

STAN DUECK: We're delighted to have everyone with us and looking forward to this time with David Fitch as he presents this webinar, **Seeding or Launching Congregations: The First Year Shapes the church for Decades**.

Today we're going to explore a little bit about the history of church planting - an introduction to approach church planting and then also, what does that mean, and what are its implications? What does that mean for us?

We have here today those that are either District Executives, or part of New Church Development teams for their districts or their regions. We also have people in pastoral ministry and those that are interested in church revitalization and church planting. We have a good mix here with us today and looking forward to this conversation and David's leadership.

For those of you that know David Fitch is the B.R. Linder chair of Evangelical Theology at Northern Seminary in Chicago. He writes on issues of local church -- issues that the local church faces in mission, including cultural engagement, leadership, and theology-- plus a number of other things. Additionally, he's a church planter - so this is a practice of his and something dear to his heart.

Following the webinar, I will post a link for your CEU's in the chat box. Also, if you could please reply with any questions or comments that you have that you'd like to ask David. You can provide the questions any at any time, but we'll take a break here and there for him to respond and then continue with more content and kind of break it up in that way.

David, welcome and we look forward to what you have to share with us. I am going to turn over the chair to you.

DAVID FITCH: Thank you, Stan for inviting me and gathering us together on this subject.

I've been thinking through church planting for many years. I think I'm on my seventh church plant, possibly eighth, depending on what counts.

I think of the things we learned in church planting. I had breakfast this morning with someone in leadership in one of those church plants and we were discussing the ins and outs of how to draw people out of their particular consumer mindset to see church differently. I think church planting is a great laboratory to think through what it means to be the church and how to engage communities, neighborhoods, towns, and villages for the gospel of the Kingdom. So, I'm about to present something that I've talked about over the years. It's all pretty simple. There's a lot of underlying theological currents going on here. I know your church has Anabaptist underpinnings and I think this take on the history of church planting fits very well with some of my Anabaptist inclinations. Perhaps we can get into some questions and dig deeper into some of the theological implications of the history of church planting and what it means for those of us who are planting and also revitalizing churches. Let me just start here with the history.

I believe that there has been a rolling history of church planting well since World War II in North America, so I'll call this first round of church planting, The Franchise Church.

This happened from immediately after World War II, all the way up to the 60s and the 70s. You probably know at the end of World War II millions of GI's were returning from the war and we are seeing a building out of subdivisions and suburbs from the cities like we have never seen before; we're seeing a lot of people move from the city into the suburbs and to new places and -- by the way-- mostly white people (7:22)

And so recognizing this was a ready market so in, I don't know -- Pleasantville, Illinois, that's a fictional name-- a new subdivision was being built and they had a grocery store. They had a barber shop. They had a library, a school and they needed a church.

So, suppose the Methodists had 250 people move to Pleasantville, and needed First Church of Methodist, Pleasantville. So what they did was they sent out an M.Div. graduate from the Methodist Seminary to put up a sign who knew the hymn book, who knew the liturgy book, who knew how to preach like a Methodist, who knew the theology of Methodist., and they *franchised* and there was a ready market. And back in the 50s and 60s if the guy was any good you had a First Church of Methodist spring up... everywhere. I call those Franchise Churches. Each denomination would do this *over and over* again as new populations grew in each of these new subdivisions.

Let's call that 'Franchise'.

There's a there's a particular way of thinking about church planting that is built into the Franchise Model. But somewhere Now go further to the late 70s 80s 90s. During the 60s you had the Sexual Revolution; you had the Boomers that were born in the 40s and early 50s leaving the church saying, oh my goodness, the church is not relevant to me. But then in the 70s the Boomers got married and had children. So the by the mid to late 70s, they are actually thinking about going to church again. They had grown up in church.

They didn't want the stale old high church liturgy of the Lutheran church. They didn't want the stale old bible church sermons of the Bible church, but they were getting married. They were having children. They were longing for something like they had in their lives for *their* children. And so the Seeker church movement was born for what they called the de-churched people. And the question was what would make you come back to church?

I call this the Update Model. So we had to update church to make it appealing to the to the Boomers who had gone away from church and then got married and came back. Okay.

So we get the Franchise Model then we got the Update Model.

Now we arrive in the 2000s and we're now in a period of outright stagnation. Maybe an outright decline of Christianized populations in North America. The market for de-churched Boomers is practically is exhausted, and more and more churches are being planted to try and tap into that de-churched market. Let's make church more hip. Let's make it more cool. Now we have to realize that we actually have to engage people outside the Christian faith altogether.

If Alan Hirsch is to be believed and I don't know if he's *always to be believed*. 😊 But if he is to be believed he says that 40% of the people in the United States still go to church on Sunday, 60% are now in that secularized realm. In Canada, the figures are as high as 10% church 90% secularized.

I was just in Europe - Germany - one and a half to two percent go to church in Germany. What Alan Hirsch says is that 90% of church planting goes for the 40 percent that are *already interested* in church, and very little work is being done to reach those outside the Christian faith. And so the question becomes, how am I going to plant a church now, if (like I believe), church is the political presence of the kingdom of God, being implanted to give witness to the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to transform the world and people's lives. And I want to reach people outside the gospel. How is that possible?

So we have a whole different kind of church. I would call this the Mission, the Missional or the Incarnational church plant. (13:00)

So three waves of church planting. And what I always say is the purpose of each church plant, and what we're here to do and accomplish, and who were aiming our church plant at (target audience). But where you start and what how you're thinking about church planting, and if it's Franchise, if it's Update, if its Mission ... will really shift how you think about doing all the things from starting a church, to leadership in church, to what and how we think about gathering on a Sunday morning, to how we think about evangelism.

So, let me try to tease out some of those differences.

First of all, the goals and purposes of these three types of church plants are quite different.

For the Franchise Church, you know we have already people in Pleasantville, Illinois that want a particular kind of church - Methodist Church, Brethren Church. They're already there. Denominationalism drives this idea of church plant. Today, by the way, we have a different kind of Franchise. I'll call it the *video venue*. We have a church, let's say in Naperville, and we have 250 people driving all the way from Westmont to Naperville to come to our venue. Well, why don't we just set up a venue in Westmont? So those 250 people don't have to drive so far, pipe in the preaching on the screen -- but the driving purpose of the Franchise church is we have a market of Christians *already there* who want this thing, this Franchise- kind of like McDonald's. We already know people want McDonald's on before we play before we build a McDonald's restaurant and pay all that money for the Franchise.

Now the Update church is a little bit different. The church has become somewhat irrelevant -- disconnected from people in their lives who grew up once in church, and the driving purpose here is to make church relevant to de-churched dormant Christians who once went to church a long time ago, and we want to reclaim those de-churched people. I ask you -- is there anything wrong with that? I think we got to be careful about over-criticizing the mega churches, but there are weaknesses here in the consumer critique of how we try to make church more *relevant* or *easy*, or *convenient*, or *fitting into your particular lifestyle* ... has inherent dangers to it.

But on the other hand, I've been to a lot of Baptist churches. I can throw the Baptists under the bus because I'm with the Brethren today, but there are a lot of Baptist churches where they haven't changed anything in like 62 years.

And there's a lot of people who are 82 who are into it. It's like trying to go to a German Baptist Church in the United States and they haven't translated anything in German. They don't realize no one else speaks German in the neighborhood. So anyways, all that to say, I'm not trying to throw the Update church model under the bus and say this is all bad. There is a legitimate purpose in the Update Church.

The Mission, Incarnational church plant, sees the problem that the church has become ingrown. The church has become an island unto itself. (18:00)

We need to engage and extend and reach into places. The violent, hurting, lost places of the world we're in and reach people for the Gospel, for the life-giving redemption power of the lordship of Jesus Christ to people who have never darkened the door of a church who, frankly, had *no intention* of darkening the door of a church.

Frankly, despite sometimes, the church.

Incarnational/Mission Church Plant. So there you have it -- there you have the driving purposes between behind the Franchise, behind the Update and behind what I'll call the Incarnational/Mission church plant.

But notice the differing premises --and at the very least can we look at our contexts and ask does this make any sense to plant an Update church in a place that doesn't have 10 remaining people who at one time were Christians and now they're longing for a church? Does it make sense to do that?

I was in Berlin about three months ago talking to some church planters. One-and-a-half percent of the people in Berlin are Christians who still consider going to a church, and a successful church plant was one that captured 400 of the 10,000 remaining Christians in Berlin ***and*** getting them interested in coming back to church. *Is that what we should be doing in Berlin Germany? Is that why we want to plant a church...?* Let's take care of those 10,000 people? I mean, by the way, now we're getting into theology and so forth. We do have to gather a community to give witness to the gospel before the world.

But you know, sometimes I've been in these missionary contexts, and it seems like we're spending 25 years figuring out how we can get 40 of the last 400 remaining Christians in Limoges, France to come to church on Sunday.

That to me no, thank you, Stan. ***I am just so not interested.*** It seems like I beat my brains out to get the to get 10% of the remaining 400 Christians who come to church again.

Maybe we can pause to take some questions, but what I want to suggest to you is, from going from Franchise to Update to Mission/Incarnational ...changes the way you think about ***context.***

How you *start a church*, how you think about the horizon... how *long* this is going to take ... How you measure how a church is going ... what you do with worship, even preaching ... how you do leadership...

But before I get into that, are there any questions? (21:29)

STAN:

I think people are still thinking and pondering. I do have a question. When the different models - and as you were saying -- *why would we do this in Berlin, to try to connect with 10,000 people...?* What is it that when we think about church planting, that our church communities, our denominational bodies, fall back to those default models?

DAVID:

Well, first of all, I just want to tell you. *It's mind-blowing that this indeed is what's happening over and over again*, going back to default model, Franchise, or default model Update.

And so my one impression is ... that it *has* worked in the past. You know, if I give a speech like this someplace, I'll get a few emails from church planters who will then tell me, "... Have you seen what happened in such and such a place ...? Usually it's somewhere south of the Mason-Dixon line. And how many people they have in three years ... and *all* the music ... and the amount of ego gratification or otherwise sense of I'm doing something *big* and *important* here is so overwhelming and then the question is ... *WHY can't I do this HERE?*

In Saskatoon, Saskatchewan or Chicago?

You know, if you've got a million dollars to spend, with the greatest equipment and you've got a Meeting campaign, you can rustle up 400 Christians in Chicago pretty fast to start a *sis-boom-bah* church plant, but that's an awful lot of money. As I said, making church relevant is not necessarily a bad thing, but it *can* turn into celebrity worship really quick.

So I just think the reason why denominations have in the past defaulted to the Update Model is because it's worked so well, and it's been so dominant on the Christian horizon. But now, I would say in the last three years, I've talked to at least a half a dozen denominational leaders who have said in no uncertain terms, "I have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars planting church after church and five years later we have almost nothing to show for it. I'm sick of throwing a half a million dollars at a church plant. What else can we do?"

So I do sense a little bit of that going on as well.

STAN:

So, here's a question that has come up: How would a person gets started? Like, what would be the first step once you feel this is a direction you would go. So let's say you're weighing these models or you're looking at the context. What's that first step that our church planter is thinking about -- this is what I got to do?

DAVID:

What's the first thing you do in a Franchise church versus an Update church versus a Mission Incarnational church?

Well, for a Franchise church what you did is you got all the goods and services set up according to the model of the Methodists or the Baptists. I'm talking children's ministry, music minister, clergy leader, baptisms, weddings ... all the goods and services as produced by your denomination as led by a professional clergy person.

That's the first thing you do. I mean, I don't know if you remember this, Stan, but when I was planting churches, *you got to have the children's ministry set up*. You gotta have a good ***preaching service***. You've got to ***have a few people in the congregation to make it look like you have some people***, you gotta ***have a youth group leader and a Sunday school class***, you know, so that's the first thing you do ... and you gotta have a ***hymnal***.

Our hymnal in my denomination was really not that good. *But you still had to have it* if you're going to start Christian Missionary Alliance Church.

Anyway, in the Updated model you do all these same things, but you just *update* them. The music is better. It's cooler. It's hipper. It's fantastic, actually. It sounds like U2 ... there, I just dated myself...

The preaching is *oh*, Oh! It's amazing! I mean you have a celebrity guy who can just get up (mostly a guy by the way, sorry to say that, but that's the way the previous models ... that's the way they were rolled). There's reasons for that which I can go into in leadership, but you do all these things, but you just update them.

With a Mission Incarnational church, the first thing you do is go and you move ... into a context ... you inhabit ... that place ... you live there... you get to know the town, the village that you live in ... you start to exegete, sort out ... what's going on in this culture. So as to be able to make sense of what the gospel is in this place. Now, I know you think that sounds ... (all you people out there in TV Land) think that that sounds "Pie in the Sky". (28:44)

I don't I don't think so. So, what we do is (and we're setting up a laboratory for this in about a couple of months), we find *three leader* or *leader couples* to go move into a place; get a job to support themselves. So within two or three years our hope is that these people will be sustainable and committed to this place. Sustainable financially and otherwise three leaders. Not one.

And they get to know the place, relationally engage the place, and slowly draw a group together and I'll talk about how that takes shape and so forth. But we don't plan a Sunday morning gathering for the actual public for possibly two to three years. And our goal in at the end of three years is not to have a sustainable church with 200 people that all tithe and so the money's coming in, and we have a self-sustaining church. Our goal is to have self-sustaining missionaries

working together in a place, who, by the nature of their jobs and their finances, are stable, they're there and now they're capable of engaging for the long term.

Does that help?

STAN:

Yes. So going back to that model versus some of the others that you have shared, what's the theology that drives it? How does the theology of one model compare to the other? What's the difference and why is that theology important to a model such as what you've just shared?

DAVID:

It's a broad question, right? I mean there's a lot of theology in what I just said. For instance, the theology that informs the way leadership works, and I believe the bible teaches *mutuality*, (by the way **this is very** Anabaptist); *mutuality*: the gifts working together in concert, people inhabiting a place; and church becomes a way of life. Not a set of programs.

And I've written about that in this book right here, (he holds up book, "Faithful Presence – Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission"). There is a Theology of the way God works in a place that says we are called to *inhabit* that place to *listen* to that place ... not just place people. But remember, people are involved in social cultural mechanisms; I mean *antagonisms* and *strife* and *brokenness* and *oppression* ... and it's into these places we have to go we have to *listen* ... *long enough* to be able to *proclaim that Jesus is Lord*. He's working to reconcile the world to himself. He wants to forgive, he wants you also to forgive, he wants to transform, he wants to make possible a new way of being together.

So it's a big question ... and I don't know if that helps ... but I gave you a few little nuggets there of how I think theology is so important in understanding why we *even want to do church* ... because we *cannot* be Christians *without* a way of life and a witness to the gospel in the *way* we live among a people. That's why we go in threes. Not one.

STAN:

So we have again, a model or ways of looking at church planting and how it shapes the future of the church so, in a Franchise or the Update church it's like, *OK, we kind of know how that model works*. You know, it's kind of a corporate model, in many ways. It's easy for us to pick up, its ingrained within our culture and society. So, how do you how do these different models re-shape or change the way that we look at worship, mission, fellowship, community, you know, help us through that as well.

DAVID:

Okay. Let me just go through a few things. So for instance: *How do we view our context?* (33:18)

In the Franchise Model, context is basically irrelevant. It just assumes a monolithic view of culture. So I'm going to plant the same Methodist church in Pleasantville, Illinois as in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It doesn't matter we're all Methodists. We all get the same hymn book. In the Update church, we are we are serving the context; we are *assuming* church is wanted in this place. And now, we just want to know how to present a set of goods and services that's relevant to the people in the context. I call that survey.

But in Mission, we are exegeting the context we're served. We're exegeting, trying to know and listen where the issues of economics, power, pain, hurt ... partying... *where are they partying and what are they celebrating?* I want to know and understand this context in the language, and the ways of life, and how the gospel speaks into this way of life. And I wanted to call people into the gospel and in the faithful presence -- I'd architect the way the church is in the book of Acts and throughout the New Testament --- is three circles -- and we go into what I call the '*half circle place*' to proclaim the gospel out of which people are called into this great Kingdom, which makes possible discipleship and worship. So frankly, there's just a different way of looking at context based on those three models. 35:19

Well, how do we start? I already kind of alluded to this, but Franchise, there's a sense of establishing a Methodist church. whereas Update so we just established it right? We are here -- Methodists are here. *All Methodists out there -- you have a place to come, let's go!*

Versus launch. Launch is what the Update church calls it. Why? *WE WANT TO LET PEOPLE KNOW WE GOT A NEW SUPERMARKET THEY CAN COME TO*, to meet Jesus and all of their needs.

In terms of mission and incarnation, I want people to think about *landing in this place*. I have a theory ... I've talked to District Executives about this. My theory is you get three leader or leader couples to go live in a place and commit to that place for 10 years, to get jobs and get sustainable life. To know their gifts and how to work together to organize the Kingdom.

Ten years later, you'll have a church. That's my guarantee. (Actually, it's inappropriate, but that's what I'm trying to say). That's how I think that's how I think Mission church works. So the horizon often for franchise churches are three years -- we'll give you three years to get your people's butts in the seats and be sustainable. Likewise, the Update church works on the three-year model. We're going to give you salary, etc., health insurance for three years. And then in three years man, if you don't have it made -- boom, you're out. You're a failure. Sorry.

And then for Mission, I want people to think of 10 to 15 years of commitment to a place, and engaging this place for the kingdom of God. Wayne Gordon of Lawndale Christian Community, a guy who teaches on campus here at Northern Seminary, graduate of Northern Seminary, said if you don't know anything about Lawndale, it's a church of about a thousand but it's had a major impact in Lawndale, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city of Chicago for many years. And he says, 'Dave, if you had been here 15 years into it you would have said nothing is

happening here. But, you go there now ... Major impact – people come from all over the world to go see what happened in **Lawndale church**.

So I just want people to have that horizon in terms of church planting -- and for that matter, revitalizing church. Just 10 to 15 years of beautiful work of cultivating a garden, and let God work.

For worship, the Franchise church ... well, it's pretty simple. You just transfer the *entire* liturgy Methodist hymn book and do it in a different place. You just need a professionally trained person in the Methodist ways.

In the Update Model, you got to get a good band. You got to translate the music to its contemporary relevant, you know, you got an update from frankly, ummm, that music you were talking about at the beginning of the podcast, Stan,-- **not** going to work anymore. You've gotta update music, your jokes, a lot of things need to be updated. But you know - think about how Willow Creek was cutting edge with the way they produced (and I **do** mean *produced*) worship services or Seeker services in those early years.

But for Mission, I want us to think about worship as part of an established rhythm that does not stand alone. It becomes a place by which we gather ourselves, that's part of feeding into and out into our life for the rest of the other six and a half days of the week and the other circles of our lives. All three circles of our lives I like to say, and I don't have time to explain the three circles, but worship is just something that is part. It makes no sense, if the other parts of our rhythms of our everyday lives are not also part of the way of life.

Um, I can go on and talk about ... justice. How does justice work in the Franchise Model? There is no justice (he laughs) in the Franchise Model. Why? Because the Franchise Model is part of the established culture, which is already Christian ... and we just expect the government to do justice and, you know, we might have to rally a vote every once in a while, to get the Republican end, (you know what I'm saying?). But, you know, for the Franchise Model justice is just not on the front burner. For the Update Model, we do projects, we do justice projects. We have a lot of people, a lot of money, with about two hours a month to volunteer for justice projects. Let's put them to work and get them out there ... but you notice the distancing effect of the Update Model because it's still operating as a part of established society.

For the Mission Incarnational model of church planting, **justice is part of developing a presence in the neighborhood. A presence where the hurting and the lost are. A regular being there. I call it the third circle** ... and the third circle takes various shapes.

In Westmont, we have a guy in the zoning committee who goes and sits on the zoning committee twice a month and I call it *Opening Space for the Kingdom*, and the struggle's there for justice. I

go hang out at Potbelly bar where there's the bunch of broken people going through various things and I feel very at home there, and I go there. Same time, same place, every week.

We have people who go minister among homeless shelters or hospitals, or we have a large immigrant community -- refugee community, on the south side of a Westmont, where we have people who spend regular time there. *And out of that space is open, and gospel is proclaimed,* and resources makes sense to be shared -- not as a client-church / have not client-relationship. But as part of living life among people with the gospel. So all these things change depending on what model of church planting and ways of understanding church plant in church.

STAN: (Stan accidentally turns off the chat room; recognizing this, 'someone' alerts him to that fact) Appreciate it. Well, it gives us a little more time to talk about Carlos Santana and Tower of Power. There is a question though, and I apologize for accidentally turning off the chat.

STAN: Q: If I'm in a leadership role for a middle judicatory district -- that's a culture shift, a mind change. I may be open to it, exploring the idea, but I'm also asking people to come along beside that, and how do you begin to shift a culture of a church body, a regional body, that is supporting and, in a sense, doing the sending as well?

DAVID:

I only have a few comments on this because I feel like this, Stan, might be *your* job.

STAN: Thanks. :0)

DAVID: I have a few comments -- I think we need laboratories. I think we need laboratories, number one, to reshape *imagination* for church planting. By the way, I'm part of a denomination that sends missionaries out and does this all the time overseas, but for goodness sakes *what is the problem? Why can't we do the same thing here that we do over there?* My small denomination (is) half a million people in the United States. It's been a half a million people for 30 years. Overseas, we started with, I don't know, a thousand missionaries, and there's three and a half million of us overseas. *What does that tell you?* You know anyways, my point is we need laboratories.

The second thing we need to realize is that this way of church planting is very inexpensive. It helps people get located, finds a housing stipend, and some health insurance for three years while they get a job. They need coaching on how to get a job. Then they need coaching and how to think about a job, and how to think about how that integrates in ministry and location. But it's much less expensive than paying \$500,000 for Superstar Celebrity to start a new church with incredible speakers, smoke machines, blah blah blah.

The last thing I'll say is we need to realize that Millennials, and to some extent slightly older than Millennials, and then the generation beneath Millennials, are just completely burnt out on planting Update churches! Matter of fact, they have burned out from *going* to Update churches and there's just a lot of people like this ready for a new expression of church and ... are the denominations going to respond ...?

That's my pitch.

STAN: And guess what? We now have some questions coming in. Okay. So Blaine asked, "... in a church who asked for revitalization, but is reluctant to accept the changes needed to grow, the **missional context** seems to be threatening to churches which are slowly dying.

How would you comment to that statement?

DAVID:

Not sure I understand it entirely, but let's just put it this way: the Mission Incarnational way of church is threatening to churches that are slowly dying ...? (Yes.) And I would say of course, *and I would say, don't ... try this... on your mother-in-law*, you know what I mean?

All right, so let me put this in perspective with my mom.

My mom is 91 years old, she lives in Florida about 15 minutes from the Christian Missionary Alliance. That's my denomination's retirement system, and they have a **village church** in the middle of this retirement system and all the old CMA people go to church on Sunday, and if you walk in, it reminds me of when I went to church in 1965 ... as the little boy, and I'm having these **unbelievable** feelings. Oh so good. So nostalgic. I'm feeling so and I'm going, **this is great!** This is fantastic. It reminds me of Delta Tabernacle church 1965. *I am not going to take this away from Mom!!*

But, unfortunately, everybody in this church is over the age of 72, and this church probably has a good life span of another 10-15 years. *I am not going to take this away from Mom! I'm not going to try to change my Mom.*

I'm going to find 12 people in my church. And if they're not in my church, I'm going to go walk up and down the streets like Jesus did up and down the shores of Galilee and find 12 people --- and I'm going to start by having a meal with them.

And start tending to what God's doing in our lives. Proclaiming gospel among ourselves. Praying for the neighborhood. I'm going to start with twelve people.

If you got a church of a thousand, start with 12 people. If you got a church of a hundred, start with 12 people, if you got two people left in your church, go find 12 people and begin the revolution there.... in that way with revitalizing your church.

This is what I have seen as really the only way -- you can't turn around a big ship very quickly, but you can disrupt it and start something new by working with a small group. And by the way, it's so encouraging -- life giving --to you and me as pastors **to be with 12 people** and see God work and see God break through and do great things in people's lives and then train them how to be in these places of brokenness to see God work in your neighborhood.

STAN: That flows so well into the next question. Leah's asking: "How can we help local residents and established church members learn to exegete their long-term context? Are there any resources for training lay people to think more **missionally**?"

DAVID: Yeah, well. (50:40)

Okay, I can give you a few books. I'll just tell you what I do.

I have a one sheet of paper. I wish I had it with me right now, where I use Luke chapter 10 story of Jesus sending the disciples out. And I say here are the things we want to pay attention to (there's 8 or 9). I'll just I'll just give a few of them. And by the way, Stan, if you email me I will send you this document and you can post it wherever, and hopefully it will help.

Pennies. Try to understand the flow of money in your village or your neighborhood. Who has the money? Who doesn't? Money is power -- money is coercive power.

And then how can we go and have it and proclaim the gospel to those who don't have money, and among those who do.

- Pain. Look for the places of pain and hurt and where people are just dealing with the bruises and the victimizations of their lives and what's been done to them, and go live there long enough to know and understand the abuse; so much is being covered over ... and proclaim the healing of the Gospel, the forgiveness, the reconciliation, the presence of God to sustain us and heal us.
- Go discern where people are experiencing celebration and figure out what they're celebrating and why. And participate in this celebration. *And give glory to God in that celebration privilege.*
- Go into a village or town and try to see where privilege is at work in oppressing people, so that *you* can proclaim the gospel of good news to those who are underneath that privilege -- that *they too* are called of God to live in Kingdom. So there are all these ways to go into a particular town and Village and train people to look for things.

So at our Seminary, I'll go through these things and I'll use a book by Gerald Arbuckle. I can't remember the name of it now, but it's really good missionary book about how to look for things and culture and how to then proclaim the gospel. And we'll then go out into a place, and we'll just start to observe things and train people to get out of the church. Okay, go sit in that restaurant, listen for conversations, take notice of people, and their faces in the hurt and the pain. And then be there long enough to maybe get into a conversation. And I just think this is maybe the first step towards inhabiting a half circle and I believe unless Christians inhabit a third space like mine is Potbelly bar on Cass Avenue Wednesday nights. I believe if you're not inhabiting a place where the people are who are hurting and painful ... I could tell the story of how I found Potbelly bar, and why I chose Potbelly bar, why I felt the Holy Spirit was leading me to Potbelly bar. But all those things come into it -- and my life is transformed by being involved in the lives of people who are seeking God. They don't always know it's God,

but me sitting there listening. I'll go. "...Oh man! When you said that ... *that* sounded like God for this reason, and this reason.

And it just enhances, I think, our own Christian lives. It challenges us when we see God working in people afresh and anew -- *and I think this is how we are to lead people into their respective contexts.*

STAN: I'm also familiar with another author, and I think his name is Sean Benesh (Missionary Alliance) site: [<http://seanbenesh.gutensite.net/>], and he's written a couple books as well on exegeting your community "[Exegeting the City: What You Need to Know About Church Planting in the City Today](#)" And so those are some other resources.

DAVID: I have a bibliography somewhere. Arbuckle's book is the first one that came to mind but there are numerous resources for this kind of thing.

STAN: Samuel is asking, "*What about church planting in the digital age?*"

It again it gets into a Millennial mindset. And then with that Crystal's asking, "Does a church plant have to be in a stationary place ... a building?" So those two questions church planting and digital age and does a church plant have to be in a particular building.

DAVID: So these are challenging questions.

I'll just speak out of my own experience. I feel frankly, too often, I'm in a church plant that's totally bought into the Incarnational Missional church way of doing things ... but sometimes I believe they overreact. So they shun -- Twitter, Facebook -- shun, you know -- internet. We do have a website, but I think I had to push him a little bit for that -- my fellow pastors. I think it's the highway -- it's the ways people talk -- and I think we should use it -- but, discerningly.

Too often we attract people that are just like us. And I believe *that's not the Kingdom*. Second thing is I don't believe that the church can impact the world without a, what I call, *a political presence*.

By political I do not mean national politics or voting or Republican/Democrat. ***I mean a presence in a community that is active and engaged in face-to-face social reality that gives witness -- that witnesses to how we live together.*** That's a politic.

So, I believe we need a real presence. Real presence is a sacramental word. I believe we need a ***sacramental real social presence*** in the community ***to totally disrupt the powers and be present for the Gospel.*** Does that always mean having a building? No. No, not at all.

But it does not necessarily mean never. Sometimes the building can function quite well, like in our case. We really need a building right now. We're running more and more into people without homes that have a hard time *finding a way back into wholeness* and being able to get situated to afford their own apartment or house. We wish we had a building with two or three places where people could stay, because -- folks -- this is where the Harvest shall become. This

is where it is amongst the hurting the broken. Not amongst the rich but the people who, the last time they thought about God, was all for an hour on Sunday morning. No, we need to be among the poor, the hurting, the broken, the oppressed of it. This is where God will do his work, His revolution, and probably drag all the rich people in with them. So, I just think a building can be helpful sometimes, so we shouldn't write it off.

STAN: I'm going to just make a comment here-- David. Is there anything else that you like to say? We have a couple minutes left, and any other final thoughts or closing thoughts. Also -- anyone else with a question or comment that they would like to make?

DAVID: Well, I just want to say that I want to validate different ways of church planting and the discernment of your context, and how that plays into the kind of church planting God's called you to do. Likewise, for those who are revitalizing churches. All these things come into play. And I don't want to idealize ... and, I feel like I've fallen into that trap sometimes, of Mission Incarnational church planting.

I'll just close with this, Martin Robinson from the UK once asked me, "Oh, this is so much hard work, Dave, you're planting all these churches..." (we're not planting all these churches. We planted four in total—Life on the Vine, that is) and he said, "That's a lot of hard work!" and I go – "Hard work? It's just Christian life. It's just living the Christian life, and doing it with two or three other leaders and it's so life-giving.

I'll tell you what's hard work -- is trying to do an Update Church Plant Model and keeping a thousand people happy all at the same time. *That's hard work*. So I just want to open up space to rethink church planting and how it can be a powerful expression of the Gospel, and God can do great things through the Brethren church.

STAN: Thank you David for sharing this hour with us. It's been terrific and all the insights and for responding to questions and I apologize to everyone for accidentally shutting off your chat box so that you're unable to respond.

I have posted the CEU link in the chat box for you.

The other thing is just like to say this is a beginning conversation with David. We're looking to have some additional conversations into 2019 in terms of getting a better feel for what we're talking about relating to this missional church plan and what this means in terms of leadership, how we need to think about this as we're discerning church planting/church revitalization and what this means for the community of faith, and *where* our church of the Brethren congregations are in relationship to their context.

David, we wish you well, and God's richest blessings in your ministry, Life on the Vine, and as you're teaching, leading, guiding, and mentoring students and those who are looking to be servants of Christ.

DAVID: So thank you very much Stan. Thanks to everybody else -- it has been great to be with you and look forward to hearing more.

All right. Thank you, everyone we will see you again, and thanks for being with us today.

Blessings, and peace to you. Bye.