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# **[ PREPARING TO PLANT: CALLING, EQUIPPING AND ENABLING CHURCH PLANTERS IN EUROPE ]**

## **Preparing to plant: calling, equipping and enabling church planters in Europe**

How are men and women across Europe being trained for the vital task of church planting? What qualities are trainers looking for in their trainees, and what are the challenges in empowering them?

When churches and church planting movements associated with European Church Planting Network's learning communities were asked these questions, there was a surprising range of answers. Methods varied from modular and accredited training, to informal huddles – but all containing a strong practical element. While gifting is an important quality in a church planter, calling, character and vision are also essential. As for the challenges, potential church planters need opportunities to 'do', the ability to pass on the DNA and permission to take risks and make mistakes.

### **1. Training and supporting church planters**

#### ***Modular training***

Many of the church planting movements within Eastern Europe use a modular approach to training, bringing church planters together several times over an extended period and supporting them as they put the theory into practice during the intervening intervals.

The **Bulgarian Bible League** trains church planters from churches around Bulgaria over two years, with modules about vision, practical tools, spiritual character, administration and bible study. "Each of these topics is relevant to starting a new church," explains Peicho Muhtarov, who leads the church planting training team. "For example, the one about practical tools includes how to make new contacts, evangelise and lead a small group, and the administration module covers time management and financial issues."

The five modules are taught at five monthly intervals, with practical tasks for trainees to do in between. Each trainee is also visited on the field at least twice – after the first module and before the fifth. The ones who are serious about church planting, who are already travelling and visiting an area with a view to starting a church, are given extra help from a special mentor, and a small amount of financial support.

***We discovered that if they know somebody cares for them, the result is different***

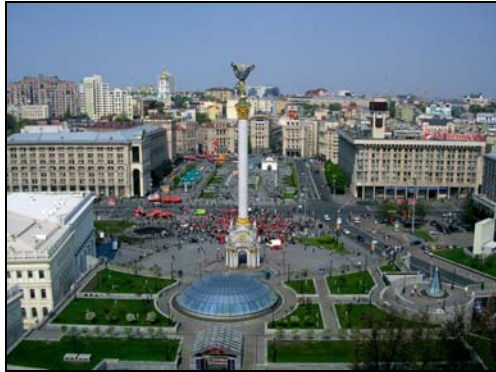
"We discovered that if they know somebody cares for them, the result is different," says Pechio. "They are encouraged – they know we trust and believe in them, and they are happy because we give them responsibility to do things their way."

**The Antioch Movement** in Ukraine use material based on the American publication *Finding God's Purpose in the Church*.<sup>1</sup> According to Joel Colon from the Antioch Leadership Team, a foundational teaching in the material is that whatever God is going to do he will do it through:

- All his people – no-one is useless or cannot be mobilised in the church.
- Leadership that empowers others as their first priority.
- Decentralised structures that use the power of people's daily lives.

The Antioch Movement have translated the material into Russian. The first five chapters focus on vision, purpose, and values, the second five on leadership, with the remaining chapters dealing with strategy, missions, partnership and development. Groups of leaders are brought together for four intense two day training sessions over the course of a year, each training session dealing with one section.

“The leaders then have three months to deal with a series of questions arising from the section they have covered and to work through issues in their context, such as coming up with a purpose statement if they don’t have one,” explains Joel. “We form them into teams of usually four people, and we visit them between each module. That way we walk with them as they deal with the issues.”



*Kiev, Ukraine where the Antioch Movement works with church planters across several denominations to bring the gospel to every man, woman and child.*

Antioch’s support continues after the year of specific training. “We just sit down with them on a regular basis and ask them where are you struggling, where do you need our support to work through particular issues. We will stand side by side with them pretty much for an indefinite period as long as they are committed to the goal of every man, woman and child having the opportunity to respond to the gospel.

“We encourage them to work through or develop a five year plan of church planting – we challenge them with 500 or 1000 churches and they push back in the other direction. That process helps them realise it is not just them pioneering the church planting. They are also mobilising existing churches within the region or denomination. And this has been a successful strategy, some have mobilised five or six churches into the vision, and others thirty or more.”

**Misiunea Mondială Unită (MMU)** (<http://mmu.ro>) also uses a modular

approach to training church planters. As a Romanian missionary association with a vision for sharing the Gospel at a national and cross-cultural level, their first step is to establish a partnership with the churches to encourage them to church plant.

“MMU’s primary goal is to saturate the region with a church planting ministry – so in our strategy it is not absolutely necessary for somebody to go through our course,” explains Victor Pascalin, MMU’s regional director. “But if they want training, we can train them. In our ministry this means three things: developing relationships with the pastor and the churches who we are encouraging to church plant; sharing specific information about how to church plant and giving examples based on our personal experience of church planting.”

Their training material is based on the *Omega Course* developed by the **Alliance for Saturation Church Planting**. ([www.alliancescp.org](http://www.alliancescp.org))

“The most important thing we have in our teaching and training programme is the vision, so this is the first step in the training. In our country some have a vision to plant one, two or even ten churches. But I believe God’s vision is to fill our country with the gospel and believers, and when we begin to work in this vision we don’t stop after one, two or three churches. New churches and believers will follow this example and this will be a movement.”

For each of these movements, church planting training tends to be practical rather than purely theological, as theology can be studied at Bible Colleges and seminaries elsewhere in their country. They also don’t train church planters for ordination. And in most cases church planters do not need to be ordained in order to start a new church.

“From our point of view, it is not important if they are ordained or not,” says Victor Pascalin of MMU. “A church planter might start a work and in time his work will be recognised and we might also ordain him. But we aren’t ordaining people to plant – we are ordaining them because they are church planters.”

### **Huddles – plus**

Mobilising lay leadership is a key aspect of church planting through mid-size groups. Most mid-size group leaders have full-time jobs and responsibilities outside of the church, so training is usually carried out ‘on the job’. For many this involves meeting together in ‘huddles’ – regular gatherings for discipleship, mentoring and support, often using the *Lifeshapes* material developed by Mike Breen ([www.3dministries.com](http://www.3dministries.com)) at St Thomas, Sheffield, UK.



*Training and supporting IMF Byrne’s housegroup leaders takes place in the context of relationships.*

**The Normisjon Norkirken Church** ([www.norkirken.no](http://www.norkirken.no)) in Bergen, Norway started huddling their mid-sized cluster leaders in November 2007. Several months on they feel they have created a framework they can work within and develop. So how do they use the *Lifeshapes* material?

“We use the circle as a way of discerning ‘what is God telling you through an event that draws your attention’,” says pastor Svein Høysæter. “The semi-circle helps people rest and establish a good rhythm. The square describes where you are at in being trained and also teaches how to give things away in the discipling process.

Our plan is eventually that these cluster leaders should become coaches to others, so we wanted to use material that is easy to reproduce.”

Kent Tjelta from **IMF Bryne** ([www.saron.no/imfnormisjon](http://www.saron.no/imfnormisjon)) in Byrne, Norway is one of three leaders huddling their house group leaders on a fortnightly basis.

“Relationships is the key word for us because you cannot do huddle unless you are friends together. We use a set of 30 ‘huddle’ questions from St Thomas Sheffield modified to our context, and we also deal with whatever other issues come up. This approach is quite flexible, because it is not a programme so we can easily shift from one week to another. But this is also a weakness, because as leaders we cannot rest in the programme and have to be on top of things ourselves.

“Most of what we do flows out of our experience and what God is doing in our life and the church as a whole,” Kent adds.

At **St Thomas Crookes**, Sheffield, UK, ([www.stthomascrookes.org](http://www.stthomascrookes.org)) the monthly huddle for cluster leaders is part of an annual training rhythm, which also includes a termly evening for leaders in the church and a bi-annual Saturday training event.

“This Saturday event is an important resource,” says team rector, Mick Woodhead. “The material we cover focuses on vision implementation and how to grow, develop and multiply clusters. Cluster leaders have to attend, but we provide childcare and lunch and aim to make it a brilliant day for them.”

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The church has also invested heavily in their website as a training tool. “We are pretty good at recognising and raising up cluster leaders and releasing them to have a go,” says Mick. “Now we are working very hard on the fourth ‘r’ – resourcing. Any new planting initiative is profiled on the home page, and we have a leaders page with materials to resource them and keep them fresh and excited about church planting and the Kingdom. All leaders in the church are given an access code to these pages which contain Lifeshapes materials, downloads, sermons and seminar talks. The key is we put it all on one central point – it is up to the leader to access it themselves.”

#### ***A two-handed approach***

**AAVM** ([www.valgmenighed.dk](http://www.valgmenighed.dk)) is church planting at two levels in Denmark. In Århus, a network of lay-led clusters is being planted around the congregational centre. In addition, the church is beginning a new congregation in Copenhagen, which will in turn plant a network of clusters.

Until recently, AAVM’s training of cluster leaders was very huddle based, “but we realised we were not training enough,” says Keld Dahlmann, AAVM’s senior pastor. “We are very good at accountability and character in the huddle, and we are good at spotting competence, but we have been training for one model of cluster. What is changing now is how we are going to equip and train for a much broader outreach and more types of cluster, especially for the apostolic types who need a much broader level of training.”

The church has also begun a programme for church planters called *The Course*, and are currently training nine seminary students. “They have to commit to studying with us one day a week,” explains Keld. “We huddle them and train them in leadership and all the things they

don’t learn in traditional seminary training – the other hand of training. This is not just for church planters and cluster leaders locally - the idea is to train planters for other parts of the nation who can set up centres.”

Other churches are also following a ‘two-handed approach’ of training lay leaders through huddles on the one hand, and providing more formal courses on the other.



*Keld Dahlmann teaching seminary students on ‘The Course’ at AAVM in Århus, Denmark*

Mid-size community (MSC) leaders at **St Andrews Chorleywood, UK**, ([www.st-andrews.org.uk](http://www.st-andrews.org.uk)) attend weekly *LATTE (Leadership And Theology Training Evenings)* sessions, which their associate vicar Andrew Williams describes as theological training for missional leaders. This is in addition to regular huddles, a conference twice a year and meeting with MSC leaders when there is a fifth Sunday in the month.

“Only people leading an MSC or identified as an emerging leader can attend,” says Andrew. “We strongly encourage them to do it, but don’t force them – they know it is for them but they have to come because they choose to.”

LATTE runs over a year broken into terms, although they can take several years to complete the course. The material is written by St Andrew Chorleywood’s leadership and includes Moses as a leader, apologetics, doctrine and strategic

issues in mission and leadership. “It is all equipping,” says Andrew.



*Mid-size community leaders at St Andrews Chorleywood, UK attend twice-yearly conferences at the church alongside regular huddles and leadership and theology training evenings*

“We are looking to release men and women who are called by God and have a desire to make a difference for Jesus in a particular area. We don’t need to make it that they have to be ordained into the Anglican Church. Instead we want to give them the tools to walk fully within the call that God has placed on their life.”

**Holy Trinity Brompton** ([www.htb.org.uk](http://www.htb.org.uk)) also have a course for the leaders of their mid-sized pastorates. “The aim is to train people to lead the groups to make disciples,” says Ric Thorpe, vicar of St Pauls Shadwell, an HTB church plant in East London. 60–100 people attend each course including pastorate leaders, associates and helpers. Rather than monthly sessions, three evenings are held during one month in each of three terms:

Term 1: Practice – understanding the theology of leadership, the character of the leader, practical issues for running a pastorate, and a practical session on identifying, mentoring and releasing new leaders.

Term 2: Theology – discipleship, the Bible, the Kingdom of God.

Term 3: Practical training – how to give your testimony, bible and evangelistic talks, and a weekend on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and pastoral care.

***We want to give them the tools to walk fully within the call that God has placed on their life.***

Training methods and content change as churches become more focused on church planting. For example **Zolder50** ([www.amsterdam50.nl](http://www.amsterdam50.nl)) has begun a new *Pastors in Training (PIT)* course in Amsterdam, Holland. Home group leaders who lead groups of between ten and twenty people within the neighbourhood churches have individual coaching depending on need, meet once a month all together, and attend a retreat twice a year. Five of these home group leaders are also part of the PIT group.

“These are the people we hope will church plant,” explains Eric Asp, one of Zolder50’s pastors. “It is a prerequisite they lead home groups because then they are already experienced in leadership and shepherding other people’s lives.”

The PIT group meets once every two weeks. On alternate meetings they work through material by Alexander Strauch on biblical eldership<sup>2</sup>. This focuses on character, ministry skills and doctrine, with reading assignments, discussion and reporting back to the group.

The weeks in between cover topics that Eric and his co-pastor Todd Watkins feel are important, for example roles in leadership, servant leadership and evangelism, as well as strategic planning for the church and administration.

PIT members also shadow Eric and Todd. ‘For example if I have a counselling appointment with someone I may ask one of them to come along and sit in on the meeting so they can see what it is like and how it works,’ explains Eric.

The training model used by many **Vineyard D.A.CH** churches in Germany, Austria and Switzerland has also been developing ([www.vineyard-dach.net](http://www.vineyard-dach.net)). In the past, weekend seminars were held to get people familiarised with the idea of church planting. Internships also took place in churches such as Bern, Munich and Hamburg. However a new initiative to train emerging leaders in the movement has resulted in “big steps in personal and ministry development,” says senior leader Marcus Hausner. The initiative, called *Regional Vineyard Leaders Training (RVLT)* ([www.rvlt-ost.de](http://www.rvlt-ost.de)) is a two-year process based on five modules, delivered through event seminars, personal mentoring and study groups. The local Vineyard leadership recommends and sends their emerging leaders on the course and will sometimes also give financial support. The participants then work through and apply what they learn on the course in the local Vineyard context.

“The most important topics are philosophical and practical<sup>3</sup>,” explains Marcus.

***Leadership is a function rather than a position – you are a leader because you lead, not the other way round.***

“The philosophical understanding of the Kingdom of God is absolutely key in our thinking: the whole dimension of the reign of God and establishing his very nature on earth through his church. This understanding leads to a certain set of values in individual and corporate church life, on the local, regional and national levels. These include creating a strong sense of family, and a culture of love, forgiveness and acceptance. We also understand that leadership is a function rather than a position – you are a leader because you lead, not the other way round.”

So far, the training has taken place in Bern, Switzerland and Berlin, Germany. Marcus is confident it will be distributed to all the D.A.CH regions.



*Amsterdam-based Zolder50's home group leaders relaxing while on retreat in the Dutch countryside. (Photo credit Eric Asp)*

And existing discipleship training can be adapted to accommodate a church planting strategy. Martin and Irene Cave from **IMI Kirken**, Stavanger, Norway ([www.imikirken.no](http://www.imikirken.no)) began ACTA Bibelskole within their church fifteen years ago. The year-long is built around the five purposes from *The Purpose Driven Church*<sup>4</sup>: worship, fellowship, spiritual maturity (including faith and ethics, bible study and personal growth), service, and evangelism. It is aimed at college-age students and is unique within the Lutheran setting in Norway because it is linked to a church.

“There are other Bible Schools but our students are living their daily life within the church,” says Halvor Lindal, who leads the Bible School. “Around 90% of the students come from other churches around Norway. They are coming in and gaining the DNA of a missional life. For many the most important learning isn’t in the classroom, but the process of being part of a pretty lively church which gives them a picture of how church life could be.

“We have a dream that the school will produce leaders of mid-size communities and clusters. Some remain in Stavanger and others go to other cities taking the values they have learnt with them. We are planning a second year with

theoretical and practical courses that will help them plant mid-size groups either within a church setting or independently. Because our church is part of a network they won't be left to start by themselves – they can go to a church that understands what they are talking about, and IMI Kirken can also help that church develop a church planting strategy.”



Halvor Lindal, leader of the ACTA Bibelskole at IMI Kirken, Stavanger, Norway

### **Learning through doing**

Many of the churches and movements already described have practical and theoretical elements included in the way they train potential church planters. In contrast, Zurich-based **c|movement** ([www.cmovement.net](http://www.cmovement.net)) has entirely practical training as Florian Bärtsch explains: “We call people into our apostolic family and train them one by one. We go through all the phases of the church planting circle together – we do it and they watch, then we do it together and then they do it and we watch – so it is quite easy.”

c|movement's *Church Planting Circle* has seven different phases, and groups need to go through all seven phases, including multiplication, to complete the circle. These are:

- Team forming and vision
- Arriving in a new area and praying
- Evangelism
- Discipleship group work
- Forming a housechurch
- Covenanting commitment

- Training
- Multiplication

As Florian explains, the teaching in each phase is relevant to the issues that come up. “The new team we are just about to launch is in the team building phase. They are in the process of team building and finding a vision, so we as church-planting trainers spend one evening a week with them sharing different values about how to handle conflicts, how you build a team and how you handle this topic. We don't use handouts – we use the Bible and our experience. For us if the teacher only uses handouts, his teaching is only theoretical.

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**Jesus Freaks International** ([www.jesusfreaks.com](http://www.jesusfreaks.com)) also begins churches and trains leaders in a very relational way. The movement began fifteen years ago in Germany, and now has groups meeting around Europe.

“Someone might visit a Jesus Freak group and say ‘OK, I have the same vision and dream, and maybe this vision can become true,” explains Max Paans of Jesus Freaks Holland. “Finding leaders operates in the same way. The primary thing we want is that they are really interested in the heart of men and women and that Christ is working through them.”

“Our starting point is always people, so we don't prescribe certain books or training programmes. Once we know you, we can give you books based in your needs, or ask people from traditional churches for advice. If someone wants to go deeper we encourage them to study more.”





*Bible study at the Jesus Freak Internationals Freak Leadership Training weekend, held twice a year for leaders of Jesus Freaks International groups.*

*Freak Leadership Training* (FLT) is a leadership training school for all leaders in the network held over a long weekend twice a year. “At these meetings we have teachers from our movement and outside,” explains Max. “Because we want to encourage groups to build their churches in their own style and culture, we discuss the topics and then let the groups make their own decisions about how their community will put it into practice.”

The topics discussed at FTL vary. Most recently participants discussed the difference between hierarchical (one leader making all the decisions) and anarchical (the whole group making decisions) leadership styles, while the book *The Making of a Leader* by J Robert Clinton<sup>5</sup> formed the basis of the previous FLT.

In Manchester, UK, **The Message Trust** ([www.message.org.uk](http://www.message.org.uk)) has 70 full-time staff and around 300 volunteers. The organisation works in partnership with other churches or denominational streams to set up Eden projects in areas of deprivation, and full-time staff members and volunteers live incarnationally in the communities they are trying to reach. They also have a strong mentoring philosophy in equipping the leaders of their Eden projects.

“Each Eden project is very different as the communities and churches we work in partnership with are so different,” says executive director Matt Wilson. “We wouldn’t be able to use a generic way of training or say you have to go through a kind of ‘Boot Camp’ before you do Eden, because it is so specific. It is very much the role of the team leader to mentor new team members and guide them through the orientation period where they learn to understand the culture.”

“The great way it happens is that the new people learn through seeing what has been modelled because they usually live in a house with another more experienced Eden worker. The whole process is very relational and natural, just asking questions all the time.”

For the last two or three years the new Eden workers have come from our *Genetik*([www.genetik.org.uk](http://www.genetik.org.uk)) programme, which is a four-month programme for 18 – 25 year olds providing training in Urban Youthwork or Creative Ministries. In addition to taught sessions and specialist workshops, Genetik majors on community placements where students put their teaching into practice. Through this programme they have been intensively at the heart of The Message and already caught the vision.”

Full-time Message staff members have a personal development programme and training budget. Their two-year *Vision Management Development Programme* leading to a double diploma is “something they can carry forward beyond the Message,” says Matt. “One part is a *Diploma in Transformational Leadership*. This largely self-reflective diploma looks at vision and values and how to take your team to a higher level of practice in terms of management theory and how you work that through in a Christian context. The second diploma is from the Chartered Management Institute and looks at issues including team building, strategy and

finance. In addition the team meets once a month for a training day where they can talk through issues, pray together and have teaching from an outside speaker. “



*Members of the Message Trust's Genetik programme work with in schools and deprived communities across Manchester, UK.*

Volunteers are trained and pastorally supported much more in the context of the local church. The volunteers on all the projects also come together for training weekends or events such as curry nights once every few months. “The network of projects is a good training tool as some projects spend quite a lot of time talking to each other and a lot of cross pollination and learning happens there. More and more of the volunteers are also accessing the monthly training day.”

Members of **The Order of Mission** ([www.missionorder.org](http://www.missionorder.org)) based in Bristol and London (UK) also offer practical training. The programme was pioneered at St Thomas' Sheffield by Mal Calladine. In addition to The Order of Mission networks in the UK, several other European and US churches use the material to form the basis of their discipleship training as members of a Transnational Training Network.

“Educational theory describes three ways of learning,” says Mal. “There is the formal educational approach (teaching), the apprenticeship approach (being) and the project based approach (doing). But you can't have all three to the same degree, so the challenge is which one you focus on. With us, doing is the primary

thing at all three levels, which takes us out of seminary culture. Being is the secondary element. As for teaching, I believe its role is to help interpret people's experience. We often start doing something before we teach it – because you will want to know what it is all about once you have experienced it.”

The training programme has three levels, starting with a year-long foundational training in discipleship and with a strong emphasis in 'doing'. This year includes involvement in a local church, projects, being a member of a small group and meeting in a team discipleship huddle group. The main focus is on developing character and helping trainees answer three questions:

- What does it really mean to be a Christian?
- What does it really mean to be the church?
- What am I about for the rest of my life?

Many of the trainees 'jump off the ladder' at the end of the first year, but some continue to the second (emerging leadership) and third (leadership) levels.

“The same questions are asked at all levels, but in a bigger context,” explains Mal. “You will have had most of the input at the first level. The second level of emerging leadership needs to be interpretive with a limited amount of input. They have to be leading something and it is more like an apprenticeship that focuses on developing the gifting and developing leadership skills.

“As a person moves through the levels they take on more responsibility so you would expect the guys at the third level to be developing a congregational ministry. The relationship here is more like coaching. All together the development takes between three and seven years.”

Members of the Transnational Training Network share the same DNA and have a similar skeleton (infrastructure, philosophy and content). But how that is played out practically in the individual situations varies.

In the UK context the training is not accredited, so currently leaders who have gone through all three levels are not able to use the training to become ordained. However, the Bristol Order of Mission network does have links with Trinity College, an Anglican College in Bristol, and Mal is hopeful that recent changes within the Church of England relating to Fresh Expressions and the Mission Shaped Church report will create a more flexible structure.

#### **Accredited training**

In contrast, **Holy Trinity Brompton** in London, UK prepares people for ordination through **St Pauls Theological Centre**, (<http://sptc.htb.org.uk>) a fully accredited Anglican training college. "St Pauls offers practical training as well as theological training," explains Ric Thorpe, associate lecturer at St Pauls and vicar of an HTB church plant in East London. "Students spend part of the week as assistants in our home focus churches. We have normal ordination training, but there is also a church plant stream related to the context of being in London."

Once ordained - whether through St Pauls or another Anglican college - HTB's curates wanting to church plant spend time at the church with a view to gathering a team. HTB sends the team to a parish church that would otherwise close, bringing not only leaders but a congregation of 50 – 100 people to revitalise the church.

The time spent at HTB is a 'phenomenal training,' according to Ric. "They absorb everything about the DNA and the culture. However church planting is not an automatic right because it might not be

appropriate for them to plant if it turns out they aren't the right people. We have also identified a need to train not just the leaders but the whole church planting team."

***We often start doing something before we teach it – because you will want to know what it is all about once you have experienced it.***

**EFS** ([www.efs.nu](http://www.efs.nu)) is a lay movement within the Church of Sweden. Over the last few years several members have worked to gain approval and ownership of church planting in the whole movement, and have developed church planting training materials. Some of the people they train are pioneer planters with a vision of starting 'free' EFS churches within specific groups. Others are lay people who will continue to work within their parish leading prayer houses that may eventually transition to a church.

The three courses are:

- A weekend church planting course with follow-up visits and contacts with each team. Participants are taught the importance of vision and goals and work very much in their own team. This year teams from Hedemora, Timrå and Uppsala have attended the weekend course.
- A mentoring course where potential future church planters meet over four weekends of teaching and discussion about church planting. They also travel to England to experience different expressions of church planting in an environment close to Swedish culture.
- An academic Start New Churches, course at Uppsala Theological Seminary. This takes place over 4 weekends, with additional coursework. Participants have to imagine a specific area or culture where they want to church plant,

research the area, develop a vision for the church and a strategy for the next five years. They then produce a written outline of their work and a PowerPoint presentation and film clip to be used to recruit people into the project.

“In one sense this was a kind of academic exercise,” says Per-Eive Berndtsson who helps lead the Start New Churches course, “but it is also the first step in helping people identify where to plant. Now we see at least one of these projects coming true – an interesting work growing among students, young people and immigrants in Stockholm.”



*EFS in Uppsala, Sweden runs three courses for potential church planters including a ‘start new churches’ course at Uppsala Theological Seminary*

### **Training for cross-cultural mission**

Many churches are planting in their own country and culture, but what about those training for cross-cultural church planting?

**Christian Associates International (CAI)** ([www.christianassociates.org](http://www.christianassociates.org)) plant churches in key cities across Europe. Most of their full-time church-planters are from the US, so the selection and training process begins before they arrive in Europe.

“Most of the people who join our church planting teams have already undergone extensive seminary training (though this is not a requirement) or have ample experience in (church) leadership,” explains Rogier Bos, a CAI church planter in the Netherlands. “When it comes to

church planting skills, our team leaders are actually already pretty experienced – even before they join us.”

***When it comes to church planting skills, our team leaders are actually already pretty experienced – even before they join us.***

CAI’s training has two phases – *Staff Candidate Orientation (SCO)* in the US, then *Field Orientation (FO)* in Europe. “During *SCO* candidates learn all about the organisation, policies and structures; see one or two of our projects, talk about living abroad and discuss support raising. A number of psychological and personality profiles are filled out and discussed, then both CAI and the candidate decide if and how the relationship is to continue.”

When a candidate joins, he or she typically raises support then moves to the European city where they will work. Team leaders often first do an internship in a different location for 3 months to a year. *Field Orientation* for new candidates consists of a two week session and a further one week session. The sessions include training, team formation issues and cross-cultural living. “We also talk at length about maintaining a healthy sense of spirituality in the midst of planting a new church – and of course we talk strategy,” adds Rogier.

**Great Commission Europe,** ([www.gceweb.org](http://www.gceweb.org)) another US ministry church planting in Europe uses a very relational approach of ‘doing life together’ in training their church planters.

“We supplement our training with a significant amount of equipping and reading first of Scripture, what can we learn from Jesus, Paul and the early church and then with the writings, materials and seminars from others,” explains Joe Dunn, their managing director. “Character development is

foundational because if we are really going to be conformed to the image of Christ then a personal walk with God is foundational and in that there is a call to personal holiness. Along with that we have a set of core values and beliefs – commitment to God and his word, prayer and faith, a missional, mindset and the Lordship of Christ among them. Not every church uses GCE's materials as we allow a lot of autonomy within the local church setting in their preparation.

“When people come vocationally, we assess whether they are suitable for cross-cultural ministry, and evaluate character, ministry skills and success and fitness for overseas ministry and being in a team. We also work with **Mission Training International** ([www.mti.org](http://www.mti.org)) a US organisation that helps people with cross-cultural orientation and language acquisition.”

*Character development is foundational because if we are really going to be conformed to the image of Christ then a personal walk with God is foundational and in that there is a call to personal holiness.*

As GCE moves to a more organic and indigenous model of church they feel their values will be built much more into ‘every day life and fabric of our disciple making, life-on-life and happening in the harvest as we go.’ This, according to Joe Dunn, has already happened in the Ukraine where Ukrainians reached through GCE churches have become church planters.

## 2. The qualities of a church planter.

US-based church planting organisation **IMB Europe** (<http://hope4cee.org>) has helped to facilitate the planting of nineteen churches in St Petersburg in partnership with the Russian Baptist Union. Now they are moving to a more

organic ‘housechurch’ model of church planting explains church planter Buck Burch. “We are not trying to start churches to get a group of fifty or sixty people; we want to grow housechurches to a group of ten to twelve people, who will start new groups of housechurches to grow to a group of ten to twelve.

“We are confident that the Holy Spirit has people in existing churches who want to move out towards unbelievers. We just need to find them and let them know it is OK to move out of their present context and into a context of outreach and church planting. It will probably run the whole gamut – there will be housewives, seamstresses and babysitters involved as much as the charismatic guy who can draw a crowd to himself. It will look like the church itself.”

**The Message Trust** requires people with character and a strong sense of calling for its Eden projects in some of the most deprived areas of Manchester, UK.

“We need the people with a heart for young people, who are prepared to make sacrifices, and most of all prepared to love unreservedly and unconditionally,” says their executive director, Matt Wilson. “You can have all the gifting in the world and all the expertise but living in an area where your car gets stolen or bricks come through your window night after night takes character.”

“Calling is also a really big factor. We aren’t prescriptive about how someone discerns that calling, but we look for evidence of it during our detailed selection process. We need people who say ‘God has called me to Manchester’ and often for a particular area within the city. Unless you have that calling you can’t endure it. It’s God who gives you a heart for urban youth in the most deprived areas because no-one else is reaching them.”



*The Message Trust works with young people in some of the most deprived parts of Manchester, UK.*

**The Normisjon Storsalen Church** ([www.storsalen.no](http://www.storsalen.no)) in Oslo, Norway also wants people with a passion for a neighbourhood or network to lead their ‘mid-size communities’. These are groups of between 15 and 50 people with a missional focus and the potential to become an independent fellowship.

“People now expect to be released to go after the vision God has given them,” says pastor Bertel Hjortland. “Sometimes this vision is expressed as frustration or criticism, but the key is to get these people to share their hearts and give them time, rather than ignoring them or asking them to leave!”

Bertel adds that it has been surprising to see who God has raised up in this way. “For example a lawyer in Oslo was always criticising our teaching as irrelevant for people in business. So he started a monthly outreach to business leaders himself and the ministry has grown.”

***“I am looking for someone I can trust who has character, a security in who they are in God and is walking in humility.”***

Andrew Williams, associate vicar of **St Andrews Chorleywood**, UK can also think of mid-size community leaders within their context who didn’t have obvious leadership qualities, but who have clearly been called. “The sense of calling and

vision identifies them in the first instance – it is vision that brings them to our attention. We say ‘if the Lord is calling you, if you want to make a difference somewhere, come and talk to us’.

“I am looking for someone I can trust who has character, a security in who they are in God and is walking in humility. While there is a lot of talk about competency, my route in is vision, character and then we look at the skill set. Leaders have come through in that way who have really grown in their abilities – and they wouldn’t have grown had we not given them the opportunity to do something.”

**Great Commission Europe (GCE)** an American church planting organisation working in Europe, have been changing their perception of the gifts required for church planting, as they move towards supporting a greater number of indigenous church planters.

***We are looking for disciple-makers who understand kingdom principles and what it means to live and work and reap fruit in the harvest.***

“In the past we would have looked to have a team who could start a meeting and get a church up and running,” explains Joe Dunn, GCE’s managing director. “There would have been a pastor who could communicate the truth, a worship team leader and an administrative person. A lot of ‘planting a church’ involved setting up a meeting and bringing in people in to that.”

“Now we want to start churches in the harvest where we don’t have to have all these things in place. Before we would have said ‘OK here’s a church, lets go and make disciples’; now we say ‘let’s make disciples and a church can come out of

that'. We are looking for disciplemakers who understand kingdom principles and what it means to live and work and reap fruit in the harvest."

**St Matthews Baptist Church** ([www.matejs.lv](http://www.matejs.lv)) in Riga, Latvia is looking for people with initiative and "a specific mission focus where something in the world is not right and needs to be healed, or something is broken and needs to be mended," explains pastor Peteris Eisans. But they want teams to church plant, rather than a single leader; with a variety of the five-fold ministry gifts expressed within the team.

These gifts are mentioned in Eph 4 v 11& 12:

*"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 the works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (NIV).*

Working in Kiev, Ukraine, Joel Colon from **The Antioch Movement** leadership team says that within their principles of church planting pastors' and teachers' giftings are primarily focussed on caring for those within the church. The apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic gifts are more suited for the initial missional ministry of beginning churches where none have existed before.

For Hannu Vorien, team leader of **Cell Group Network Helsinki** ([www.verkosto.net](http://www.verkosto.net)), Finland, the challenge is to find leaders with vision and give them freedom, because "real leaders don't want to do other people's visions". "There are some churches with good people, pastoral people, but no vision about growth – individual needs are so important that they don't think widely. But when there is a clear vision that is well communicated, it is easy to mobilise a team to church plant," says Hannu.



*St Matthews Baptist Church, Riga, Latvia where the leaders are looking for people with initiative and a 'specific mission focus' to get involved in church planting.*

The five-fold ministry gifting can also help groups understand their ministry, as Paul Maconochie. **St Thomas Philadelphia's** ([www.stthomaschurch.org.uk](http://www.stthomaschurch.org.uk)) senior leader, explains.

"Our understanding of the different ministries of our mid-size clusters has broadened out significantly in the last two years, based loosely around the five-fold ministry definitions. Before this, clusters were based around the way the first wave of cluster leaders operated. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that they were pretty gifted apostolic-type leaders. If you put pressure on everyday leaders of 50 people who haven't got those specific gifts to run those types of clusters they will usually fail and feel condemned about it. By including other kinds of clusters in the definition we have released people into their gifting, whether it is pastoral, teaching, prophetic, evangelistic or apostolic."



*Cluster leaders at St Thomas Philadelphia in Sheffield, UK have been 'released into their gifting' through broadening the definition of what a cluster's ministry can be.*

Evangelism is a key gifting for church planters within the **Vineyard D.A.CH** movement based in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. “Either the church planter has a strong evangelistic gifting, or is able to create an atmosphere where evangelists feel valued, attracted and empowered to live out their gifting,” says senior leader Marcus Hausner. “Over and above this, we are looking for character and integrity, a vital walk with Christ, a sense of calling and a track record in life.”

***Either the church planter has a strong evangelistic gifting, or is able to create an atmosphere where evangelists feel valued, attracted and empowered to live out their gifting***

Marcus says that their approach to choosing church planters is relational – Christians hear about the Vineyard through attending a conference, reading about it or getting to know others within the movement. “As relationships are built the whole idea of church planting is established, and they move out to plant with our support and encouragement.”

And the value of identifying church planters through relationships is underlined by Mal Calladine of **The Order of Mission**.

“The greatest indicator of future performance is recent track record. If you have watched someone over time and see how they have responded to confrontation, difficulty and success, you can see how they will respond in the future.”

### **3. Challenges in empowering church planters:**

#### ***Passing on the DNA***

One issue facing church planting trainers is how to pass on the important values or DNA of the church to those being trained.

Joel Colon of **The Antioch Movement** says this is a particular issue when the teams you have trained are now training others.

“As long as we maintain one-on-one contact with the teams we can hold them accountable. It’s more difficult to expect the teams we have trained to invest in their second and third generation teams,” he says. “They are much more Slavic in that perspective and don’t like holding each other accountable to the same degree as the West, so the degree to which you can maintain that emphasis really tightly begins to slip. It is the balance between wanting it to become indigenous and therefore not controlling them, and at the same time maintaining the value and the principle.”

The moves **GCE** is making towards a more organic and indigenous movement has forced them to describe what they are doing missiologically, and uncovered the need for a common ‘language’, as managing director Joe Dunn explains.

“Because we have Europeans and Americans in our teams, and long-term members as well as people from outside who are joining us, there are a lot of language things going on. In order to pass on who we are and what we do, we need a common language to define what really captures all of our collective hearts.”

#### ***Creating vision and opportunities to do***

In Southern Germany, **Evangelisches Jugendwerk im Wurttemberg (EJW)** ([www.ejwue.de](http://www.ejwue.de)) reaches around 200,000 young people through its programme of youth activities linked to the Lutheran Church. As Reinhold Krebs, EJW’s regional youth worker explains, the movement is very good at releasing responsibility and it is not unusual to have a fifteen year old girl conducting a youth choir of eighty people. Now they are looking for people prepared to step outside their comfort zone and plant youth churches, possibly



along the lines of the UK's Mission Shaped Church.

"Youth churches are being supported by the official synod, and we have a many young people who could easily start a mission shaped community, but so far the vision is missing and there is a barrier in their thinking. They think it is OK to lead a youth group or choir, but we want to envision them towards doing church – that it can be more than a choir – it can be a youth church."



*EJW in Southern Germany reaches many young people through its programme of youth activities, including 'Teendance' workshops.*

The **Good News and New Land Baptist Church** in Belarus trains church planters through "friendship and partnership".

"In Belarus, education is a 'big deal', with over 40% of the population with a college degree," explains their pastor of missions. "Most of the guys right now have a theological education, as there are some denominational seminaries and bible colleges in the country, and it is possible to study by correspondence. But their churches are stuck in a traditional model and not using these potential leaders. We therefore have had an unlimited resource of these kinds of people."

The church offers emotional and spiritual support through developing strong mentoring relationships and holding training conferences twice a year. They also offer financial advice.

'We go with a two-year plan where we help them start the churches for example

try to find a US church to support them for a while. The idea is not to create dependency, but to help them become effective quickly. That model has worked so far – the first three churches we planted have become self-supporting within two years.

"Ultimately we aim to inspire and motivate the church planters to do something that is already in their hearts, and supporting them where before they feel alone and afraid. Because they feel supported they can go out and accomplish a vision they already have."

*Ultimately we aim to inspire and motivate the church planters to do something that is already in their hearts*

***Allowing mistakes to be made and risks to be taken***

Eric Asp of **Zolder50** in Amsterdam, Netherlands says their church is a close-knit community giving a lot of emotional and spiritual support. The leaders and members are young with a lot of ambition and potential. But youth can also be a weakness, says Eric.

"We don't have a lot of people with a great amount of life experience who know what they want or are pressing forward to it and this can lead to a subtle fear of making mistakes. We recognise the need to step back, let balls get dropped and mistakes happen because that is a learning process and will empower people."

*We recognise the need to step back, let balls get dropped and mistakes happen because that is a learning process and will empower people.*

In Norway, **IMF Bryne's** leaders found that when their mid-sized groups were told "as long as it is mission, you can do what you want," a lot of the groups ended up doing church services of some kind. "We tried to be low control, but in a way that created a vacuum," pastor Kent Tjelta says. "Now we give examples to give people ideas, help them work through their vision and maybe connect them with one or two others with a similar vision.

"But we don't want them to become dependant on us, so they have to figure out what they need – money, location or more people. For example, last year we restarted a 100-strong group for people in their twenties, but only two people wanted to lead. We said we wouldn't do anything and they would have to work it out themselves. We got three new leaders out of that."

Kent says they also try to create an atmosphere of 'mistakes are good' not just 'could be good' because this is more permission giving. "We try out new things all the time and if we make a mistake we admit to it – because people have to see that."

***Are we successful church planters if all our church plants stay open – or are we just not taking enough risks?"***

Marius Bühlmann of **Vineyard D.A.CH agrees**. "John Wimber once said that if you don't close a certain number of church plants a year you are probably not taking enough risks. Are we successful church planters if all our church plants stay open – or are we just not taking enough risks?"

In conclusion, training church planters can take many different forms, each with a particular emphasis. None of churches or church planting movements described in this paper would say their methods are completely fool proof or guarantee success. But then methods are only tools to get the job done. It is only when the calling, training and empowering of church planters is carried out in partnership with the Holy Spirit at work in the world today that Christ's church can truly be built.

## References:

<sup>1</sup> *Finding God's Purpose for the Church: Training Kit* written by Dwight Smith and Robert Mountford see [www.xpansion.org/www\\_xperience.html#training](http://www.xpansion.org/www_xperience.html#training) and download a sample lesson.

<sup>2</sup> *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* by Alexander Strauch Lewis & Roth Publishers; Rev Exp edition (June 1995) ISBN-10: 0936083115 Companion study guide: The Study Guide to Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch 1997 ISBN-10: 0936083131

<sup>3</sup> Vineyard DACH's RVL Module Topics:  
Module 1: History and Values of the Vineyard  
Module 2: Kingdom of God  
Module 3: Value-based Church Development - The Vineyard Way of planting and leading of a church  
Module 4: Spiritual Leadership  
Module 5: Missions  
Each school can use Bonus-Modules such as Coaching, Prophecy, Evangelism

<sup>4</sup> *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren Zondervan Publishing House; Revised edition (2 Feb 1996) ISBN-10: 0310208130 [www.purposedriven.com](http://www.purposedriven.com)

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