

Clergy Church Planting Care

Rev. James Wagner

1. Preserve the purpose of the church planter – it is easy to lose sight of why the church was planted in the first place. That church planting is the most effective way to do evangelism, isn't very helpful once the euphoria of starting is past. The first purpose of a church planter is that of a dream and becoming more like Jesus. That's the purpose of all Christians in vocation and ministry.
2. Increase the devotion of the church planter - it is easy to lose contact with God before, during and after the church goes public. Practically, life gets busy but spiritually a church planter turns to all manner of advice for making the church viable and thriving. So a church planter needs all the help possible to stay in contact with God, who really loves the church planter, before during and after failure and success on a small and large scale.
3. Stir up the inspiration of the church planter – a church planter cannot plant a church like anyone else. Church planters can imitate other church planters just as Paul affirmed churches imitating his life after he left them. But there is something different and special about each church planter that God is doing in a local church that only that church planter can accomplish.
4. Stay in the community for the duration – I know a church planter and coach of church planters who recommends church planters buy burial plots in the city of planting. This is not a job but a calling, and when you commit for the long haul, love is the only way.
5. Keep the church planter from quitting – the church planter will say to himself “I hate this” or “I quit”. That's not a sin. It's when the church plant begins. Sometimes the church planter will feel this more and sometimes less. Church planters can decrease the frequency of feelings with empathetic support and change.
6. Protect the church planter's marriage – pastoring is tough on marriage and so is church planting. Church planters need to start off with the marriage strong and get help when the going gets tough. Celebrate the marriage at anniversaries but other times as well.
7. Give affirmation to the church planter's children – it's amazing what the children pick up accurately or inaccurately. They have lives not all their own but separate from the church plant. Knowing when to keep children connected to the church and separate at the same time is an art.
8. Focus the vision of the church planter – somehow a church planter needs someone to give them spiritual binoculars to bring the longer-term future into view. It's easy to look back through a rearview mirror but the future is forward. Learn but don't dwell on the past. Look into the future and dwell on God.
9. Surface the passion of the church planter – passion is a little like a sunken treasure. Find what thrills the church planter and major on that. Not everyone has to follow a leader but a leader cannot be one without followers. A leader can only take people where he/she really wants to go. Identify the treasure and go for it.
10. Look after the body of the church planter – someone once said “we don't have bodies, we are bodies.” Eat well and exercise each and every day. Too much inspiration comes from caffeine. Water and walks are much better for the body and soul. It's amazing what good the two will do for stamina.