

## WHAT IS AN APOSTOLIC MISSIONER?

### **The Apostolic Gift**

Apostolic missionaries establish new foundations. The apostle Paul reveals his heart as an apostolic missionary in his words to the Romans: “It has always been my ambition to preach the Gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation” (15:20). The Holy Spirit gives this gift, as He does with all other spiritual gifts, for building up the church and expanding God’s Kingdom on earth. As the apostle points out to the Ephesians, “It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the full measure of perfection found in Christ” (4:11-13). The work of the Kingdom mightily goes forward as God’s people recognize and release the gifts. But the apostolic gift, necessary in every age, is especially in need of recognition and restoration in twenty-first century North America, where the population is already significantly unchurched, and growing more so every day.

Identifying the apostolic gift is most appreciated when God’s people recognize the need for establishing new congregations. Planting new congregations is the best and most effective means of reaching the unchurched with the transforming power of the gospel. The apostolic gift thrives when it is released, finding an outlet for its expression to bless, begin, and encourage new ministries and new congregations. The gift functions as an anointing from the Lord to go into new territories to establish new congregations and ministries. When the apostolic gift is acknowledged and blessed, new works spring forth, works that both reach the lost and build up believers.

Not only does the apostolic gift function to lay new foundations, but it also stirs up the other gifts of the Spirit. In essence, the apostolic gift creates a pathway for the other gifts to walk upon. The apostolic gift blesses and releases other gifts, yielding the fruit of new congregations. Paul, an “apostle to the Gentiles,” modeled this gift in the early church. We learn more about the apostolic gift as we read the statements Paul makes regarding his calling to the congregations he helped establish. He explains that his calling was to raise up new foundations that others would build upon. He appointed elders and pastors in the fledgling congregations and released them to step forth into ministry. When he tells the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:14) that he is glad he had not baptized many of them, he also indicates that other gifts follow the apostolic calling to equip the body more fully.

Paul reveals that the Lord assigns different labors to people within the body of Christ for the common good. He points out, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow” (1 Cor. 3:6). Wherever Paul went, he left behind congregations that others would then lead. This was his calling. This is the apostolic calling that must be reclaimed today.

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### **The Task of the Apostolic Missioner**

One way to best release the apostolic gift is to set apart and bless people for a specific role once this gifting has been identified. Such individuals, as apostolic missioners, are entrusted with the task of laying the foundations of new works for others to more fully develop. The role of apostolic missioner will encourage congregational planters. Apostolic missioners will help identify and equip teams for planting congregations. They will be instrumental in calling together the resources needed to begin many new congregations, and thus they will render invaluable assistance and resources to congregational planters.

Along with learning from the apostle Paul, a number of modern day apostolic missioners demonstrate this gift. Excellent pictures of the release of this ministry abound in Africa and Asia, places that demonstrate an accompanying growth of the Church. The Rev. Canon James Wong in Singapore demonstrated the apostolic gift. Canon Wong served as the rector of a growing Anglican church called Chapel of the Resurrection. The church exists as one parish with multiple congregations. While Canon Wong was the primary pastor the central congregation, he also helped start a dozen other congregations under the auspices of Resurrection, each meeting in different locations with different local pastors, and each reaching different populations. The apostolic gift flowed freely in Canon Wong, and the fruit of this is evident in the thousands of believers actively involved in the congregations he helped establish.

The church in Nigeria offers another dramatic example of what happens when the apostolic gift is blessed and released. Here apostolic missioners are sent out to develop congregations wherever they go. They gather people in diverse places: large African cities, huts in small villages, and even under large shady trees in rural areas. All such sites are viable locations for congregations to meet, and the Nigerian apostolic missioners tune in their eyes and ears for the leading of the Spirit for the establishment of new groups. They then identify leaders in local gatherings, releasing them to do the work of the general teaching and care of the new congregation. In this way the church in Nigeria has grown and thrived, despite numerous outside threats ranging from extreme poverty to encroaching Islam.

The Anglican Church in North America stands at a crossroads, establishing new foundations, with a goal to plant one thousand new churches in the next four and a half years. Now is the time to identify, bless, and release those with the gift of apostle to establish new foundations rooted in scriptural integrity and the life of the Holy Spirit.