

New Strategies for Stadia

Marc Bigelow, President at Large



Wow! When Stadia began three years ago, we had no idea where God would take it. We thought we did, but obviously God had other plans.

As we begin our fourth year, several changes that have been highlighted elsewhere in this newsletter are on the drawing boards. However, **many things remain the same.**

Our vision and values remain the same. The goals of seeing thousands of new churches planted and millions of people coming to Christ remain the same.

The values of taking the best possible care of planters and seeing churches multiply remain the same.

The value of helping churches to start churches remains the same. If anything, this value will be accentuated as we strive to drive church planting back to the local level through a multiplying series of networks.

What is changing is the way we accomplish those values. In our rapidly changing culture, we must all change or soon become obsolete. The strategies will change while the mission, vision and values remain the same.

Lastly, our level of collaboration with other church planting associations will likely increase. We have come to realize that many strong local or regional associations are better than one large association. Together, we can accomplish the vision of changing America with the good news of Jesus Christ.



Stadia: New Church Strategies

Marcus W. Bigelow

President at Large

Tom Jones

Southeast Regional Director

Mark Leeper

Sierra Pacific Regional Director

Bruce White

Southwest Regional Director



Fall 2005 Church Launches

Eleven new churches with Stadia connections are scheduled to launch before the end of this calendar year!

New Life Christian Church in Odessa, Texas (our first a cappella church) and Harbor Christian Church in Baltimore (see story on page 3) are among nearly a dozen new congregations scheduled to hold their first worship services in the coming months.

The Fall 2005 church planting season kicked off on Sunday, September 11 when three new Christian churches in the Southwest region – Life Spring Christian Church, LifePoint Christian Community and Breath of Life Christian Church – opened their doors for the first time.

For a complete list of 2005 church launches, complete with contact information and web links, visit www.stadia.cc.

Journey Christian Church Accepts Over \$1.5 Million for Gulf Coast Rebuilding Efforts



Rick Grover planted Journey Christian Church in New Orleans in the fall of 2002. For three years the church ministered to the people of the Big Easy, even founding an inner-city ministry called "Building Better Communities," but no one in the church ever expected to lead a massive humanitarian relief effort in the city.

That all changed on August 29, 2005. Rick and his family, like hundreds of thousands of other New

Orleans residents, had evacuated their home with just three days worth of clothes when the levees broke and the flooding began. When Rick contacted Stadia on August 30, however, he wasn't concerned about his personal belongings, or even his home.

Just one day into what President Bush called "one of the worst natural disasters in our nation's history," Rick and the team at Journey had already laid out a three-part plan to assist the displaced residents of their city. Journey was committed to serving the long-term needs of New Orleans. They planned to repair homes, distribute food and drinking water, and host day camps for children whose schools had been destroyed.

Journey was eager to begin their new ministry, but they had no way to collect the funds they needed to put their plan into practice. Stadia offered to receive disaster relief donations on Journey's behalf and agreed to pass all proceeds directly to the church.

On Sunday, September 4, more than 100 Christian churches collected special disaster relief offerings specifically for Journey, using a 90-second video that Stadia produced and distributed for free through www.stadia.cc. To date more than \$1,500,000 has already been entrusted to Journey.

The need is still great, but Rick Grover says God's people will persevere and serve faithfully where He has called them. "It's going to be many months – probably six months – of relief efforts to get things back together before they can truly rebuild most of the city. We really believe that it is for such a time as this that God has allowed us to be here...to try to make a difference."

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A Church-Planting Church

Graydon Jessup, Senior Minister
Eastside Christian Church
Fullerton, California

In 1996 our Elder Board made a unanimous decision: Eastside Christian Church would be a church-planting church.

We have only eight acres of property and we were already meeting the needs of about 2,500 people per weekend. Other property costs in our area were averaging \$700,000 to \$1,000,000 per acre, so we said, "We will be a church-planting church!"

The Lord in His humor thought, "I am going to test Eastside!"

In 1997 plans were laid to launch one of our worship services, called University Praise, as an independent church. In February 1998, University Praise was launched. We sent 700 of our finest young adults away (less than one mile away!) to plant the new church. They had been a positive cash flow to Eastside, but we couldn't count on that cash anymore. We gave them the freedom to be their own church as quickly as they could secure their own tax I.D. number.

Though it did not make sense on paper, it certainly made sense in the heart of God. Since that launch in 1998 we have not looked back.

Eastside still runs in the neighborhood of 2,500 worshipers on a weekend, but when you add in all the church plants we have supported – either 100% or in some significant manner – that number jumps to approximately 6,150! Not bad for a church meeting on eight acres of land! We give God all the glory.

Joey and Lindsay Keck – The Newlywed Planters

Joey and Lindsay Keck were married on May 27, 2005. This winter they will be planting a church in South Baltimore, Maryland. Why, of all the things they could be doing with their first year of marriage, are they committing themselves to the ministry of church planting?

"I tell people we got into church planting by accident," Joey says with a chuckle. In January of this year, he and Lindsay (then his fiancée) attended what they thought was going to be a Stadia Assessment LAB. It turned out to be a church planting class taught by Stadia's Southeast Director Tom Jones. The Kecks got to know Tom during that class, and the very next month they were participating in an actual Assessment LAB.

The LAB cemented Joey and Lindsay's calling – to plant an urban church in a blue collar area. Tom Jones had been seeking a couple to plant in South Baltimore, and the community seemed like a good fit for the Kecks. In fact, Joey and Lindsay were so confident of their decision that they didn't even visit the area before agreeing to plant a church there!

"We realize there's a lot of need here," Joey says of his new hometown. But thanks to his ministry, an all-new body of believers – Harbor Christian Church, or "The Harbor" – is preparing to meet those needs. Now that's no accident!



Bowling Tournament Raises \$25,000 for Church Planting



On Tuesday, July 26, sixty-two bowlers, many of them Provision Ministry Group employees, came together to show their support for Stadia at "Gutterpalooza '05" – a charity bowling tournament in Southern California.

The event raised just over \$25,000 for church planting, making it the second highest-grossing event in Stadia's history. Alan Cech, our top individual fundraiser, collected \$1,915 in sponsorship pledges. (Way to go, Alan!)

Thanks to all of our bowlers, everyone who pledged their support of the bowlers, and especially our generous corporate sponsors:

Abound Fundraising
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Yocum Business Furnishings

"It Took Me Decades, But I Found Jesus"

Before he became a Christian at LifePointe Christian Church in Elk Grove, California, Dan was always in search of something – he just didn't know what that "something" was. Dan had been blessed with a wonderful wife, a great son and a job many envied, but he felt he needed more.

"No matter how bright my life seemed," Dan remembers, "there was always a sense of darkness, an empty space that needed to be filled. I could go into detail, but the details don't matter now. What matters is that I found what I was looking for. It took me decades, but I found Jesus."

Since accepting Christ as Lord, Dan has learned that the many blessings he enjoys are gifts from his Heavenly Father. Now, he says, "I look forward to beginning each day, rather than wishing for the day to end. I no longer just get through the day; I pray that my daily efforts glorify His Kingdom."

LifePointe Church helped Dan and his family find what they had been searching for – the saving grace and love of the Lord – and Pastor Chris Delfs continues to help Dan grow in his new faith. "Chris was honest from the first time we sat and discussed the Lord. He is a bright light in my life."

After years of searching for answers, Dan says, "I know who my Abba is. I know He loves me, as He loves everyone. I know Jesus died on the cross for me." And thanks to the ministry of LifePointe Church, "I know I am blessed to have the friendship and guidance of the Lord for eternity. I know my search is over, but I also know this is just the beginning of my walk with Jesus."

Meet Our New Leadership Team

In early August, Stadia announced plans to join a new collaborative network of church-planting ministries. As a result, a new leadership team – which includes representatives from other ministry organizations – is now "re-engineering" Stadia with a more collaborative and decentralized approach.

Todd Wilson, Executive Pastor of New Life Christian Church in Centerville, Virginia, has been asked to serve as Transition Consultant. Others on the new leadership team include:

- Marcus Bigelow, President at Large
- Tom Jones, Southeast Regional Director
- Mark Leeper, Sierra Pacific Regional Director
- Bruce White, Southwest Regional Director
- Bob Harrington, National Planter Care Director
- Larry Winger, Acting Executive Director
- Paul Williams, President of The Orchard Group

Todd and the rest of the team will be reviewing every process that Stadia currently performs – from assessment and coaching to accounting and marketing – and determining whether those services should be provided by Stadia or through partnerships with other proven church-planting organizations.

As he leads this thorough evaluation, Todd is quick to point out that Stadia's commitment to planter care has not changed. He has also asked for ongoing prayer for the leadership team, which will be meeting every week for at least the next six months.

Of course, Stadia's continued desire is to see thousands of people won to Christ through the effective witness of new churches. By transitioning to a new model of church planting we pray that we will be able to help plant healthier, more vibrant churches than ever before.

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(the Stadia e-newsletter)

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