



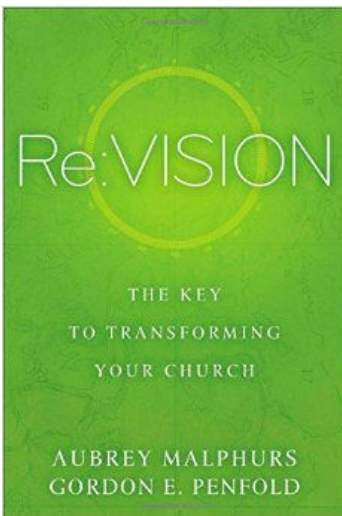
# EQUIPPER

The monthly e-zine from the U.S. Church Administration and Development (CAD) team of Grace Communion International.

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Re: Vision
- 2 How a small church partnered in church planting



Dear servant of Jesus:

Though I'm not a big fan of New Year's resolutions, the beginning of a new year is a good time for some vision casting. By that I don't mean trying to predict the future. Casting a vision is about looking down the road with faith-filled eyes to prayerfully define a clear picture of where we see God leading.

As a family of churches and denominational ministries, we see the Holy Spirit connecting us in deeper ways with the ongoing mission of God. As you look down the road, what does that look like for your church or ministry? In answering that question, I encourage you to consider insights from Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold in their book *Re:VISION*. Note their comment about church planting and church revitalization:

Many denominations...have become most interested in church planting...knowing it is the key to their very survival. However, in their pursuit of visionary church planters who can plant spiritually healthy churches, they've overlooked the need for and importance of the re-envisioning or the revitalization of our established churches. [These are] essential to our future because most successful church plants are nurtured by a strong, vital, supporting established church. The demise of established churches means there are fewer strong churches to nurture church plants, making planted churches less viable. We must place as much emphasis on re-envisioning our churches as we do planting new ones if we are to have any hope for the future of the church in America.

I think their observations here are highly relevant to our situation in GCI. We envision God shaping us into a *church planting movement* and we're well on our way. For that we give God thanks! As I've written before, all of us, no matter the size of our church, have a meaningful part to play in this movement. But at the same time, we have a vision for the revitalization of our established churches. As Malphurs and Penfold note, this happens as established churches participate in God's mission through church planting. At the same time, new churches come into being largely because established ones have a church planting vision. You see the synergy at work here—and this is where I see the Spirit leading us. Remember GCI's denominational vision statement:

***All kinds of churches, for all kinds of people, in all kinds of places.***

We seek to be a movement of multiplication—faithfully and creatively engaged in what Jesus is doing in the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Father's mission to the world.

I encourage you to use this statement as a jumping-off point for re-visioning your church or ministry. For assistance, see the article on page two of this issue and the Church Development section of the December 24, 2014 issue of *GCI Weekly Update*.

In Christ's service,  
Greg Williams, director CAD

*Equipping all kinds of churches for all kinds of people in all kinds of places.*

## How a small church partnered in church planting

By Gary Dry, GCI elder

Are you part of a small GCI congregation? I am. We're not big enough to have small groups—we are a small group! We're also geographically dispersed—nobody lives in the neighborhood in which we meet and nobody in that neighborhood has any idea we meet there. So much for letting our light shine.

About three years ago, we began to question our efficacy as a congregation, asking the age-old question: Why are we here? Fortunately and unfortunately, we didn't have to look far for the answer. The fortunate part is that most all of us know the answer—it's the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20—our calling to spread the gospel. The unfortunate part was that an analysis of our programs and expenditures told us that we weren't living up to our commission. We needed to change. But, realistically, what could we do?

The Great Commission was a good start, but there is another scripture that guided our thinking as well: "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:33-35). To be active in spreading the gospel we were needing to re-envision how we thought about ourselves as a church. We decided to put our money where our hearts should be and dedicate at least 50% of all of our congregational income to spreading the gospel.

Nice thought, but how were we, a small congregation, going to implement this goal? We looked around, wanting to be sure we would not be wasting our money. The ministries we would support would have to be fiscally responsible. God blessed us with a familiarity with one of our own GCI ministries—Church Multiplication Ministries (CMM). We knew Randy Bloom (CMM's director at the time) and trusted him. We asked him about CMM's needs and Randy explained what was happening and explained CMM's vision. We decided to help. And in each passing year, we've continued to do so, small though it may be. Through supporting CMM we are assisting GCI in starting new kinds of churches for all kinds of people in all kinds of places!

We also are helping spread the gospel by supporting a young missionary couple working in Mozambique. And we are providing assistance to a Christian youth camp nearby. There are other ministries we support, and as we do, we are on the lookout for ways to spread the gospel in more direct ways in our area.

If you find yourself in a position where you too are looking for ways to fulfill your commission as a congregation to spread the gospel, might I suggest GCI Church Multiplication Ministries as a starting point? They are doing good things on a tiny budget. In my humble opinion, God is blessing their work.

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Note: If your congregation would like to give financial support to church planting in GCI-USA, here are several ways:

1. Donate to the GCnext domestic mission fund, which supports the work being done through three GCnext ministries: Church Multiplication Ministries, Generations Ministries and the GCI Intern Program. To do so, go to <https://www.gci.org/participate/donate> and put "GCnext fund" in the "apply donation to" box.
2. Make a donation directly to one of these ministries by contacting its coordinator (you find these coordinators listed at <https://www.gci.org/churchdevelopment>
3. Donate to a church planting network in your area—for information about doing so, contact your regional pastor.

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