

Evangelism for Church Planting



On a Monday afternoon in July 2013 Kev Sawers and I went to the Department of Housing development in Hamilton South. We wanted to make contact with some of the residents and hopefully arrange a time to come back, share some food and talk to them about Jesus.

We came up with this strategy one afternoon after PM church at Hunter Bible Church, following a fairly unsuccessful attempt in the previous week to do some cold turkey evangelism by door-knocking.

In God's providence we came across a group of 5 men sitting down out the front of one resident's bedsit, having drinks together. We introduced ourselves and explained that we were Christians from a local church and we were interested in meeting some people in their neighbourhood.

We asked a few questions about what their experiences of church had been like and explained that we were not going to invite them to our church but would like to bring church and Jesus to them. We asked if we could come back that Friday with some lunch and meet up again with whoever was interested. They said we were welcome to try so we thanked them and were on our way.

That Friday we showed up at the time we'd arranged and two of the men we'd met on the Monday were there. We had a lot of food with us so we invited some passers-by to join us and ended up with a group of 5 or 6.

We read and talked with them about a brief passage from the Bible and asked if we could come back the following Monday and do the same thing. This became a routine for a few weeks; every Monday and Friday we'd come to the same place at lunchtime with food to share, read a passage from the Bible and talk about Jesus with whoever showed up.

Some of the same people would come each time and gradually we met some of their friends.

On other days during the week we would sometimes arrange to meet the friends or neighbours of our regulars who had heard about the Monday and Friday groups but were uncomfortable coming along without knowing much about it.

One day, during one of these mid-week appointments, we were at the flat of Jenny, one of our regular Monday/Friday crowd, to meet her friend Fiona.

Fiona seemed put out by our presence and kept saying that she thought we were going to judge her because she hadn't been a very good person. We were explaining that we weren't there to judge and what it means to follow Jesus when Jenny spoke up and told us all that she'd decided to follow Jesus after our last Friday meeting.

Kevin and I looked at each other, surprised, because she hadn't told either one of us. We asked her some questions and she told us that after we left the previous Friday, she had prayed and confessed that she was a sinner, asked for forgiveness and told Jesus she wanted to follow him.

We were happy and excited told Jenny we'd like to baptise her. We had already been discussing holding a Bible study one night of the week at Jenny's flat and so, a week or two later, when the group started Jenny was baptised.

With a regular bible study group on a Monday night with 10-15 members and a regular public meeting every Friday which was open to anyone to come and hear about Jesus we decided to stop our Monday lunchtime meeting so we could have more time to go out and meet new people in the community.

It was incredible how many times opportunities to talk to people about Jesus were dropped in our laps; we'd arrange to go and talk to one person and when we arrived there would be two or three other people there who would, more often than not, stick around and hear the good news about Jesus.

We started another bible study group on a Thursday afternoon with some people who became Christians after hearing the gospel at the Monday night group and through follow-up meetings. Both groups grew and it wasn't long before our regulars proposed that we have a "proper" church service. Kevin and I began discussing how we could do it at the local community hall and started making enquiries.

In December 2013 we decided to take a leap of faith and try to put on a big event to let people know who we were and that a church was starting in the neighbourhood. We had some flyers printed and delivered them to every flat in the Hamilton South housing commission (around 650 flats) and to houses in the surrounding streets, advertising the two big events in the weeks to come.

On the 1st of December we held a free BBQ breakfast at the Hamilton South Community Centre so we could introduce ourselves to more people and let them know about church the following Sunday.

Over 100 people came to the BBQ breakfast which was largely run by the members of our bible study groups and public meeting. We gave out a lot of copies of the gospel of Luke and invited everyone to come back the following Sunday for our first church service which would be followed by a free BBQ.

On the 8th of December Hamilton South Jesus Church held its first church service and about 30 adults came. We prayed, taught them a Christian song and Kev preached from 1 Corinthians 15.

We met a few new people and an extra 30 or 40 people came after the service for the BBQ which allowed us to make more new contacts and follow up with some of the people who had come the previous week.

Since December we have held a church service at the community centre every four weeks and it has been growing steadily. With the people we've met through the services and through walk-up evangelism through the week we have started two more bible study groups so that at the moment we have regular groups meeting on Monday nights, Tuesday lunchtimes, Tuesday nights, Thursday lunchtimes and we still have the public meeting every Friday at lunchtime.

There are around 30 people who attend a regular community group during the week and at our church service on the 30th of March there were 48 adults and 15 children in attendance.

CONVICTION

CONVICTION

“In terms of our experience, we didn't 'evangelise' into existence. I was introduced to 6 adults who were meeting as a Bible study. They were praying for wisdom/direction re: next steps.

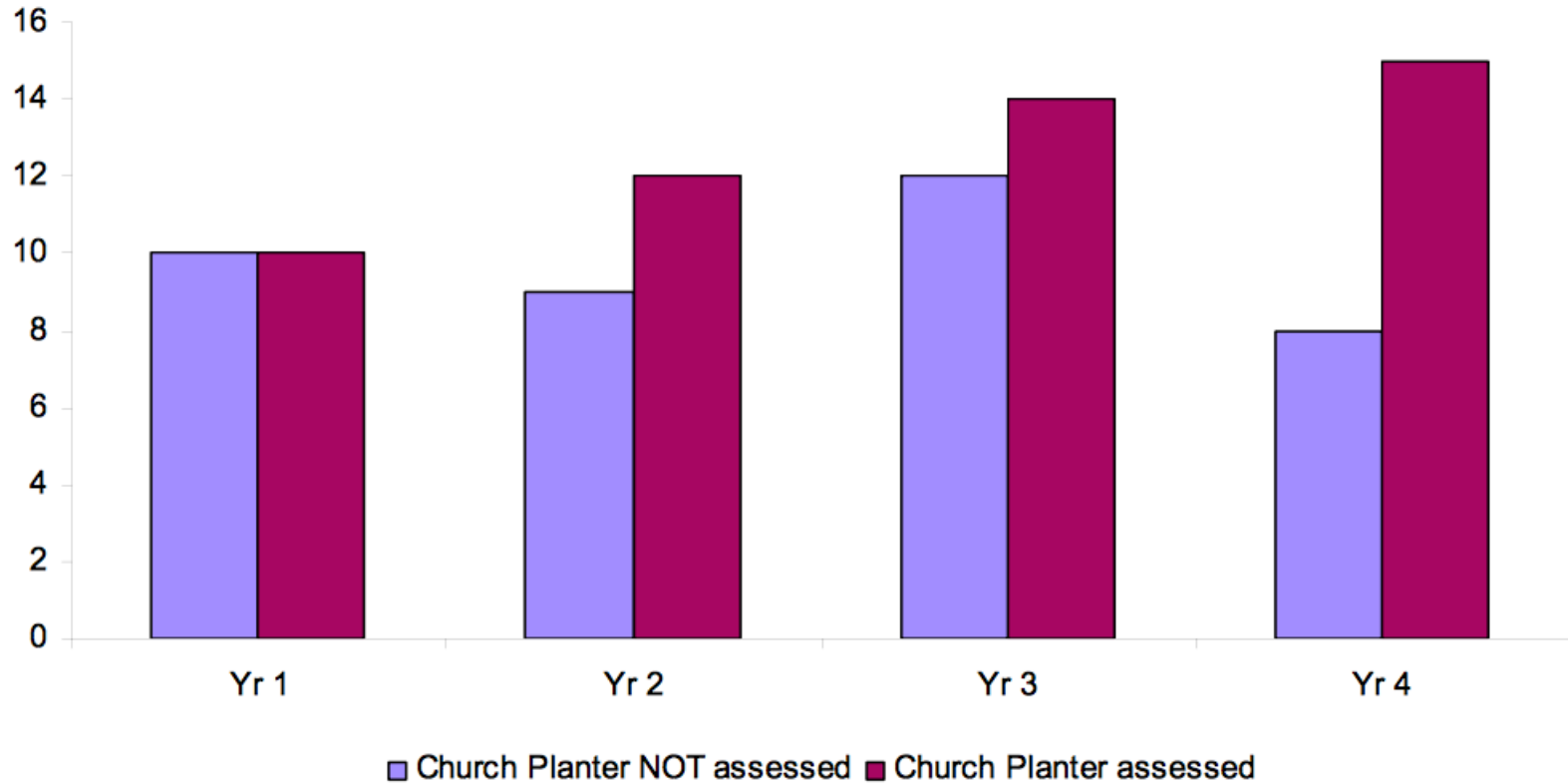
Their vision was simple, to reach their friends with the Gospel. We began as a small church knowing that our future viability depended on evangelism. I am very grateful to inherit a small band of brothers and sisters who had a mission DNA.”

Steve Covetz
The Point Community Church
Port Macquarie

CONVICTION

COMPETENCE

Figure 16—Mean baptism count by church planter assessment and year



Church Plant Survivability and Health Study 2007

Ed Stetzer Phillip Connor

CONVICTION

COMPETENCE

CONFIDENCE

“Again Jesus said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground.

32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.”

Mark 4:30–32

FOCUSSED PURPOSE

FOCUSSED PURPOSE
FOCUSSED STAFF

FOCUSSED VISION

FOCUSSED STAFF

FOCUSSED STRUCTURES

life

looking into life with Jesus



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CONNECTION

Carnivals and picnics

Carols

Free concerts

Holiday Kids Club

Neighborhood BBQ's and footy games

Family movie nights

Sporting tournaments

Special Christmas Eve service

Community New Year's Eve party

Parenting seminar
Newcomers Guide to the
Community
Marriage workshop
Personal finances/budgeting
workshop
Time management workshop
Preparing kids for School
Job interview and resume skills
Renovating seminars

Community repair

Working with refugees

Visiting people in
nursing homes

Food for families in
crisis

“Some of our most effective evangelism has happened in the car park of our local primary schools. I can remember Ruth working the car park with invites to our events and have seen heaps of fruit from this!

In normal suburban Australia I reckon primary schools are often the easiest first phase of evangelism... especially when the planter himself has a young family. One of the challenges this brings to Christians is the willingness to think beyond the Christian schooling option.”

Dave Sheath
Lakes Evangelical Church

From the beginning we worked hard on personal evangelism, growing a culture of evangelism, constantly encouraging everyone to Invest & Invite. We kept our events and programmes minimal (Sunday service and small groups). We didn't run any evangelistic events for the first 2-3 years, worked hard at cultivating the importance of everyone genuinely investing in the lives of non-Christian friends.

Steve Covetz
The Point Community Church
Port Macquarie

CONVICTION
COMPETENCE
CONFIDENCE
CONNECTION
CULTURE