatians 5:16-21). To live a life pleasing to God and fully accountable to Him, the believer must constantly be directed back to the Bible (Psalm 119:9-11) and the power of the Holy Spirit over the flesh (Galatians 5:22-25). God alone determines what is truth and what our response to truth should look like.

All IFCA members should live holy lives for Christ’s glory!

Share on FB
Divorce and IFCA International
Les Lofquist

Ever since our founding in 1930, IFCA International members have held a variety of views concerning the Bible’s teaching on the subject of divorce. Good IFCA men equally committed to the centrality and inerrancy of Scripture and embracing the exact same hermeneutic have held differing views on divorce, which both sides sincerely believe to be true to the Bible.

The Erasmian view of divorce (first set forth by Erasmus in the 16th century, also sometimes called the traditional Protestant view) became the majority view among the Reformers and was included in the 1648 Westminster Confession. Those who hold this view teach there are biblical grounds for divorce in Jesus’ exception clause regarding adultery in Matthew 19:9 and Paul’s words regarding abandonment in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. Many members of IFCA International hold this traditional view.

But many members of IFCA International reject the Erasmian view and say there are no biblical grounds for divorce. They say that Jesus’ exception clause in Matthew 19:9 is regarding betrothal not marriage and 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 excludes a man from being an elder or a deacon if he has divorce in his background (even pre-salvation).

This subject has been the cause of ongoing discussion, debate and disagreement in the IFCA ever since the 1940s. In 1972 a definitive position was codified when the IFCA By-Laws (Article II. Section 6.b.) restricted individual membership in IFCA International if a man has divorce in his background or if his wife has divorce in her background. That restriction continued to the present day.

The Subject Came Up Again
The discussion about divorce and IFCA International has come up again. Here is the context.

At the 2015 IFCA International Convention in Covington, Kentucky the IFCA Board of Directors distributed a proposed amendment to By-Laws Article II. Section 6.b. and announced they were placing that amendment on the agenda for the 2016 Convention. The Board sought to answer the question: what kind of standards of holiness should we set for IFCA members?

Here is how the proposed 2016 amendment read: “Members of IFCA International must agree with our doctrinal statement, our philosophy of ministry and key values, and our stated purpose of working together for great commission objectives. Members must be committed to personal holiness and the application and authority of Scripture to every aspect of one’s life. Members must strive to live in a way that is holy and acceptable to God, transforming their thinking according to God’s Word rather than conforming to this world (Romans 12:1-2). Members believe that the grace of God teaches that having denied ungodliness and worldly desires they should live soberly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:11-13). Expecting the imminent return of Christ, members strive to purify themselves, just as He is pure (1 John 3:1-3), desiring to be blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, shining as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15).”

In 2016, the amendment was discussed thoroughly for three hours and then voted upon. It received a
majority of the vote but did not receive the necessary 2/3-majority vote of the convention delegates to pass. Based on the verbal comments made during the business session and written comments on the paper ballots, Paul Seger, President of the IFCA International Board of Directors, announced that the Board would continue to work on the issues involved in the amendment. He interpreted the day’s discussion and comments received as a mandate to consider a revised form of the amendment in 2017.

After the 2016 convention, the Board did its work and is placed a revised Amendment on the agenda for the 2017 IFCA International Annual Business Meeting. The following text was overwhelmingly approved at that meeting in Kalamazoo, MI:

Members of IFCA International must agree with our doctrinal statement, our philosophy of ministry and key values, and our stated purpose of working together for Great Commission objectives. Members must be committed to personal holiness and the application and authority of Scripture to every aspect of one’s life. Members must strive to live in a way that is holy and acceptable to God, transforming their thinking according to God’s Word rather than conforming to this world (Romans 12:1-2). Members must believe that the Word of God teaches that having denied ungodliness, worldly and fleshly desires (Galatians 5:19-21) they should live soberly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:11-13; Galatians 5:22-23). Expecting the imminent return of Christ, members must strive to purify themselves, just as He is pure (1 John 3:1-3), desiring to be blameless and harmless, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15). As such, members will abstain from evil and every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22), including drunkenness and enslavement to intoxicating and addictive substances (Ephesians 5:18). In addition, personal holiness must govern the use of all literature and media forms. This includes guarding against all temptations regarding inappropriate personal relationships (1 Timothy 5:2), pornography, and gambling. Instead, members will endeavor to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and to walk by the Spirit so that they do not carry out the desire of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). Since God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), members will honor marriage and seek to guard the sanctity of marriage, as it is a picture of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Why now?
At the 2016 convention, some asked the sincere question: “Why is all this being proposed now? What’s behind all this, especially the discussion about divorce?” That’s a good question deserving of an honest answer.

The issue of divorce relative to IFCA membership has been around almost from our beginning in 1930. Here’s a historical summary based on records in the Home Office files and the eyewitness accounts from former IFCA National Executive Secretary Glen Lehman. [1]

Prior to 1947: The unwritten policy under the first full-time National Executive Secretary E.G. Zorn (who served part-time from 1940 to 1943 and full-time from 1943 to 1950) was to allow membership for men who were divorced prior to salvation. He instructed the Credentials Committee: “divorce prior to salvation must be ignored in IFCA membership applications.”

1947 St. Louis Convention: The Credentials Committee sought clarification on the issue of divorce and IFCA membership, but no action was taken. However, it was decided that one year later, at the 1948 Convention, three papers on divorce would be presented with the agreement not to take a vote / adopt any official position on divorce. They would merely listen, discuss, and then publish the papers in VOICE.

1948 Grand Rapids Convention: The divorce question was debated on the floor. Three position papers were presented. No decision was made by prearrangement back in 1947. The three papers were published
sequentially in the September, October and November 1948 VOICE.

1957 *Los Angeles Convention*: Glen Lehman was asked by the National Executive Committee to serve as Credentials Committee Chairman, to which he replied: “not until the NEC places on the application form the specific causes for rejection.” Prior to this, the Credentials Committee considered each applicant without a written policy. In response, the NEC adopted the current policy of excluding divorced members and presented it to the convention. The Credentials Committee was instructed to deny membership to divorced men or men married to a divorced woman.

1961 *Cicero Convention*: The issue of divorce and IFCA membership came up again and was discussed on the floor during the business session. The National Executive Committee concluded to leave unchanged its policy decision from 1957.

1972 *La Mirada Convention*: The By-Laws were adopted and the current causes for rejection were included in the By-Laws as Article II. Section 6.b. Prior to 1972, only the IFCA Constitution existed and it did not list causes for rejection of membership; in 1972, the no-divorce-allowed policy was elevated to By-Laws status.

1975 *Portland Convention*: The NEC requested that a paper be presented during the Annual Business Meeting by Wally Wilson to demonstrate that there are biblical grounds for divorce. And in response, the NEC also asked Hermann Braunlin to present the view that there are no biblical grounds for divorce. No action was taken.

2000 *Mid Year Meeting*: The NEC began a complete revision of the Constitution & By-Laws, a process that took three years. Early in the process, the NEC decided not to change anything in the IFCA Doctrinal Statement or in the language of By-Laws Article II. Section 6.b. However, they agreed to revisit By-Laws Article II. Section 6.b at a later, undetermined date.

2004 *Mid Year Meeting*: The concept and process of discussing the divorce issue was approved by the Board of Directors. Eight men from IFCA membership (that is, not necessarily Board members) were appointed by President of the Board Roy Sprague to form the Committee on Divorce and IFCA Relationship. These men were: Dr. Richard Gregory, Dr. Robert Thomas, Dr. George Harton, Don Fredericks, Earl Brubaker, Dr. Tim Demy, Alex Montoya and Dr. Les Lofquist.

2005 *Baltimore Convention*: The Committee on Divorce and IFCA Relationship met for one day in Baltimore in June, 2005 and then again January 3-5, 2006 in LaPuente, CA. They carefully considered many Scriptural options regarding divorce, remarriage, and qualifications for local church leaders and IFCA membership in light of 1 Timothy 3:2 (“husband of one wife / one woman man”). They also carefully reviewed the historical background and past discussions in IFCA International regarding divorce, remarriage, and qualifications for local church leaders and IFCA membership.

2006 *Mid Year Meeting*: The Committee on Divorce and IFCA Relationship reported to the Board that they were evenly split on both sides of the issue, four men on one side and four men on the other side. After extensive discussion, the Board received the report and tabled any action. They assigned the matter to the Board’s Membership / Recruitment Committee (all were members of the Board), who discussed the subject and made a presentation to the full Board in 2007 at Tulsa.

2007 *Tulsa Convention*: The Board reported to the convention business session all the discussions from 2004 to 2007 and distributed four papers on the subject. Those papers were then mailed out to all IFCA members with an opportunity for input given. Those papers are now republished in this issue of VOICE.

2013 *Mid Year Meeting*: The Board’s Membership / Recruitment Committee began discussing the issue once again in the much broader context of recruitment of new members and retention of current members. Divorce was but one of a whole host of topics discussed in the context of recruitment and retention.

2014 *Colorado Springs Convention*: The Board’s Membership / Recruitment Committee brought the issue to
the Board and suggested the language for the amendment to By-Laws Article II. Section 6.b. which led to where we were going into the 2017 Convention this past June.

Points to Consider
The main point the IFCA International Board wants to address with the amendment to By-Laws Article II.6.b. is how the Biblical calls for holiness apply specifically to IFCA members. What kind of standards of holiness should we set for IFCA members? What do we expect from our members in this regard?

It’s easy to miss this point. This revised amendment to the By-Laws seeks to describe the life of holiness we expect from all IFCA members. As such, the Board seeks to state Biblical standards that are timeless. Please go back earlier in this article and reread the Revised Amendment to By-Laws Article II. Section 6.b (2017 version). Then pray that all our IFCA members and churches will reflect those sacred truths.

Another point to consider is this. The history summarized above demonstrates that having this discussion about divorce and IFCA membership in this issue of VOICE and at the 2017 convention is not a form of compromise to accommodate our ever-downward cultural slide. We are not giving into the pressures of our culture today. This discussion has always been around IFCA…it has never gone away.

The subject is not ultimately about the tragedy of divorce in our country or the fact that your daughter or son or friends have suffered through a divorce (devastating as those circumstances may be). IFCA has always respected the autonomy of the local church and its prerogative to decide those matters for themselves. But the issue presented in this edition of VOICE involves how the various views on divorce affect the men who seek membership in IFCA International.

Pray that all IFCA members will reflect lives of holiness in these sinful, confused, troublesome days.

END NOTES

1 Glen Lehman served as IFCA National Executive Secretary (which today is called IFCA International Executive Director) from 1959-1972. Glen lived through all the early history of the founding of the IFCA and shared his memories and eyewitness accounts with many of our men right up until the day he died at the age of 98 in May, 2006. Each year, during the Mid Year Meeting of the IFCA Executive Committee / Board of Directors in Grandville, Glen would come and share about IFCA history. His meeting with the NEC / Board on November 14, 2002 was completely devoted to Glen’s report on IFCA history regarding the discussions on divorce. I took careful notes of Glen’s report and the history in this article is based on Glen’s report as corroborated with minutes from the meetings he referenced. Amazingly, Glen’s memory was precisely accurate whenever I checked the official historical records in the Home Office.
Meeting Christian leaders for the first time inevitably leads to the banter of finding out where we are from and what it is that we do. On more than a few occasions, when I mention my involvement in a church planting agency, a curious remark gets made by my new acquaintance, and it goes something like this:

“That’s interesting, we should talk during the break or over lunch. I’ve been in my church for a few years now, and I feel like I’ve been re-planting it since I got here.”

The storylines come from a variety of contexts; but oddly enough, the range of ministry needs defined, of ministry skills applied, and of ministry victories and defeats experienced is the same range in profile as that my church plant leaders go through every day. Much is common between those who are in formal church planting ministry and those who are pastoring churches. A question like, “Are you planting or pastoring a church” is often best answered with the simple, “Yes.”

In subsequent articles, I will present a biblical definition for church planting that will show that planting ministry is not a role but a process. This will be done to demonstrate that church planting is not for us to grasp as a department or isolated as a ministry caste; church planting as a process is a value that is to be embraced by the whole of our IFCA fellowship. To lay a foundation to that coming presentation, this article wants to establish that church planting takes place in such a broad range of ministry contexts that IFCA members really have a difficult time not being somehow connected or even engaged in a planting enterprise. To accomplish this purpose, I will present some categorized grids showing this range of context. These grids are by no means the only ones to be drawn, but these are easily understood and correlated to every IFCA member’s experience. Church planting by way of the contexts in which it occurs is a part of our lives and work, and thusly deserves to be a part of our value system.

**Church Planting Classified by Field Activity**

The stereotypical role of a pioneer plant leader working to start a new church comes to most people’s minds immediately. The pioneer planter will begin his ministry like an apostle Paul by inserting himself to a field without a sufficient Gospel witness; a field can be completely without a good church, or in terms of ratio to population can be insufficiently addressed with enough good churches to reach the target area. This person and his work is all about plowing new ground, meeting and winning lost souls to Christ and finding believers who need to be taught to grow in Christ under a
ministry proclaiming the whole counsel of God.

Church planting also involves the work of *replanting*. Often referred to as *revitalization*, replanting ministry is the work of entering a field with an existing church that has some form of health deficiency. It could be a stagnant church that needs an infusion of life through reviving its purpose, mission, and vision; it could be a troubled church that needs its spiritual disorders corrected and proper order implemented. Replanting work is very necessary and often far more difficult in nature than the work of the pioneer. It must always start with an admission of the existing church’s reality, which is often very difficult to accomplish; and harder yet is achieving the necessary humility required to walk the road of correction and recovery. Both of those concepts requires CHANGE, which all too often is the dirtiest word in church ministry.

Church planting also involves the work of *daughtering* or *reproductive* ministry. Thriving, healthy churches are filled with life, and life reproduces. Being evangelistic in their respective fields naturally creates more opportunities to extend life-giving ministry to nearby fields as well. What a great joy it is to have the new arrival of a newborn to one’s family! Well, in the context of church ministry, there is no less joy to be experienced when an assembly of God’s people has the experience of giving birth to another assembly.

**Church Planting Classified by Stage of Development**

This grid will be explained more fully in subsequent articles, so this introduction is a point of reference. The life cycle of a church is usually portrayed something along the order of this grid: birth, growth, plateau (stagnation), decline, death. This is very accurate in the reality of the local church journey, but the biblical ideal life cycle would be much different. God is all about life, and the book of Acts certainly gives a great template of life that looks like this: preparation, penetration, permeation, propagation. Church planting ministry is very much a part of each of these steps; this is the case for planting as a process and not simply a function or role. Here is a preview to the coming discussion.

- Preparation is the work of readying a group of believers to fulfill the work of the Great Commission (Acts 1).
- Penetration is the work of believers advancing the Gospel message into its “Jerusalem” or local mission field (Acts 2-4).
- Permeation is the work of believers saturating its “Jerusalem” with the Gospel message so thoroughly that no house is missed, no person is left untouched (Acts 5-6).
- Propagation is the work of believers extending the Gospel ministry beyond its local field to the next geographic opportunity, be it the next towns, counties, regions, states, or nations (Acts 8-9, 11, 13-20).

*Spoiler alert:* Per this grid, it is to be understood that all living churches are in some stage of the planting process. If our churches are always initiating new ministry, we never really stop “planting” our churches.

**Church Planting Classified by Demographics**

This grid is the most wide-ranging of all, for the demographics that impact church planting are far too broad to be encompassed in this space. Presented here are just three common demographic schemes:

*Ministry by Population Size / Density*

- **Urban** – In 2015, the US Census Bureau identified 392 Metropolitan Statistical Areas of 50,000 or better in population across the US. Over 275 million of our nation’s population of over 321 million live in these areas. The mission fields represented by the urban centers of
the United States is a very compelling issue for the IFCA. If we truly value evangelizing our nation, we will avail ourselves of the opportunity to establish strategic centers to carry out our Great Commission objectives. Urban church planting will be a crucial part of that pursuit.

- **Suburban** – In 2015, the US Census Bureau identified 545 Micropolitan Statistical Areas of between 10,000-50,000 in population across the US. An additional 27 million people live in these areas. This reality should further impel us to extend the Gospel in our ministry coverage efforts for our nation.

- **Rural** – This description encompasses those communities, townships, villages, etc. not included by the above definitions. These are the places where we find the remaining 17-18 million Americans. Whole foreign fields of less size are justifiably sent a missionary team to reach the lost in places where Christ has not yet been named; surely, we can justify reaching a larger population that resides within our own homeland. We can fulfill the Great Commission by planting churches in such places as well.

**Ministry by Population Race / Ethnicity**

- **Single-Cultural** – Many fields do not have a population diversity represented in others. The typical church in America would have this profile of ministry to one culture of people within its ministry scope. The single culture can be defined by more than just a racial or ethnic profile; it can be an economic profile or even a preference-based profile as well.

- **Cross-cultural** – In fields where diversity in population is occurring, the need for cross-cultural ministry becomes quickly apparent. Identity issues, language barriers, and other factors add complexity to the drive for Great Commission fulfillment. It takes a different approach to ministry to adapt to a diverse field, and having a church planting value is core to a successful cross-cultural endeavor.

- **Multi-cultural** – In fields where a cosmopolitan, “world at your doorstep” profile exists, finding the open doors for Great Commission work demands a multi-cultural perspective to the ministry. In such fields, new ground is always being plowed when meeting people who represent every nation, tongue, and religion. Creative means for Gospel communication, unique preparation in training, and enlistment of personnel are demanded in such profiles. In some cases, there will need to be whole new churches started to reach a multi-cultural field; in other cases, churches within churches will be required to meet the needs.

**Ministry by Field Perspective**

- **Local** – every church regardless of its stage of development is in the local planting ministry. It is what each church’s founders had in mind when they first birthed the church, and should be a prevailing value today.

- **Regional** – Great Commission ministry to those places just beyond the immediate reach of a given local church is to be on our radar as well. The several Church Extension agencies of IFCA are in existence to help local churches fulfill this aspect of the Great Commission, and lead in planting where others cannot reach.

- **National** – Reaching the United States for Christ is a beat that throbs in the heart of every IFCA member. IFCA church planting initiatives of the past have had this motivation at the heart. With every week that passes, we can certainly see how far off from the Lord our nation has gone, and yet God in his word assures our land that he is not far off from us (Acts 17:27). Our witness is vital to making him known to our nation.

- **International** – With the help of IFCA missions organizations, our local churches can extend our planting value by sending faithful servants to the “uttermost part of the earth.” In every place, another local witness planted becomes a new part of the Great Commission enterprise, and the ministry cycle starts over again.
In conclusion, this display of the range in church planting is by no means intended to be exhaustive; rather it is given to show how it touches every one of us in the IFCA. We state in our “Vital Signs” that a healthy church is “a church that is committed to aggressive involvement in planting, establishing, and nurturing biblical, local churches in the United States of America.” This article attempts to show us all how easy it is for us to manifest this core value. Imagine our impact if we as members of IFCA were universally engaged to this enterprise!

Church Planting: Setting Forth a Definition – Henry Vosburgh

This is the second article being provided by the Church Planting Commission designed to stimulate the ministry of church planting as value to be embraced by IFCA International. The first presentation demonstrated the broad range of ministry that is encompassed within the ministry of church planting. This article will narrow the discussion down from the broad range of ministry to that of a definition of church planting itself.

Some time ago, I decided to conduct an internet search to see what the “with-it” experts had to say about the definition of church planting. I reasoned a couple of things. Because of the wide disparity that exists among the ministry philosophies, models, paradigms, and movements that call themselves church planting / church growth, a biblical working definition is something necessary to establish. I also figured that in about ten minutes, I ought to have more stuff than I would ever need to help me in that pursuit. When I am called upon to present church planting ministry in a church, pastors’ fellowship, Bible school, etc., I could just parrot the experts’ definitions, give them credit, and expand my material working from their expertise as part of my launching pad to open the discussion.

My reasoning of course is sound about the first thing; we must have a biblical working definition of church planting. Far too often, definitions are nothing more than human philosophical expressions clouded by spiritualized wordings that sound good to the ear. Yet, upon genuine biblical scrutiny, they find themselves falling gravely short of a real scriptural basis. Without a biblical definition, one cannot frame a biblical ministry philosophy. Without a biblical ministry philosophy, one cannot develop and work out a biblical ministry model. Without a biblical ministry model, the efforts of church planting to be embarked upon, spiritually speaking, will be difficult to justify as faithful ministry; and practically speaking, will be happenstance, and hence, difficult going at best due to the directionless paradigm inherent to unsound and / or poor planning. These unsound patterns being repeated then lead to whole movements of biblically unsound ministry while still claiming to be church planting.

Back to the internet search, I found that my reasoning was not quite as sound about the second thing. Little did I know that the question for my pursuit would be something rather difficult to nail down when it came to finding good, articulate definitions for church planting. First, exploring through websites and even books on the subject reveals that often, authors assume the reader knows what church planting is and thus do not take the time to articulate a definition. Others frame a simple definition that is not perhaps “definitive” enough to be called solidly biblical. Here are some samples:

Church planting may be defined as initiating reproductive fellowships who reflect the kingdom of God in the world. – www.missiology.org

Strength in this definition is seen in the phrasing initiating reproductive fellowships; initiating alludes to a starting element of a process, and reproductive is very good as it describes a birthing and growing
characteristic to what is being started. Fellowships is “okay,” but it is probably too ambiguous a choice in wording for a definition. In the context of the definition, an attempt is made to narrow the field on what a fellowship refers to. Yet depending on the reader’s pretext, a fellowship could mean many things. This definition’s biggest weakness is that the relative clause following fellowships might be revealing a theological bent to which we in our IFCA understanding of biblical doctrine would not subscribe.

Ed Stetzer – “The best definition I know of which describes church planting is the word ‘missions.’” (http://www.acts29network.org/acts-29-blog/missional-theological-church-planting/)

Now as for Stetzer, of late his material is being recommended by people whom I judge to be very discriminating readers, so I confess I’d like to see if elsewhere he does better than this as a definition. However, since he states that this is his “best definition,” my response is that this it is not a definition but a description. If this is a definition, then I require a definition of missions to know what church planting is.

Bob Hopkins (Anglican Church Planter) – “Church planting is creating new communities of Christian faith as part of the mission of God, to express his Kingdom in every geographic and cultural context.” Cited in Mission-Shaped Church, p. 29.

Creating is acceptable, for it conveys the same concept as initiating. New communities of Christian faith has some merit, but again I would maintain that the phrasing is fairly ambiguous as to what defines Christian faith, especially considering the religious identity of the source. As part of the mission of God requires a definition of its own. To express his Kingdom is weak at best, but I do appreciate very much the reference to every geographic and cultural context. This phrasing seeks to encompass the Acts 1:8 expression of the Great Commission, which supports both the geographic and cultural fulfillment of the charge given to us all as witnesses unto Jesus Christ.

Church Planter’s Management System – “God’s Word teaches that church planting is evangelizing the lost, discipling believers, and starting congregations.”

This definition also contributes to the discussion. It first appeals to my penchant for simplicity. Church planting is an enterprise that must stem out of vital Great Commission activity that is most certainly summarized by evangelism and discipleship. This would naturally produce new congregations as Great Commission fruit multiplies. In short, this definition describes the right activity. In my opinion, the problem with this definition is not what it says but what it does not say. Planting churches as we will see in the next article is not only getting congregations started; there is far more to it than that, so I believe this definition comes short.

Aubry Malphurs -- Church planting is “an exhausting but exciting venture of faith that involves the planned process of beginning and growing new local churches, based on Jesus’ promise and in obedience to His Great Commission.” Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century, p.19.

This definition is much better than the previous samples. It is far more complete in that it addresses not only the start of churches but also the growth of those which are started; this is an excellent dimension. The opening clause has some merit – it is definitive in that church planting is a venture of faith; however, the adjectives “exhausting” and “exciting” are subjective words, when definitions need to be objective. Is it exhausting? Yes, but what work is not if done well? Is it exciting? I think so, and I believe it should be for everyone. But I can tell you that “exciting” is not how everyone sees church planting. Church planting has critics, has failures; people in these positions would not define church
planting as exciting. The remainder of the definition is acceptable. It does presume we will know what those phrases refer to, but in this case that is reasonable to do.

I honestly didn’t think it would be that difficult to find a definition; call me picky or hyper-scrutinizing, but if we endeavor to do “it,” we ought to know biblically what “it” is. I want to provide you with my definition of church planting, and in the interest of full disclosure, I am willing to have my words scrutinized for weakness and subjectivity as well. I am still collecting definitions, but here is what I see as a proper definition of church planting, followed by an amplification of its elements:

Church planting is the strategic process whereby a biblical witness is inserted within a community of people resulting in the establishment of an indigenous, reproductive local body of believers.

• Strategic Process – Church planting by definition is not an event; its nature as a ministry form is a planned-out work of progression through phases of birth and development unto maturity.

• Insertion of a biblical witness – This phrasing brings to the definition the intentional purpose of church planting (providing a witness) and clearly identifies that witness’s content and standard as biblical.

• Community of people – This phrase identifies a target group for insertion. Community is purposely left generic because “community of people” can be defined variously by geography, demography, etc.


From this definition is seen clearly two elements to establishment: origination (founding the church), and stabilization (strengthening the church); for this reason, some of the previous definitions are not complete. These two elements to establishment will be addressed in our next article.

• Indigenous – This term refers to something having the characteristic composition of a particular community. In the context of the church planting definition, providing an indigenous witness speaks toward maximizing the potential of relating a biblical testimony to the people being reached for Christ.

• Reproductive – This term stipulates the necessary attribute of birth and growth referenced earlier. Life produces more life. It is never intended that a single church be the end goal of church planting ministry. It should be just the beginning of reproducing more life through an expansion of evangelism and discipleship into new communities of people needing their own indigenous biblical witness.

Previously having demonstrated a broad range of ministry to show how much church planting ministry truly touches every member in our IFCA fellowship, this article purposed to set forth a definition to lay a foundation on which this biblical value can be expanded in the next presentation. That article will provide a scriptural analysis of this definition, using Luke’s record of the church at Jerusalem as the inspired template to illustrate how church planting is to be a vital part of our value system.
Church Planting Advance Follow-Up

Over forty people were able to attend some or all of the various sessions for this year’s Church Planting Advance. It was exciting to see this many of our IFCA people sharing an interest in church planting. In addition to several of our IFCA Church Extension personnel, others in attendance were pastors, missionaries, and educators burdened to advance the Church here in these United States.

You can get a taste of the Advance by listening to the first session online or downloading it.

It was a good start for this event sponsored by the IFCA Church Planting Commission. Yet we also know that this is only to be the beginning of our work in promoting the biblical value of church planting ministry throughout our fellowship. Pray that with some effective assessment, we can improve on our efforts to have an even more helpful and successful event in 2018 at South Bend, IN. You can help in that assessment if you haven’t already done so. If you attended any of those sessions, or the two church planting related sessions during the actual Convention, we’d like you to fill out the evaluation form that can be accessed here. We appreciate your assistance!

Responding to My Feelings – Tim Jeske

I’m sure that many of you who are reading this are disturbed, as I am, by the terrible, unprecedented, and sometimes ridiculous but harmful actions and attitudes which are front and center in the national news in a never-ending stream of what I call “newsewage”. For me, the feeling is a mixture of frustration, anger, confusion, helplessness, and disgust. There is enough of each of those feelings to be directed to those on all sides of some of the burning issues of our society … and I’ll still have some left over! I can always tell when the level of such feelings is getting to the danger point when I catch myself talking to … and having animated conversations with…the television news personalities. Even those on FOX News!

At times like that, I need to cut the conduits to the “newsewage” and clear my head by focusing on the truth that there really is nothing new under the sun. Sin has always been sin and it has always produced vile results. What is different is the fact that technology has simply allowed us to be more intensely aware of its fruit and it makes the stark reality of those results harder to avoid because it is in our face bidden and unbidden every waking moment.

It helps me to retain my hold on sanity (some suggest that is pretty tenuous) to remember that none of the “newsewage” surprises our Sovereign God. And there is never any “Breaking News” that affects Him, or causes Him to change His plan for me, for you, or for the Church. The Great Commission is still the Great Commission, and it has never been repealed. What God expects of us is the same today as it was a generation ago; it hasn’t changed. My responsibility is to simply be obedient to what He has commanded … and to leave the rest to Him. He can handle it. I sure can’t! Can you?
Editor’s invitation

I hope you found something in this issue to inspire and encourage you. Perhaps, if you have a Facebook account, you will take a moment to share it with others in that social media network. Please use the convenient link below to do so and perhaps add a comment on the article that you appreciated, with directions to the specific page. Thanks!