

European Church Planting

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Yeast in the Euro-Dough? Transforming Church-Forsaken Communities

“There are no God-forsaken places; there are only church-forsaken places.”

Manchester is a city of urban decline and poverty, abandoned row houses, high crime.

It is typical of Europe because it's Post-Christian, postmodern, a political hotbed, cynical.

Our story: We went in and gave the gospel to a generation of young people who had never heard.

They were hungry for God; many were converted; following up became the challenge.

The local church couldn't handle all the teenagers that wanted to follow Christ.

We needed to be where they were, so we moved into the neighborhood.

Incarnational ministry:

“The Word became flesh and blood and *moved into the neighborhood.*” John 1:14 TMB

Move in and try to live an authentic lifestyle in order to bring change from the inside out.

- The single most effective message anyone will hear is the fact that you are willing to come in and live with them.
- 5 distinctives we live by are to be incarnational, relational, purposeful, counter-cultural and holistic.
- We tried to create a concrete model that would work with the most desperate of the poor, who are the most unrepresented group in the church at large.

Church planting is less about taking our template here and there, and more about making our plans in pencil, going in to live amongst, listening, learning and responding.

The key word is *proximity*: are we willing to get close?

Geographical proximity is not enough; we've got to achieve *relational* proximity.

Only as we achieve proximity do their problems become our problems.

Ed Stetzer, Lifeway, Nashville, TN (www.lifeway.com)

How European Church Planting Networks Are Changing Europe

Streams of the European context:

1. The decline of the institutional church –on a much larger scale than in the US
2. The growth and influence of Islam –flood of Muslim immigrants, in religious transition.
3. The post-Christian or secular world view held by many Europeans.

In many ways the US follows Europe, but we don't know if the cultural climate will follow exactly.

Some elements of the European worldview are fatalism, hedonism, relativism, narrative, secular morality, social democracy, environmentalism, spirituality, virtual society and tribalism.

Models that don't work:

- Attractional: “come and see” fails in Europe, only attracts Christians.
- Discipleship: Extractional, looks for a movement that is rapid and reproducible.
- Redemption and lift concept: Come to Christ and disconnect from where you came from.
- Parish mentality: Founding pastors are often outsiders.

What have we learned?

- Church planting must be missional and incarnational, indigenous and Spirit-led.
- To value the tribes, households, existing social circles rather than creating our own.
- We need to have a multiplication mindset.

Why Europe? There is an opportunity there to see the world transformed by the power of the gospel in a global way that we in American can't do, to break through boundaries.