

SO I WANT TO PLANT A CHURCH...

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PROCESS

January 1996: Decision to Follow

I had claimed to be disciple of Jesus for over two years – but had little to no concept of what it meant to be on the mission. I thought that I was saying ‘yes’ to being in vocational pastoral ministry – but really I was committing to go where Jesus told me to go and do what he asked me to do (regardless of personal cost).

June 2002: Youth Ministry

After five years of internships and four years of college, I of course had everything figured out. It took less than six months for me to realize how little I really knew. Regardless, I had planned out my life – Jana and I would be in youth ministry for ten years and then possibly a lead pastor of a turnaround church (I have this terrible habit of believing if I can plan something then I can be in control of it).

August 2004: Dreams and Discussion

I would meet with friends and discuss “why” and “what” as it relates to Christ and the church. I was intrigued with simple discipleship and mobilizing ministers.

January 2006: Transition

I committed at least five years to Pastor David Brakke. We trusted each other enough to share our dreams for the future with each other. My hope was to honor him by aligning the youth ministry with the local church and his desire was to develop me to be the leader that I was supposed to be. The conversation continued.

January 2009: Masters Program

I began studying at Southeastern University with the intention of learning more about turnaround churches but gradually began to think and imagine more about launching a missional community in the Tri-Cities. I was greatly influenced by the works of Alan Hirsch, Thom Rainer, Ed Stetzer, and Leonard Sweet (as well as conversations with Don Detrick, Jeffery Portmann, Dan Serdahl, and John Jay Wilson).

August 2010: Restless Contentment

My lead pastor's nine-week sabbatical solidified in me the desire to do something – I just did not know what. Honestly, I had a bad case of “Junior-itis.” Just because I wanted to do something did not necessarily mean it was the right time.

July 2011: Pursuit

Conversations occurred with a couple of churches about the possibility of pipelines and partnerships. My lead pastor asked, “Why not give Maltby a chance?” He agreed to send me to Starting Point (a Network workshop designed for church planters). I followed that session up with prayer in the Tri-Cities (once by myself and once with my lead pastor and our spouses). We made our decision in October.

December 2011: Honor the Past and Present

I made appointments with the lead pastors of the six existing churches in the Tri-Cities. My hope has never been to compete with them – but to compliment what they were already doing. Many of these churches were instrumental in my life and family. Though I cannot do all that they ask, I am determined to all that I can to honor them. I have a lot to learn from several of them – especially in the areas of prayer and leadership. Time and time again, I have been overwhelmed with their support.

February 2012: Public Announcement

We shared with Maltby Christian Assembly the plan and timeline for them to be primary partner with Blue Bridge Church (a relational connection). Our desire is for this multiplication venture to be as much a win for Maltby as it is for Blue Bridge.

TIMELINE

- February 2012: Incorporation (Trustees begin meeting monthly)
- March
 - Lead Team Meetings begin meeting monthly
 - Pre-Launch Party
- April: Launch Team meetings begin meeting monthly (rotating between east-side and west-side locations)
- August
 - Family moves (team moves between June 2012 and January 2013)
 - Lead Team and Launch Team begin meeting weekly
- October: Preview Gathering #1
- November: Preview Gathering #2

- December: Preview Gathering #3
- January: Soft Launch (weekly worship gatherings)
- February: Official Launch

CURRENT REALITY

- 4 trustees (2 more projected to be added before official launch)
- 6 lead team members (2-3 more projected to be added before August)
- 89 attended pre-launch party (anyone interested in praying, giving or going)
- 29 attended first launch team meeting (goal is to have 50 in attendance by August, 75 by October, and 100 by January)
- Approx. 18-25 are moving and 40-50 have committed to the community

LESSONS LEARNED (AND STILL LEARNING)

- **Honor:** We refuse maverick mentalities. We respect those who are already in the area – understanding that we a different work (not a better one). That being said, the mission takes priority. The harvest is very, very, very ripe.
- **Identity:** We remind ourselves: 1) This is not our church. This is much bigger than a personality or method. What drives Blue Bridge? 2) This is not about planting. We are defined by trust and obedience to Christ in all areas of our lives – not merely in the plan and prepare for a Blue Bridge.
- **Prayer:** We are tempted to work on a project rather than to pray. Don't.
- **Pressure:** We thought that the most stressful point would be saying “yes.” We were wrong. Pressure mounts when people join us on the journey.
- **Success:** We *must* define true success. Otherwise we will grow discouraged.
- **Trust:** A “no” hurts more than we ever thought that it would. But we must remind ourselves that following Christ does not look the same for everyone.
- **Unity:** We cannot and will not do this alone. Our primary partner is Maltby (and many churches and individuals in addition to that). A diverse team is being compiled and developed. This is not *my* vision – but *our* vision.
- **Work:** The pre-launch phase is more difficult than ever imagined. We are caught between two worlds – finishing strong and preparing for the next phase. Time management, accountability, and grace are non-negotiables.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- **1200:** We are compiling a list of people who we have influence on a daily basis. We want to see people made new. We want to baptize them in water!
- **Location:** We await a very important decision from the school district.
- **Partners:** So many have been so generous and sacrificial. We currently have \$94,000 raised. Our goal is \$150,000 by October.
- **Transition:** There are several individuals and families who need housing, work, and education in a very short amount of time. We also join Maltby in prayer for the right youth pastor, with the right gifts, all in the right time.