

“Vision for Opening Day” (If the Lord wills)

Message given by Pastor Craig Schill at Trinity Fellowship Church on April 23, 2006.
One year before our public launch.

I have two quotes taped onto my cabinet in my office – that have given me inspiration over the past four years of seminary. One quote, I find, will have continuing applicability as we follow the Lord to this church plant. I would like to read it for you. It is from Andy Stanley, from his book *Visioneering*. “Any vision worth pursuing will demand sacrifice and risk. You will be called on to give up the actual good for the potential best. You will find it necessary to leave what is comfortable and familiar in order to embrace that which is uncomfortable and unfamiliar. And all the while, you will be haunted by the fear that this thing you are investing so much of yourself in may not work out at all.”

Those of us embarking on the adventure of church planting, embark on an adventure of faith. I include all of us here – not just those who will go physically; by anyone who puts their hand to this project, through prayer, financial support, practical help. We are like the pioneers of old, loading the covered wagons and preparing for a new adventure. I imagine that the pioneers of old asked two questions before they set out. Before they made their decisions – first – “Where are we going?” In term of church planting language – what type of church are we trying to plant? Second – “How do we get there - how will this happen, what is the plan? I’d like to address both questions briefly.

Vision for Church Values

If you mention church planting to 10 people, there will probably be 10 different ideas of what that means. Satellite church? Denominational plant? Mother/daughter plant? We purpose to have a mother / daughter church, with the new church becoming financially independent in 2-3 years. It is church plant born of our cooperation, and not conflict. In fact this church plant is born out of love for Trinity and wanting to share the blessing of what we have experienced here in another community. We desire the DNA of the mother church to continue into the daughter church. In fact that is a key reason for the church plant in the first place. The conviction that what the Lord has brought to Trinity in terms of ministry philosophy and focus is worth reproduced in a different community. My vision is that a year after the new church has been planted, if you visited both churches on two consecutive Sundays you would say, “Hey – these churches have some similarities – are you related?” Like when you see a child and parent – you can see the resemblance.”

What are some similarities?

Same four purposes – as in the handout. We will state them a little differently, but they are essentially the same. Same form of church governance, plurality of elder. Same worship philosophy – God centered and blended. Word and the Table – weekly communion. High priority of teaching from the word of God. Value of fellowship – seen in the name “community” – we are a community of faith, reaching our community around us. Valuing our connection with the historic Church of God – the best of what God has done is not all in the past 50 years. Using the church calendar. I don’t like “traditional” but historic Christianity.

What are some possible differences?

Here are a few possibilities. I would like our core group to think carefully about how we are going to do small groups – and how that interacts with adult Sunday School. I would also like for us to be strategic and abundant in our evangelism – that may be different. While music philosophy will be the same – the style of music may be different. We will have different mix of instruments, and the worship leader will bring his own background to the task.

For opening day (April 2007), here is a vision that I shared with the elders back in February – that puts some form to what this might look like, if God allows it to occur:

On opening day...

There is a buzz of excitement in the air – like the anticipation of a new baby being born, or opening presents on Christmas day. The church is meeting in a rented facility – school or rec hall in the city of Rowlett. There is plenty of good signage – directing cars from the major surrounding streets to the parking lot. The church begins operating with a modest inventory – communion plates, keyboard, CE curriculum, a sound system, coffee maker, data projector, and nursery items. They are organized and stored in a trailer, and a team of people have been trained for set up and take down responsibilities.

Between 100 and 150 people are present for the first service. This includes one or two key dignitaries to offer prayers of consecration – Dr. John Reed, perhaps? Several from TFC are present – hopefully you are there! Inside there is coffee, TFC-quality doughnuts, bulletins and information about the church. Everyone at the service is given church pens with the new name and web site – to pass out to their friends. The service is complete with worship, a message and the Lord's Table. There is special music. Sunday School is offered for the children, and a loving nursery for the infants.

That is...the new church launches with a critical mass – We are a functioning local assembly when people can come to serve and be ministered to.

In terms of outreach prior to the service...

There is a basic but attractive web site and logo communicating the values of the church, and its distinctives, location etc. The web site has been around for about 6-month by the time the church opens. The community has been made aware of the new church through targeted and attractive advertising. The church's first service has been advertised in the newspaper, perhaps on radio. Over the previous months, I have met with several pastors in the city – other churches are aware and welcoming of this new work. The neighborhoods around the church's location have been canvassed with door hangers and other information. The church has become a legal entity with incorporation, constitution, bi-laws, policies, vision and mission statements. One or two evangelistic events have already been planed and executed in the target community – perhaps a Crown financial seminar? Two or three couples are present at the opening service because of these events. One person has come to faith as part of the new-church development process. Other advertising includes a 7-minute DVD about the church, a yellow-page ad and informative brochure.

Behind the scenes...

By June of 2006 the core group was identified – comprised of families from within the church, and a few families from outside of the church. The minimum benchmark of 10 families – 7 from TFC and 3 from outside the church was met and exceeded. Over the past 8 months the core group has met regularly to pray, strategize and discuss each part of the ministry. Team

building has occurred and the core group has moved through the stages of team development – forming, storming, to norming to performing. Operational plans and ministry assignments are in place for: a worship team, nursery, CE, missions program, small groups, assimilation of new people, evangelism, youth, and more...

There has been a commissioning service for the new church. There are tears of sadness mixed with the sparkle of excitement as everyone feels both the loss of friends from this fellowship – yet great anticipation and gladness on account of God being at work in the new church. A team investigates and secures a meeting place. They have been investigating the purchase of land – the acquisition of land is a priority and matter of great prayer. Two other elders have been selected and mentored by TFC – they are ready to do what it takes to help this church plant succeed. A worship leader has been identified – and mentored by Alan. The worship leader and myself have discussed the first year's preaching calendar, and much work has already gone into the planning process. The church has already identified its first missionary family to support. It begins, opening day, with a missions program. Strategic and cooperative meetings have happened between the new church plant and TFC regarding CE, youth ministry, adult ministry and others – so that the church plant might be well prepared. Money has been saved through the sharing resources. In terms of finances... \$120,000 has been raised for both start up costs and to fund the 2007 budget for the church plant. TFC also meets its own operating budget for 2006. This has encouraged the body at TFC, as they invest in outreach, and sets the church on a stable financial path – receipts to the new church in 2007 are applied toward the 2008 budget and for land purchase. Because of over abundant giving – perhaps a part-time worship pastor has been added to the leadership team.

All of this happens up to the launch of the new church. The careful work and preparation give everyone the sense that this “has been done with excellence.” The new church is poised for fruitful ministry for years to come. **Does it sound overwhelming?** Yes – it may. But is it worth it? Is God calling you to be a part of this? I hope so – that you all will be part of this church plant to some degree.