

Church Planting- Legal and Functional Implications

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It has been my pleasure over the last couple of years to have the opportunity to work with many passionate, inspired Christians during their journey in church planting. These faithful missionaries have been such an inspiration- demonstrating their devotion to God by working diligently to create a new flock from the unchurched. Reaching out to both believers and non-believers in many areas of the world, those called to plant new churches exude a dedication and zeal that reminds me why I chose a career in the nonprofit sector.

But there is more to strategically planting a new church than simply following Gods call to action. For a new church to be successful in acquiring initial capital, attracting a faithful membership, and expanding outreach ministries to reach all populations in need, church leaders must learn to take on the characteristics of entrepreneurs.

It may seem divergent to view the Church in a commercial sense, however if you think about churches who have achieved extreme success they are operating as a business- a big business. While your goals in church planting most likely have led you to focus on location, congregation, and ways to reach out to disbelievers, you may not have considered the following essential aspects of church administration:

Incorporation- Becoming a legal entity, limiting the liability of those involved, and increasing eligibility for funding and benefits such as tax exemption are of importance. Rules and regulations for incorporation vary by state, so be sure you know the facts in your area.

Bylaws- While Im sure youve developed a Doctrinal Statement and religious hierarchy for your planned church, it is also essential that you develop and affirm Board duties and responsibilities, conflict of interest policy, and checks and balances.

Tax Exemption- Recognition as an exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) provides validation to supporters that your church is legitimate. It provides the opportunity to receive faith-based grants, receive discounted rates on occupancy, and assures the members of your congregation that their tithes are tax deductible.

Marketing- Word of mouth is a great way to develop membership, however other avenues to market your organization are critical, especially if the church you are planting is in an area in which you do not have established personal contacts. Website development is a great start, as about 50% of Americans log onto the web to conduct searches daily. Search engine optimization for your site is also key- if someone is searching for a Christian church in your target area youd rather your site be at the top of the list of results rather than buried ten pages in.

Grants- There are many established grantmakers out there whose specific mission is to fund religious organizations and churches. Drafting a successful proposal and conducting detailed research into funding agencies may add a much needed source of capital for your organization. While tithes and offering will undoubtedly represent your bulk of funding, think of how many more missions you could undertake if you could generate a few thousand (or more) extra dollars each year via grant funding.

With an expertise in theology and the thought of assuming such administrative responsibilities may seem a daunting task. If thats the case, you may want to look to outside experts for support. A good start is experts at ChurchNet USA. For more information, visit www.churchnetusa.com.

ChurchNet USAs mission is to serve as a one-stop resource center for churches and religious organizations nationwide. As the nations number one provider of nonprofit services, ChurchNet USA offers assistance in all aspects of establishing, operating, and sustaining a church or faith-based ministry. In addition to the diverse products ChurchNet USA makes available, the organization also provides charities and churches with free tools and links to free resources for religious organizations to help engage the community and share the faith.

For more information on ChurchNet USA please visit www.churchnetusa.com or call 877-857-9002.

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