A Word from the Director

Well, Spring has sprung. I hope that this time of the year is going well for you as we witness the change in seasons, with the budding of the trees and blossoming of the flowers. Aside from you allergy suffers, change can be a good thing.

Some of you reading this month’s newsletter are considering international church planting. Some day, your plans are to leave North America and venture to a different land to share the gospel and plant churches. I want to encourage you to consider making a good change now in your present situation: Get involved in planting North American churches among the people to which you hope to serve when you leave this continent.

Making plans to serve among the Chinese? Why not start now? Desiring to minister to a North African people group? Why wait three or four years? The cultural diversity here in North America is great. There are numerous people groups here in great need of the gospel.

Consider making a change now to better prepare yourself and your family for the future. Ministering among a different people now will allow you to better understand their culture later, teach you numerous interpersonal skills, develop some knowledge of the language, begin developing networks with the people, and assist you in learning how to share the gospel more effectively. Along the journey, you will be involved in planting North American churches, raising up indigenous leaders, becoming a better qualified international missionary candidate, and overall assisting Southern Baptist congregations in becoming Acts 1:8 churches.

This month, we hear from Jason Lee, a Nehemiah Church Planter, serving among the Somali refugees living in Louisville, Kentucky. Jason is ministering cross-culturally and working among a people that few desire to serve. We also have some points to ponder about Seattle, Washington, located in one of the most unreached areas of the United States.

May the change of seasons be good for you. Also, may you consider making a change and serving as a church planter or leading your church to such missionary activity. If you sense the Lord is calling you to make disciples among the various peoples of North America through church planting, then let’s talk.

Take care,
J. D. Payne
Church Planter Profile: Jason & Sarah Lee

Believe it or not, Louisville Kentucky contains a surprising number of Muslim immigrants and refugees...some 3,000! Jason and his family have taken a hold of this significant opportunity to bring the message of hope, restoration, and salvation to those who can now, freely hear the gospel.

The Lees: Sarah, Rebekah, & Jason.

We are excited to share his story with you in hopes that you too will take a closer look at where God has placed you and the opportunities at hand!

Q: Tell us about your family: A: My wife’s name is Sarah and we have a daughter Rebekah (age 2), and a son who is due April 9!

Q: When will you graduate from Southern? A: December of 2006

Q: What are your primary responsibilities? A: I am a Nehemiah Church Planter working among Muslim immigrants and refugees in Louisville, Kentucky.

Q: Could you give us a ministry description? A: God, under His powerful hand and magnificent plan, has brought to us a group of people that are war-torn and from one of the most traditionally “closed” Muslim countries in the world. Three thousand of them are living in Louisville. These refugees from East Africa number over 3.5 million and have been scattered all over the world. God has brought these people into our cities where they can freely hear the gospel.

Our main ministry is to share the gospel with them and while doing this task, I am trying to develop a comprehensive plan aimed at initiating, nurturing, and making disciples of Louisville Somalis. Part of my role is to act as a researcher trying to discover the worldview of the Somali Muslim Refugee. One of the goals in this research is to try and understand the different needs they might have (learning English, teaching them to pay bills, learning to check their oil, etc.) and how local churches can wholistically take the gospel to them.

Q: How did your church planting training at Southern help you in preparation for your work on the field? A: My training at Southern has been extraordinary! The theological foundation and hermeneutical principles that were taught and modeled have given me a good launching pad into our current ministry. The challenge to always think biblically is the backbone in my current and future ministry. All of my experiences at Southern have helped shape and prepare me for ministry. The biggest impact for me was outside of the class when men like Dr. Lawless invested in me in personal ways.

Q: What is the greatest blessing received since you have been involved in church planting? A: It is difficult to narrow that down to one blessing but currently it would be how local churches have partnered and gathered alongside of our ministry. For example, Immanuel Baptist Church (Louisville) strives to model biblical ministry in the city
and took seriously the need to send us out in a “manner worthy of the gospel” (3 John 5-8). Also, I have been encouraged by how the North American Mission Board and the Kentucky Baptist Convention have given us the opportunity to minister in this capacity when the promise of “instant numbers” or growth isn’t there.

Q: What advice would you give to those who are wondering if God is calling them to be involved in church planting? A: For starters, pray and research! While there is a tremendous need to plant churches in North America, be sure you have saturated the decision in much prayer. Do much research in the given area you are considering. Talk with church planters serving in a variety of contexts. Do your own homework. This ministry is going to be where you pour out your life. Be careful not to rely only on what others have told you about a given area. Be careful of aiming too narrowly at a “target group.” Aim to take the gospel to a needed community and if Christ is lifted He will draw all men to Himself. Dream and pray big biblical dreams of how God can bring many to the gospel.

Q: Regarding church planting, what counsel would you give to those who are called to serve in established churches? A: Consider how you can partner in church planting to reach your given area or region. From my own context I know there are thousands of people in Louisville that are from foreign origins and have little access to the gospel here in this city. Consider what your church can do to reach those that are often marginalized. The biblical pattern would be to pray for one or more people to be sent out from among you to reach them (Matt. 9:38, Acts 13:1-4). As the church planters are sent out, pray for them and for the gospel going forth (Rom. 15:30, Col 4:2-4, 2 Thess. 3:1) and support them in any and every way you can (3 John 5-8). Be willing to take risks and cast your vision to other churches and the local association and state convention.

To find out how you can pray and partner with the Lees please email Jason at: psalm963@bellsouth.net

Focus Area: Seattle, Washington

Points to Ponder about Seattle

- The Seattle area has been the site of dozens and dozens of movies, television shows, and commercials, going back as far as the 1930’s.

- On average, it rains in Seattle at least 50% of the time, but her annual yearly rainfall is less than the average for New York City or Washington, DC.

- In the winter, temperatures rarely fall below freezing near sea level in the City of Seattle -- the city may see 2 or 3 light snow days per year.

- Approximately 3.4 Million people live in the greater Seattle area.

- The greater Seattle area has one of largest unchurched populations in America.
It has been estimated that only 4% of Seattle's population meets with a Christian congregation on any given Sunday.
Eastern religions, New Age, Wicca, and Mormonism thrive in the area.
There are approximately 160 different ethnicities in the Seattle area; and over half of those people groups presently have no SBC churches to minister to them.
The Puget Sound Baptist Association had twelve church plants in 2005 with over half of those churches being non-Anglo.

“Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you”
2 Thessalonians 3:1 NASB