

# 97%

**THE GOOD SHEPHERD LEFT 99,  
TO FIND LOST ONE  
WHAT ARE WE READY TO LEAVE  
TO FIND 97%**

I wholeheartedly encourage you to become involved in the church planting process and to discover that something that seems distant and impossible can become close, common and even the most exciting thing in your life: Christ and His promises to the Church in the relationships we develop and nurture daily. This is not a goal in itself but our task, responsibility and necessity for the Gospel of Christ to cover our land through new, purposeful communities of believers - new churches.

**Mārtiņš Balodis** Pastor, Lecturer at Baltic Pastoral Institute

What you see depends mainly on what you look for. I can see a new harvest waiting in Latvia. A church that reaches out to the people, youngsters raising up in leadership and new churches planted. Do you see it? Leaders that are willing to give leadership to the next generation, serving fathers that "do all things to all, that they might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Are you one of them?

**Oivind Augland** DAWN Churchplanting Net, Norway,  
a church planting partner of the Latvian Baptist Union

Every church serves the kingdom well by adding to our numbers. But by adding to the number of churches we throw open the doors to a ministry of multiplication. Each of our churches, new or old, preaches an ancient gospel that will forever transform lives with relevant truth. But new churches are unencumbered by sentimental attachments to old forms and styles. New churches have a capacity to attract spiritually curious people with fresh approaches to reaching and teaching. The church around the world must plant churches.

**Keith Potter** Senior Pastor, Saratoga Federated Church,  
California, USA, guest speaker at the Latvian Baptist Union Congress 2008

**HOW TO SEE THE LATVIAN  
BAPTIST UNION PLANT  
100 NEW CHURCHES**



**150** The Baptist movement in Latvia has been a church planting movement for 150 years. Except during the repressive years, Baptist leaders have endeavored to multiply Biblical congregations throughout the land. Church planting methods have varied over the years, but Latvian Baptists have always been dedicated to starting new churches.

We can learn from both Church history and nature itself that the multiplication of churches is the only way to survive in the long run. In recent years the leaders in the Latvian Baptist Union (LBU) have sensed that the Holy Spirit is leading us to give more attention to church planting.

God is a God of generations. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Only through the bearing of children can a family develop into the next generation. Churches that do not release their next generations into the leadership and multiplication of new fellowships that reach their own generation will die within two generations. The whole of Western Church history tells the same story. Many denominations and churches are dying for this reason. What will be our future? We believe that we need all generations. We will be a

denomination with young and old people, and new and established churches working together.

This requires us to pray much and think clearly about the development of a master plan that will release and help churches and individuals see their potential in church planting and missional activities. LBU has set a goal to plant 100 new churches. The Baltic Pastoral Institute (BPI) has initiated training for future pastors and church planters. And there are already results. Several initial church planting steps have already begun which may result in 10-15 new churches in the next three years.

Church planting must be at the top of our denomination's agenda. Our future growth and survival demand it. Our desire to see more and more people come to know God and experience His transforming power demands it. We can't wait for people to come to us; we have to go to them.

Please read this article carefully and prayerfully. And then take the challenge.

Christ is Lord!

**Pēteris Sproģis**  
Bishop of the Latvian Baptist Union

● ● ● **I** will build my church,  
and all the powers of hell will not  
conquer it.

Matthew 16:18, NLT

**H**e who has an ear, let him  
hear what the Spirit says to  
the churches.

Revelation 3:22, NIV

OUR GREATEST DESIRE IS THAT MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WOULD COME TO KNOW THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER, EXPERIENCE THE GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. NEITHER OUR ABILITIES AND DESIRES, NOR OUR ARGUMENTS AND EXCUSES, NOR COMFORT AND AMBITION, NOR RESIGNATION AND PLEASING OTHERS, NOR HABITS AND STYLE

**ONLY** JESUS

# Why church planting?

## **CHURCH PLANTING IS BIBLICAL**

Jesus wants to build His church (Matt. 16:18). The Great Commission tells us to make disciples of all nations and people groups (Matt. 28:18-20). The whole story of the book of Acts is one in which the gospel gains power and the church grows and multiplies into all corners of society. This can only happen through the multiplication of new churches.

We proclaim Christ in order to create new communities where fellowship occurs. God's first command to the human race was to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28). Nature demonstrates that only through multiplication can life continue into the next generation. This is true also for Christ's church.

## **CHURCH PLANTING IS EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE**

Church history tells us that it is more efficient to start new evangelistically minded churches than to refocus on established churches. While we believe that existing churches need to be developed, we must establish

Besides God Himself, the greatest resource for church planting is the existing church.

church planting as our main focus. Established churches often find it difficult to reach new people, while new churches are more effective in reaching unbelieving people. New churches often have vitality and vision that are attractive to non-Christian people, and this initial attraction often leads to a commitment to Jesus Christ.

In Interact, a Baptist-like denomination in Sweden, 25% of all baptisms in the last ten years took place in newly planted churches that represented only 8% of the denomination. In this way, new churches are three times more efficient than established churches.

Research indicates that as churches age, they are less effective in reaching new people. One European study reveals that churches that have been in existence for fifty or more years require 100 members to baptize one convert per year. At the same time, churches that are less than ten years old require only ten members per baptism per year. In this way, younger churches can be even ten times more effective than older churches!



The church exists by missions like fire exists by burning.  
Emil Brunner

### **CHURCH PLANTING IS NECESSARY FOR DENOMINATIONAL LIFE AND VITALITY**

It is the best strategy to reach new people. Statistics from northern Europe reveal that only those denominations that plant churches are growing in membership.

All others are declining. So church planting is necessary for denominational survival. New church plants give life, vitality and growth to a denomination.

When all of our churches work together to start new churches, we will experience renewed unity and great joy. This is a means by which our younger churches can learn from and be blessed by the strengths of established churches. And the older churches can be blessed by the freshness that new churches represent. Established churches will also benefit from the lessons and principles learned by the experiments and risks new churches have taken.

### **CHURCH PLANTING IS VISIONARY**

We need to ask the right questions in order to come to the right solutions. Some may ask, "Why do we need new churches when we have room in existing churches?" Or, "why plant in a city where we already

have a Baptist church?" These are the wrong questions and by focusing on them we can reach the wrong conclusions and make wrong decisions.

The visionary asks, "Who does not go to church, even established Baptist churches? How can we reach them? What kind of church will these people want to be part of? We can't wait for people to come to us, we need to go to people. We want to plant a Baptist church!"

### **CHURCH PLANTING RELEASES NEW LEADERS**

Church planting gives room for new lay and pastoral leaders to develop. It also generates increased resources - new people with energy, time, talents, abilities, finances and vision.

### **CHURCH PLANTING TURNS THE PASSIVE INTO ACTIVE**

In many places and for many reasons, many people have backslidden from the church. New churches can reach and revitalize those who have been bored, passive and uninvolved and help them return to the church and the fellowship.



2009 2019

87 187

CHURCHES

6 593 20 000

CHURCH MEMBERS

# **H**ow can we plant new churches?

There is not one way. There are many European models of new church plants. Some churches are planted into specific geographical areas, while others begin among certain cultural or ethnic segments of society.

Old churches must not simply stand as monuments to the past but as spiritual grandparents that have invested in the future by passing on their life to others and releasing their offspring to form new congregations. Church planting needs to be given priority by old-line denominations.

Eddie Gibbs

## **MOTHER/DAUGHTER CHURCH PLANTING**

An existing church targets an area or group of people, releasing some of their members, under its leadership, to reach out to people and plant a new church.

## **CROSS CULTURAL CHURCH PLANTING**

A cultural or ethnic group is identified and those who have experienced God's call form a team to focus on that group.

## **DENOMINATIONAL CHURCH PLANTING**

Denominational leaders may see specific areas that are strategic to reach. They form and train teams who move into new areas to start new churches.

## **CHURCH PLANTING BASED ON A MINISTRY OF AN EXISTING CHURCH**

A certain ministry is launched in a new area with a goal of establishing a new church. The church plant can grow out of a Sunday school, an Alfa course, a social ministry or any other ministry of a church.

God blesses the mega church in Korea and the house church in China. Hold to your models loosely and to Jesus firmly.

Ed Stetzer

There are others ways to start churches. They can start in homes, or camps, or different rented localities. In all cases, relationships are key. Many new churches have been started without full-time pastors, but by committed lay people who form teams with clear vision. Some churches are established as a result of effective youth or summer ministries. We want to use a variety of forms and models to reach out into the different geographical, cultural and ethnic areas of Latvia.

As we are committed to being flexible in forms, methods and ways of planting churches, we want all of our church planters to be deeply rooted in Scripture and theology. They must have a clear understanding of the purpose of the church, as well as our own Baptist background and identity.

#### **TARGET-GROUP CHURCH PLANTING**

A target can be defined geographically, socio-economically, or even vocationally. A team with a calling is formed to reach out to meet target group needs. Along the way, the gospel is preached, people come to faith and a new church is established. Target group examples could be business professionals, athletes, international students, artists, families with children, homeless people...

#### **NEW BEGINNING CHURCH PLANTING**

If an existing church is empty or nearly dying, a new community with a new vision can be formed in the old church, with the freedom and mandate to build a new church.

#### **PIONEER CHURCH PLANTING**

We need to call out the pioneers! The Lord works in the heart of a gifted church planter who builds a team under the covering of a local church and/or denomination that also holds the team accountable. The callings of such individuals must be confirmed and supported by local church and denominational leaders.

# The challenge before us

As we move into the future, we need to be biblical and “count the cost” (Luke 14:25-33). We need to honestly ask ourselves, “What can hinder us from reaching our vision to see 100 new churches?” We ask you to reflect on some possible hindrances.

What you do with your first convert determines whether you will become a church planting movement.

Bob Logan

If you want to win the world to Christ you’re going to have to sit in the smoking section.

Neil Cole

## PAST EXPERIENCES

Past negative experiences and hurts from church planting can so bind us today that we miss future possibilities. Just because some church plants have come out of painful church situations does not negate the importance of church planting. We need to bring our negative experiences and hurts to the cross for healing and restoration. We can learn from the past and then continue to do what we are called to do: plant new churches.

## SHORTAGE OF WORKERS AND RESOURCES

We live in challenging financial times. The lack of workers and resources can hinder us from reaching out to new people. We need to ask and pray to the “Lord of the harvest to send out workers” (Mathew 9.37-28). What can you or your church give? No one church can do this alone, but if every church does even a little, much can be done.

The calling of the church in every culture is to be mission. That is, the work of the church is not to be an agent or servant of the culture. The churches' business is not to maintain freedom or to promote wealth or to help a political party or to serve as the moral guide to culture. The church's mission is to be the presence of the kingdom... The church's mission is to show the world what it looks like when a community of people live under the reign of God.

Robert Webber

### **SELF-PROTECTION**

For many years, as a church, we have protected ourselves from society. We have not wanted to be negatively influenced or contaminated by the world. Though well meaning, this kind of thinking can result in believers avoiding all unbelievers. If we have self-protective worldviews, our behaviors will be protective and will render the development of vision impossible. This is a misunderstanding of Christian sanctification. We have been "set apart" not only for the sake of holiness (1 Thes. 4:3-4), but to be used by the Lord Jesus who was a "friend of sinners" (Matthew 11:19).

### **TRADITION**

Tradition can be good, but it can also be bad. And for some, it can even be a 'god.' Tradition can also hold us back from achieving future goals. If we recognize that certain traditions keep us from reaching new people we need to ask for boldness to change.

### **LACK OF VISION**

When we lack vision we are not able to see beyond what has happened or what is happening. Is God only able to do what I have experienced? Now we need to increase our vision of how we can better reach society. We need to ask God to give us his eyes to see our nation and our people.

### **INADEQUATE LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

The church is as mature as its leader. We believe that a lack of ongoing leadership training and discipleship will hinder us from reaching our vision. In the LBU we need to emphasize the training of healthy biblical leaders who, in turn, will help us achieve our goal of making church planting our most important priority.

# Mistakes we will try to avoid

We can learn many things from the history of church planting. When we aim to form many new Baptist churches, we hope, by God's grace, to avoid some of the most common mistakes and follow the following principles:

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.  
C. S. Lewis

When God is at work, a church is planted. It is always a miracle.  
Ed Stetzer

## **Not rebellion or pride but a SERVANT'S HEART**

The heart of the planter will determine the foundation in the new church. A church that is planted by a proud and rebellious leader will produce similar fruit. The leader who will not bless his own background and home church, is not ready to plant new churches.

## **Not programs but RELATIONSHIPS AND DISCIPLESHIP**

Church planting is about people, not simply attractive activities. Our aim is to share the gospel with new people, to help them come to know Christ and to disciple them into mature Christian living and service. Quality programs are good but they must always be seen as tools, not the purpose.

## **Not alone but TOGETHER**

Only a team can provide the variety of gifts that are needed to effectively plant a church. Though some individual leaders may possess extraordinary giftedness, it is not enough. Character comes before charisma. Gifts will end, but love remains (1 Cor. 13). The loving inter-relationships of those on the church-planting team can be a very powerful evangelistic tool. We are inviting people to see the gospel lived among the members of Christian community.



The first Christians did not go to church, they went around being the church.

Ylva Eggehorn

**Not to make a name for oneself but  
TO LIFT HIGH THE NAME OF JESUS**

The purpose of the church plant is not to provide a stage for the super talented guy to perform. People will be encouraged to use their gifts in a way that results in God receiving all glory.

**Not cool but FAITHFUL**

It is popular today in many church-planting circles to plant cool and hip churches in the name of relevance. While church planters most certainly should embody the truth of the gospel in every context, they must not forget that faithfulness is to be prized and the truth is always relevant. The gospel must not be compromised by fashion or style. We want our church planters to identify with the culture, but for the right reasons. We can have the biggest dreams and best plans, but without true gospel humility, we are destined for a fall (Prov. 16:18). 'Coolness' can be an asset, but if the church leader depends on it, he will hit the wall. 'Coolness' can never make up for the lack of spiritual faithfulness, humility and depth.

**Not an escape but FAMILY FIRST**

If the church, as God's people, is to be an authentic community of learners, family of God, and missionaries, the leaders' families should be able to demonstrate how they are growing more in the Word, how their marriages and parenting are grace centered and how they are loving their neighbors as themselves in word and deed. One cannot hide behind a church plant for long. A healthy pastor is also a healthy dad and husband. If the family fails, it will affect the church.

**Not stealing people but TRUSTING GOD  
to raise up the right people**

There is great temptation to recruit 'the right people' to new church plants or to re-arrange visions and values based on wanting to keep the people we like rather than trusting God to bring the right people into our communities. Church planters must never forget that developing people is more important than recruiting people. They need to have the mindset of raising people up from within their context to provide service and leadership in the church. This means seeing potential in people around them and a readiness to start where they are with what and who they have.

# How you could get involved

We pray and hope that you and your church will be part of this vision and respond to the call.

## ARE YOU PERSONALLY WILLING TO:

- Pray for God to put the passion for spreading his gospel in Latvia into your heart and for specific steps you should take in obedience to him?
- Bless those who are involved in church planting, speak about them with respect and love because they are on the battlefield and need support and protection?
- Give support to a church planter or leadership training provided by the LBU?
- Go: Are you called to church planting as a leader or team member?

He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Jim Elliot

## ARE YOU AS A CHURCH WILLING TO:

- Pray that the Lord will reveal his will for your church regarding church planting and to raise up new workers from within your church?
- Bless those from within your own church/denomination who want to plant churches by actively supporting them with your love, time and other resources?
- Give support to a church planter or leadership training provided by the LBU or support a student from your church who goes to BPI?
- Go: Is God calling your church to plant a church in a geographic area or for a target group or to adopt a church plant?

# W hat can the Latvian Baptist Union offer?

Our lives end the day we become  
silent about the things that matter.

Martin Luther

**VISION:** The LBU will continue to uphold and communicate the vision and progress of church planting in Latvia.

**CALLING:** The LBU will continue to challenge members of its churches to discover their possible callings regarding church planting and provide an assessment tool to help potential church planters understand their calling.

**TRAINING:** The LBU will continue to provide country-wide and regional training for church planting, utilizing experienced church planters from Europe and beyond.

**MENTORING:** The LBU is providing mentors for church planters to help them mature as believers and become more effective church planters and leaders.

**CONNECTIONS:** The LBU will help connect church planters with church planting networks locally and globally.

**RESEARCH:** The LBU will engage in basic research to determine locations of the most important places to begin new churches.

**RESOURCES:** The LBU will provide training resources (programs, manuals, articles, website) and help church planters in financial support raising.

# **D**o you have a calling for church planting?

To grow something that lasts a season, plant flowers.  
To grow something that lasts a lifetime, plant trees.  
To grow something that lasts through eternity,  
plant churches.

We believe that God will call many people to church planting. If you are recognizing God's calling in your life to plant a new church, here are some questions you can ask yourself. This will help you reflect on your own calling. Please rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 by circling the number.

- 1 Never
- 2 Rarely
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Often
- 5 Always

These questions are adapted from the work of Steven Addison of Church Resource Ministries.

<b>ABILITY TO CREATE VISION</b>	I have been able to see ahead clearly to where God wants my ministry to go, and to lead others in that direction.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED</b>	I have been committed to doing things well despite the cost and can work hard and long without close supervision.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>OWNERSHIP OF MINISTRY</b>	I have been able to inspire others so they will commit themselves to work together to fulfill a worthwhile goal.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>RELATING TO THE UNCHURCHED</b>	I have formed good relationships with unchurched people, and can relate the gospel to their lives in a way they understand.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>SPOUSE'S COOPERATION (IF APPLICABLE)</b>	My husband/wife/fiancée understands, accepts and supports my commitment to church planting and is willing to support me or join me in it.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>RELATIONSHIP BUILDING</b>	I relate well to others and I am sensitive to their needs.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>CHURCH GROWTH</b>	I am committed to see the church grow numerically.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>COMMUNITY RESPONSIVENESS</b>	I am sensitive to the character and needs of the people we are seeking to reach and can establish appropriate ministries to meet their needs.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>UTILIZING THE GIFTS OF OTHERS</b>	I have demonstrated skills in the recruiting, training, supervising and supporting of others in ministry according to their giftedness.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>FLEXIBILITY/ADAPTABILITY</b>	I have shown that I can adapt well, and take advantage of sudden and abrupt changes and uncertainty.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>BUILDING A COHESIVE CHURCH BODY</b>	I have drawn individuals together into teams engaged in meaningful ministry. I have been able to help them resolve conflicts in a healthy way.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>RESILIENCE</b>	I have rebounded strongly from setbacks, disappointments and failure.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>FAITH</b>	I believe God has called me to plant a church and that he will supply what is needed to get the job done.	1 2 3 4 5

**[www.jaunasdraudzes.lv](http://www.jaunasdraudzes.lv)**  
**STAY CONNECTED - INFORMED - INVOLVED**

The Great Commission "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) is the foundation of the need for church planting. It is an integral part of mission and the most effective method for reaching people who are far away from Christ. Church planting is not and should not be a goal in itself or a means to improve our statistics. It should also not be taken as competition with the existing churches. It is always a new opportunity to fulfill the mission task better and to help each person find an appropriate environment for his or her spiritual growth. Presently many hospitals are being closed in Latvia, and people have to travel far to receive medical help. Through every new church Christ comes close to people with His help. The essence of a truly vital and active church is its need and ability to multiply. As there are seeds in every apple which, when properly treated, will bring new apple trees, so the task of church is to create new sources of spiritual life. Jesus tells His disciples, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). Salt can be useful and reveal its characteristics when it is used as small grains in every city, village and home. Every planted tree contributes to the healthy atmosphere of the planet by providing oxygen, every new church is like "divine lungs", the provider of Christ's calming and saving atmosphere to its surroundings.

Dr. **Ilmārs Hiršs** Pastor, Professor at Baltic Pastoral Institute

The most blessed times in 400 years of European Baptist and 150 years of Latvian Baptist history have been the times when believers whose lives had been transformed by their faith in Christ testified to their fellow men and established Baptist churches. Effective church planting is built on the living foundation of individual witnesses who believe in Christ as personal Savior and Lord. We should allow our Lord to send us with this witness, trusting in His promised strength. Mahatma Gandhi, answering a Christian's question "How can India be reached?", said, "Live out the whole message of Christ, without any exceptions!" Where there are Christ's witnesses, there will be new churches.

**Andrejs Šterns** Pastor, Bishop Emeritus of the Latvian Baptist Union



[www.lbds.lv](http://www.lbds.lv)



[www.bpiriga.lv](http://www.bpiriga.lv)

**3%**

**IN LATVIA ATTEND CHURCH  
AND READ THE BIBLE**