



Shepherd @ 50

Mission Church Plant Proposal – Detailed Report

What? From the Shepherd @ 50 oversight committee - “To boldly expand our efforts at evangelism” by planting a *new* church in the fast growing far Northwest area of San Antonio as a means of spreading the Gospel, making disciples, and growing the kingdom of God.

The overall Shepherd @ 50 effort has always had two components: stewardship & evangelism. The stewardship component is focused on the long term use and growth of the current campus and the evangelism component focused on planting a new church body. That’s not to say there won’t be good stewardship in the church plant or that evangelism doesn’t happen at 6914 Wurzbach – both are happening both places. This is just a helpful framework to guide our work in seeing a new church planted – to help us remember that new churches aren’t just cool social clubs or places for like minded people to gather. Churches, healthy ones at least, exist to *evangelize*, that is to spread the “evangel”- the good news of Jesus Christ, or what we commonly call the Gospel. Evangelization is not the task only of professional evangelists, missionaries, or pastors rather it is the charge of the entire one, holy, Christian, and apostolic church on earth. And as we’ll explore in the next segment planting new churches is a critical component in the Church’s task of evangelization.

Why? *Go and make disciples...* – Jesus

Because Scripture tells us Church is not just a nice thing to do on Sundays but is *the pillar and foundation of the truth* - 1 Timothy 3:15

This section contains information on why church planting is the best option for evangelization and why our target area was chosen for the new plant.

Planting new churches is the single most effective means of reaching unreached people with the good news of Jesus Christ. Here are a couple long but important quotes from a Tim Keller & Acts 29 (both leading voices in American church planting) article called “Why Plant Churches”

The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for 1) the numerical growth of the body of Christ in any city, and 2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else—not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes—will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting. This is an eyebrow raising statement. But to those who have done any study at all, it is not even controversial.

New churches best reach a) new generations, b) new residents, and c) new people groups.

First, younger adults have always been disproportionately found in newer congregations, and second, new residents are almost always reached better by new congregations. Last, new socio-cultural groups in a community are always reached better by new congregations.

New churches best reach the unchurched - period.

Dozens of denominational studies have confirmed that the average new church gains most of its new members (60-80%) from the ranks of people who are not attending any worshipping body, while churches over 10-15 years of age gain 80-90% of new members by transfer from other congregations.

All in all, church planting helps an existing church the best when the new congregation is voluntarily 'birthed' by an older 'mother' congregation. Often the excitement and new leaders and new ministries and additional members and income 'washes back' into the mother church in various ways and strengthens and renews it. Our attitude to new church development is a test of whether our mindset is geared to our own institutional turf, or to the overall health and prosperity of the kingdom of God in the city.

A study of Southern Baptist churches from the late 90s showed that healthy churches who sponsor new churches see at the mother church a 24% increase in worship attendance and a 14% increase in adult baptisms ("Studies Show Parenting Churches are Healthier and Grow Faster" Dr. Larry L. Sherman).

It is no secret that church attendance and religious participation is slipping in America and we've all heard about the rise of the "nones" or the religiously unaffiliated (23% of the US population - Pew Research). On any given Sunday about 17-18% of Americans attend church and only about 25% attend with any sort of regularity (Barna Group). The population in our target area scores "relatively low" on the religious participation scale so if we want to do something to see the trend change we've got to do the hard work of church planting.

Where? Which brings us to - why Alamo Ranch? When I was in high school 20+ years ago Taft High School was just about the only thing in our target area and almost all of its student population was drawn from inside 1604. Since then NSID has built Warren and Stevens High Schools inside 1604, Taft is filled with students from its immediate area, Brennan High School has been built outside 1604 off Wiseman and filled up, and another new NSID high school is being built a little farther out.

It doesn't take a professional demographer to know the population has exploded in that part of town. But here are some stats to help us along:

Overall San Antonio is the 6th fastest growing large city in America; the metro population is currently around 2 million and there will be another 1 million by the year 2040. Our target area has the highest rate of growth in metro San Antonio projected at 30-40% between now and 2020 and with no end in sight.

Growth has far outpaced the infrastructure in the area including churches: if we doubled the number of churches in the area tomorrow it that would only bring it up to the per capita city average for the

current population, to say nothing of the fact that the approximately 50,000 people who live there now will number near 80,000 in less than 10 years.

Besides the astronomical population growth the area seemed a natural extension of the Shepherd family – in other words New Braunfels is exploding with growth as well but it wouldn't make sense for us to go that far away. Many of our own Shepherd folks, church and school, commute from the greater Alamo Ranch area.

The target area is outside 1604 and narrowly speaking we would like to be between Wiseman and Shanefield Rd. Broadly speaking we're looking everywhere between Potranco and Braun.

Plan A involves "launching" in leased space. There are several options including NISD schools, commercial space that is not normally used on Sundays, and partnering with another church.

The NISD option is doable especially because it is affordable and available but there are restrictions. Elementary Schools cost \$85 an hour with a three hour minimum per weekend – just over \$1,000 per month plus liability insurance (we'll need this regardless of where we meet). But the longest they will let any one group rent a facility is 6 months, anything beyond this requires an extension to be approved, and you must have a letter from a real estate agent or builder showing that we are looking for a more permanent place. The space is not necessarily guaranteed month to month and holiday weekends are difficult to secure. All that to say a public school may be a good option but a necessarily temporary one that should probably only be used as a stop gap if there is a more permanent location on the visible horizon.

Commercial lease space runs the gamut from approx \$600 per month (Karate studio) to the prohibitively expensive (\$4,000 per month for a Montessori school being leased by another church).

Partnering with or leasing space from another existing church is a good option as well and we have a few leads in this realm. It would necessarily mean working around the existing church's schedule but that can certainly be arranged.

Plan B would begin as a "house church" model. This could take several directions but one option is, if we are unable to find another lead planter this year, Pastor Aaron's family is willing to consider potentially moving into the area and starting the church in their home (this is a very common model, especially in the evangelical world) and allowing the church to grow organically, moving into larger space once the congregation size made that necessary.

Who? Who we're after is primarily people who do not know Jesus or who are not connected to the Church. Here a word is necessary on what we are NOT trying to do.

We are not looking to transfer a large number of Shepherd families to the new church. We're not trying to create "Shepherd West". We are not going for a parish model for all the good Lutherans who must be moving into the area. We're not trying to engage in competing or "flock stealing" – drawing people away from other churches to our "better" church. Nor are out to offer a "confessional and doctrinally orthodox" alternative to Zion or Amazing Grace (ELCA).

We want to offer Christ-centered community to the whole neighborhood and ultimately to see people meet Jesus, engage with the church, and see lives change.

Currently the “core group” which can eventually become the leadership of the new church consists of 8 Shepherd families and 1 family recruited from outside SHLC

How? Plan A involves hiring a full time planter to live and work and play in the target area (we are in serious conversation with one potential candidate to fill the position). Ideally being a Church planter is a full time job much more akin to being what Christians traditionally think of as a missionary rather than a pastor of an existing church. His job, besides preaching & teaching and those things commonly associated with pastoral ministry will include building relationships in the neighborhood with community leaders, school principals, youth sports and neighborhood organizations, restaurant and bar owners, etc. This is all in an effort to get the church’s name out there and make it a recognizable face in the community prior to launch.

Before the new church launches there will be marketing of many types to include but not limited to: direct mail, internet and social media advertising, print advertising, banners. With the hope that by the time the new church launches, that is – begins regular public worship services, it is already a known entity and you have enough people there (100 is a good number to shoot for) to build and maintain excitement.

In addition the lead planter will need to do some fundraising to help the church get off the ground and head toward financial self-sufficiency. But he doesn’t have to do all this on his own by any means. In this plan Pastor Aaron will be the associate pastor to assist at all levels of ministry as well as the music leader. And we also have the core group as the key volunteers to help lead the new congregation.

The person we are tentatively speaking with about the position is prayerfully considering as we investigate the steps we need to take. He would still need to be evaluated by the district church planter assessment board and eventually colloquy in to be eligible for a formal call.

The following is a sketch of the partnership Shepherd would take on with the district.

Timeframe: July 2017 through July 2018

Funding Partnership Amount: A grant of \$3500 per month from the Texas District

Purpose: The Texas District will partner with Shepherd of the Hills to immerse the new planter in Shepherd’s DNA, to allow the planter to form relationships and trust, and to give the planter time for training and planning during his first year on site.

Timeframe: August 2018 through October 2021 (40 months)

Funding Partnership Amount: Repayable, no interest start-up funds in the amount of \$5000 per month from the Texas District

Purpose: The Texas District will partner with Shepherd of the Hills by providing repayable start-up funding for the church plant, if it is desired. This funding will supplement the planter’s fundraising efforts and Shepherd’s contributions to the church planting effort. Repayment begins about 6 months after the funds are borrowed. The initial repayment amount would be

\$125 per month and would increase annually based on funds borrowed (amortized at 0% interest over 20 years).

This is assuming Shepherd brings a planter on in July of 2017. It also is based on Roy passing church planter assessment and having your planting plan approved by the Board of Mission Administration

If we are unable to find a suitable lead planter within the year Plan B could begin as a house church led by Pastor Aaron and the other core group members as stated above. In this model there would be less up front marketing and financial investment and growth would come via word of mouth until such time as the group organically outgrew a home and needed to move into larger space. At this time the church could begin a transition to a more standard type of church body including looking for another full time minister.

Currently the core group is meeting regularly for the purposes of learning together how to lead a church - a small group whose purpose is to "practice" being a new church. For now we are meeting every third week and will be going through a curriculum called Alpha to practice being a church that exists to reach the unchurched and spending time doing strategic planning and training.

A child care center is a high likelihood as a partner and ministry extension of the new church but would not be a part of the initial launch. A consultant from Open Arms, a church-child care center consulting agency thought our target area would be a prime candidate for a child care center as a church ministry and outreach but he said in his opinion given our preferred timeline we ought to move ahead with the church and consider opening a child care center once the church is operating and stable. There are other partnership possibilities including a coffee shop.

When? The core group is already meeting, learning, and planning. We'd like to have a lead planter here at Shepherd of the Hills this summer. He'd begin here meeting folks, learning the ropes, and building relationships. Over the course of a year he'd gradually spend less time at Shepherd and more in the target area shooting for a **target launch in fall of 2018**

Conclusion

There have been to my knowledge no new Lutheran churches planted in the San Antonio area for over 15 years. We're way behind but we have a great opportunity to start to play catch up here. Lord willing this new church plant will be the first of many; not a one and done project but the beginning of a movement.

For Christ and His Kingdom,

Pastor Aaron Tilt