

Pathways Sunday – December 9, 2013

It is always great to get together and eat. We love table fellowship and it is good. We thank Rita and those who have served with her to make this happen. But we are gathered here tonight for something bigger than satisfying our hunger; we are gathered to celebrate an opportunity to satisfy a spiritual hunger in people who don't yet know Christ. I am thankful for you being here and I am proud of you for caring about others. As our Lord said, he did not come to be served but to serve. It encourages me personally to know that you have opened yourself to His leading.

Green Lawn Church of Christ is essentially a church plant. Even though there was no formal oversight by a planting congregation, when 35 people met in a garage on December 30, 1958, a decision was made to establish a church in West Lubbock, which became the Green Lawn congregation.

Church planting is one way of carrying out Jesus' mission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person (Matthew 28:18-20), and it was built into our initial DNA. Since our humble beginnings in 1958, we have been involved with church planters and church plantings in mission work all over the world. Examples include: Jess Hall, Sr. in Rapid City, South Dakota; Claudio Chism in Italy; David Luke and Reiner Kallos in Germany; Pablo Molina in New York; Floyd Deathrow and F. W. Mattox in Wilmington, North Carolina; Jose Mudio as well as Abraham and Olga Mata at the Casa de la Esperanza orphanage in Mexico; Clifford Utter in Idaho; O'Neal Tankersley in Kenya; Steve Gilliam in South Africa; the construction and work of the school and hospital in Kenya; J. Lee and Margaret Roberts in Belgium; World Bible School; Heath and Rebecca Amos in Rwanda; Skyler and Morgan Ely in New Zealand; and our Mexico missionaries Javier Garcia, Hector Chagoya and Miguel Rubio who helped plant three churches: Desi Ochoe, San Francisco and Peridesta, each with 75 to 100 members. We are simply carrying out what Paul instructed Timothy: *Now I want you to tell these same things to followers who can be trusted to tell others* (2 Timothy 2:2, CEV).

When the shepherds and ministry staff met together in late 2010, we evaluated our mission efforts and asked God to show us how we can join Him in His work of calling people into relationship with Him. That is when we became more familiar with Kairos – a group of former missionaries with many years of experience, who evaluate, equip and support church planters, and connect them with planting churches. The way it works is: The church planter and his team identify a location they believe is ripe for harvest and make plans to move there and start a church. The planting church commits to providing financial support for 5 years, gradually declining after year two. The expectation is that the newly planted church will itself become a planting congregation. With the steady spiritual decline in our own country the idea was born to work with Kairos to plant a church somewhere in the United States. That way we could offer greater hands-on support.

Unfortunately, we have encountered obstacles. (We believe our enemy is at work, but we will persist in this mission to which God is calling us). At one point we thought we might have a church planter, but an accident has halted his ability to fulfill those plans. Rather than

halting our plans, we are moving forward, believing that God will raise up someone (perhaps even from among our number) to lead this church plant. That's why we have kept planning. That's why we have been praying. That is why today we are committing and contributing. We will present more definitive plans when those plans become more clear. For now we are going forward in faith, believing that God will do above and beyond what we ask or imagine.

Our hope is that as the years go by we will grow, equip and send planters from Green Lawn - that we will grow up our own missionaries and work with University students to prepare them to be church planters or team members. Let's be honest: Much has been demanded of us over the last decade plus – two building projects and numerous ministries in which to serve and support. This too will call for sacrifice. It will call for self-evaluation. It will call us to refine and reprioritize the way we teach and minister. But we believe we are strategically located, exceptionally blessed, and divinely called to do this great work.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:7,8, Paul writes: *you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.* We hope to become a model for other congregations who have a passion for those who need Jesus. Not because we seek acclaim but because we believe God is giving us the opportunity.

Today, we started the financial part of this journey and Darrell Price is going to tell us what was collected and what was committed this morning.

Before that, let me share one final note ... I am the product of a church planter's home. Only as an adult have I come to understand what a blessing that has been to me. Coming from that background, I am now humbled to be part of this great group of believers who want to make a difference for now and for eternity for people we many never meet ... in this life. I think this work will bless our whole church in ways we can't even imagine. But more importantly, people who don't know the Lord will come to know the Lord, and God's name will be glorified. Again, I thank you for letting God work in and through your life.

~ Dale Mannon