Folks,

Welcome to a new semester! Whether you are a returning student or this is your first semester, I want to take this time to encourage and challenge you and share a little of what God is doing in North America. I know that you are facing many changes to your regular routine. New classes, job schedules, and ministry activities have already filled your daily planners. In light of all of these good things, take time to relax and enjoy this season of life. It is a great blessing to be a part of the Southern Seminary family. Study hard, and make time with family and friends. Do not forget your daily quiet time with the Lord. Also, be intentional about making personal evangelism a priority in your new daily routine. I am praying for you this semester and excited about the Lord’s blessings on your life. My hope is that this semester will be a most delightful experience for you.

In this newsletter, we turn our attention to New York and hear from Aaron Coe and his church planting work. We also have a review of Phil Stevenson’s new book, *The Ripple Church*.

Just a reminder…

The Church Planting Center exists to educate others regarding church planting and to challenge students to consider becoming involved in making disciples through the multiplication of churches among the unbelieving peoples of North America in particular, and throughout the world in general.

The Church Planting Center exists to serve as a liaison between the North American Mission Board and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, primarily through the strategic partnership known as the Nehemiah Project.

The Church Planting Center exists to strengthen the relationship between NAMB, our seminary, our state and Canadian conventions, local associations, and local churches, primarily through the on-going church planting recruitment processes that these entities currently have in place.

If the Church Planting Center can be of any help to you or your church, let’s talk.

Until next month,
J. D. Payne
Church Planter Profile: Aaron Coe

Names of family members-Aaron, Carmen, and Ezra James Coe
When will you graduate from Southern? Spring 2007

What is your present involvement in missions and your location? I am the lead pastor in a church plant known as The Gallery Church. We are located in New York City.

Can you give us a little information regarding the church plant? Our mission is that we are committed to displaying the greatness of God to the world. We had our first worship service in January 2006, and will officially launch on September 10, 2006. We were able to start the church with a team of eight full-time people. These men and women are dear friends who raised their own support to make this church a reality.

We value: The Bible as God’s standard of Truth in a skeptical culture (2 Tim 3:16-17); Worship as daily living, experienced corporately and individually (Rom 12:1); Relationships first with God, through His son Jesus, and with people (Matt 22:37-39); and The Arts and Technology as enhancements to displaying God’s glory (Ps 19:1).

How did your church planting training at Southern help you in preparation for your work on the field? The training I received at Southern was monumental in helping me “flesh out” my calling. Being in church planting classes with others who were considering church planting gave me an opportunity to ask questions about and gain confidence in what I felt God was leading me to do. The training also helped me to develop a strong ecclesiology and a strong “theology of the city.” I now feel extremely prepared to plant a church in the context of New York City.

What are the greatest blessings received since you have been involved in church planting? There are three major blessings we have received so far: 1) God is continually giving us favor with the people of the city; 2) God has given me a wonderful team with whom to work; and 3) We have been surrounded by many churches from across the country who are financially supporting our work in the city.
What advice would you give to those who are wondering if God is calling them to be involved in church planting? I would say GO FOR IT. Consider moving to a major “world” city to plant a church. If we reach the major cities we WILL reach the world. I would tell them to get a mentor, read every book on church planting and evangelism, pray and build a team of prayer partners, build a team of church planters to go serve, and believe that God can and will do great things.

Regarding church planting, what counsel would you give to those who are called to serve in established churches?
I would encourage them to train and send planters, provide leadership for new works, designate massive amounts of money for church planting, and involve their people in short-term church planting mission trips.

For more information about The Gallery Church see: www.gallerychurch.com

Focus Area: New York City, NY

- Metro area of NYC is a 75 mile radius from Times Square
- 22 Million Residents in the Metro Area

- The population density of the Metro Area would be like moving EVERY person in the state of Texas to the city of Dallas (Manhattan has about 66,000 people per square mile)
- 8 million people live in the 5 boroughs of NYC
- 1.5 million people live in Manhattan
- 191 nationalities live in NYC
- There are more Jews in NYC than in Jerusalem
- There are more Puerto Ricans in NYC than in San Juan
- Approximately 1 million college students attend 191 universities in the Metro Area
- About 21 million are un-churched in the Metro Area

Book Review:
The Ripple Church: Multiply Your Ministry by Parenting New Churches
Phil Stevenson


Stevenson’s work has filled-in a substantial gap in church planting literature. Scan the bookstores and you will find that the overwhelming majority of church planting books are designed specifically for the individual church planter.
Stevenson, however, has produced an easy-to-read work that is more for the established church. Designed to motivate, encourage, and offer some practical steps, this work seeks to lead churches to become church multiplying churches or what he calls, “ripple churches.” While serving as a senior pastor in the Wesleyan tradition, Stevenson led two congregations to plant seven churches. Currently, he is a senior consultant and coach with New Church Specialties.

Peppered with much illustrative material of personal stories, it is easy to see that this work was born out of Stevenson’s ministerial experience. Consisting of thirteen chapters and several appendices, The Ripple Church is a practical resource for church leaders. Chapters one and two discuss Stevenson’s journey into the ministry of church planting and the biblical roots for this ministry. Chapter three describes church planting as the most effective form of evangelism. It is here Stevenson addresses the reasons why new churches reach more people for Christ than most established churches. Chapter four addresses the numerous models of church planting. In chapter five, Stevenson addresses the barriers that prevent churches from effectively participating in church planting. Here he explains that both the pastor and the people must be willing to make the necessary sacrifices. Chapters six and seven explain the need to foresee and strategize to overcome church planting obstacles and when a church should not plant churches. In chapters eight and nine Stevenson discusses the details of leading one’s church into church planting and the concept of financing this type of ministry. Healthy church planting teams and proper leadership are discussed in chapters ten and eleven. Chapter twelve addresses the various issues of consideration when working with a denomination. Finally, the author concludes the book with a chapter revealing seven examples of “ripple” churches.

There are numerous strengths to this work, more than space will allow me to address. First, Stevenson shows that the New Testament pattern for global disciple making is that of planting churches that will multiply themselves throughout the world. He rightly reveals that it is unhealthy for leaders to see Kingdom growth only in terms of the numerical growth of their one congregation. Second, in light of the fact that many denominations offer the most praise to their largest congregations solely due to their size, Stevenson challenges denominational leaders to encourage, applaud, and reward church multiplication, even among smaller churches. Third, Stevenson emphasizes the vital role of the pastor in church planting. The pastor must first own the vision.

There are a couple of non-substantive concerns that I have with the book. First, the author seems to be too optimistic about the ability of denominations to adjust their structures if a church multiplication movement occurs. Referring to denominational leaders, Stevenson wrote, “Yet they will be amazed to see how quickly the organization can adapt and change when it needs to keep pace with a genuine movement of the Holy Spirit” (148-49). Both historically and missiologically speaking, these types of movement usually occur outside the established churches. Second, Stevenson’s description of the non-competitive attitude of “the ripple church,” seems to be more of a theoretical concept than reality. He noted, “The multiplication of churches in a given area does not pose a threat to any one of them [churches]. . . . Neighboring churches are not competitors but comrades” (154). Though I agree with Stevenson’s premise, I know from experience that unfortunately many churches are turfish and competitive with other churches.

This is an excellent book addressing the need for churches to become church multiplying churches. I wholeheartedly recommend this work to church leaders considering becoming involved in church planting. This is even an excellent work to assist leaders in catching the vision for church multiplication as well. Stevenson has done an outstanding job in providing us with this text.

– J. D. Payne

“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