

Mission UpReach Newsletter

Self-led, self-sustaining, and self-replicating churches

By Phil Waldron

Joel Rainey wrote an article in which he said, "It is easier to birth a baby than it is to raise the dead." His article lists five things that must be done if a declining church is going to "turn around." Anyone who has ever been a member of a declining church understands the difficulty in turning around a negative momentum church. Rainey's advice is pretty good for someone in a declining church in the USA. Here in Latin America however declining churches are not so much the problem as stagnant churches. And very few of our congregations are free from dependency on US funds nor are they planting new congregations with any frequency in communities that have none currently. Trying to "renovate" or "turnaround" one of these congregations where the pattern of dependency on foreign funds has already been set is almost impossible.

Let me share with you some "for instances" that are anecdotal but fairly accurate in highlighting the problem. Typically, a US congregation will pay the salary of an evangelist or preacher that has graduated from a school of preaching. The salary that he receives comes directly to him from the US congregation. Because he is a missionary sent and paid for by the foreign church back in the US this prevents the local brethren in the congregation from having any "say so" over his work ethic, productivity, attitude, etc. The sending church back home asks that he report on the number of Bible studies per week that he is holding and how many people are baptized each year. Typically, once a year someone from the home church, who often does not speak the language or really understand the culture, will visit for a few days in order

to maintain personal contact between the congregation and their national missionary.

In many, many cases these national missionaries work hard to baptize people but if you look at the attendance of their churches it does not increase appreciably from one year to the next. One should ask the question why is he reporting a substantial number of baptisms each year and yet the overall attendance in his congregation is not going up? It could be that his reporting is inaccurate. Or it could be that he is accurately reporting the data by which the home congregation is evaluating his effectiveness, i.e., he baptizes people but getting them to commit to the Lordship of Jesus in their lives is a very different conundrum.

If we are serious about preaching the Gospel to every creature and "not being willing that any should perish" we should be concerned that our traditional methods of missionary work and church planting don't seem to be growing into any kind of a church-planting-movement. Sometimes you will hear people excuse the lack of growth in these congregations by repeating to themselves the phrase, "somos pocos pero fieles" which means, "we are few but we are faithful." Somehow, our well intentioned efforts at planting churches here in Latin America have communicated a value that if we are faithful to the "sana doctrina" or "holy doctrine" we will never reach large numbers of the lost.

But when we look at Acts and see how the church spread like wild fire across a Godless, pagan, immoral world; we have to believe that being faithful will lead to more and more people kneeling at the Lord's feet not just a few. Our experience is that because Latin America has a Roman



Catholic cultural backdrop that teaches that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins (albeit they practice infant baptism in lieu of believer baptism) it is fairly easy to show someone from the Scriptures what they need to do in order to be saved. However, the prevailing sentiment is, "sure Jesus is Lord but what does that have to do with how I live my life during the week?"

These and other factors such as the local members taking the attitude of; "of course he should do all of the evangelizing. It's his job. They pay him to do that. It's not our responsibility" are barriers to a church becoming self-led, self-sustaining and self-replicating. That's why here at Mission UpReach, even though it is a much slower process of raising up churches than the traditional form of paying a preacher with outside funds, we believe the best way to raise up a self-led, self-sustaining and self-replicating church is to start with one. That means that we have to train 1,000's of men and women who will take the Good News to their family and friends in villages where there is no church. Then our job is to help them establish themselves as a self-led, self-sustaining, self-replicating congregation by providing them with access to continuing education and equipping in order to mature them as teachers, preachers, evangelists, elders, and deacons.



Moses Project contributes to self-led, self-sustaining, self-replicating churches

By Jon Stacy

When we were presented with the opportunity to take over the operations of the Moses Project, one of the first decisions that we had to make was what to do with the boys that are there. The idea of having an agricultural training center for young boys was a totally new concept for Mission UpReach and we struggled at first with how this training center fit into our plan for planting self-led, self-sustaining and self-reproducing churches. During the past 3 years of owning and operating the Moses Project this plan has come into view and we are already beginning to see glimpses of how this can be a huge tool for planting these self-led, self-sustaining and self-reproducing churches.

The boys come to the Moses Project having completed the sixth grade and are with us for the next 6 years while they complete their formal high school

education. This gives us six years of being able to invest in their lives and disciple them to become leaders in their families and communities by using the examples that we find in the Bible of what God defines as a leader and how a leader then uses that gift to bless others. These boys will pass through our CRESCO school as well as our CREO program during their six years with us. They attend chapel 4 days out of the week and are active members in the Belen congregation's youth group as well as participants in the worship time on Sunday morning. Teaching these young boys to be leaders in their families and communities helps us to meet the goal of a self-led church.

We also are teaching these boys the latest in agricultural techniques in the areas of aquaculture, coffee and poultry. We have partnered with a government run technical school, so these boys also learn valuable career sustaining skills such as

welding, carpentry, auto mechanics and electricity. These boys will not repeat the cycle of subsistence living which more-often-than-not ends up in them fleeing illegally to the states. We are teaching these boys how to be self-sustaining and provide for their families and their community. This helps us meet our goal of having a self-sustaining church by having young men who have been trained and are equipped to have gainful employment that provides for their families and communities.

The self-reproducing church comes naturally if we have done our job of discipling these boys to be disciples who make disciples who make disciples etc.

We pray that as these boys leave the Moses Project that we can say to them some of Paul's last words to Timothy. *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it."* 2 Timothy 3:14

Local church hosts choir concert

By *Dakota Nowell*

On Saturday night, June 16th, three choirs came together for the first concert of the year. The concert titled, “Orgullo Catracho” or “Honduran Pride” featured three different groups. “Los Bajos Altos”, a choir of around 30 young men from the Moses Project started off the night with two traditional songs about the beauty of Honduras. Then, “CANTO” which is one of the DESEO after-school programs, performed three songs which included two soloists. The final Choir of the night, “Los CatraChicos,” which is made up of children from the local church and former CANTO students and is the only auditioned choir, performed two songs including a Spanish rendition of “Remember Me” from the Disney/Pixar film, “Coco”.

With the Moses Project, DESEO, and the local church all represented, this concert was a great example of the dynamic that exists between Mission UpReach and the local church. While



each choir is directed by Dakota Nowell, a MUR volunteer, the participants come from different areas where MUR has been working. Unfortunately, the Honduran education system puts very little importance on music and the arts so the majority of Hondurans grow up never learning how to sing.

While Hondurans sing with all

their heart, you can imagine how this lack of music education would affect an Acapella worship service. Our goal with these choirs is to create a love and appreciation for music and train the next generation of song leaders and worshippers. We are excited to see how our efforts today will impact the church in the coming years.

Busy brigade season

By *Caleb Gossett*

During the month of June we began our busy brigade season. Each year countless individuals choose to spend a week working alongside us. We count it as a blessing that so many people have a similar mindset for missions and a heart for service.

The second week of June the Lexington Church of Christ came and did a medical brigade in Corquin, Copán. The Lexington Church is actually the home congregation of the Bridges family, who live in Corquin and have helped lead the efforts of establishing a new congregation. It was encouraging to see the Lexington group work alongside the Bridges family in their efforts for the kingdom.

The third week of June brought a small group from the North Atlanta Church of Christ to Honduras. The group taught multiple lessons and seminars to help develop the leaders in the local church. One of which was a week-long seminar centered on pastoral counseling, and how we can use the Word and the Holy Spirit to guide others towards healing. The North Atlanta group, while made up of only a few people, had a tremendous impact.

In the final week of June, the Pine Tree and Southside Churches of Christ combined forces to accomplish not one



brigade, but three. These two groups did a medical brigade, VBS, and a construction brigade. It was amazing to see such flurry of God-centered activity, and we know that the results will be just as incredible.

Please pray for our staff and our visiting groups as we continue the brigade season.



A note from Donna



I recently heard a quote from a very successful man who after being complimented for his success said, "Success comes from making mistakes and learning from them." As we

have worked over the past 9 years here on the ground,

we have made mistakes and attempted things that simply didn't work out.

True success evaluates experiences and using them to do things better the next time. As Phil mentioned in his article, we have seen the results of years of US churches putting preachers on support and it has not been positive. We should learn from our mistakes and experiences and direct our money, time and efforts in new direction due to our evaluations. Change is not always easy, but when we see the urgency of need to preach the gospel, we should be willing to change and adjust. We here at Mission UpReach do not claim to have the perfect model, but we have developed a plan, taking into account the lessons learned.

Please pray for those efforts and join us financially as we seek to plant self-led, self-sustaining, and self-replicating churches. We can't do it without you!

2018 Brigades/Visiting Teams

TBD	Tusculum C of C	Medical
March 10-17.....	Southside C of C	Medical
March 10-17.....	Pine Tree C of C youth.....	VBS/Construction
April 7-14	Surgical Brigade	Surgery
June 9-16.....	Lexington C of C.....	Medical
June 16-23	North Atlanta C of C	Pastoral Counseling/ Marriage Mentoring
June 23-30	Pine Tree C of C	Medical/VBS/Construction
June 30 - July 7.....	Snellville C of C.....	VBS
July 7-14.....	Burnt Hickory C of C.....	Medical//Construction
July 14-21	University C of C	Medical
Sept. 29 - Oct. 6	Surgical Brigade	Surgery

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Other Giving

Mission UpReach is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We can assist you to designate MUR in a corporations' matching gifts program, or giving through a United Way campaign, or as you prepare wills for your estate.



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