

You may have already heard somewhere that years ago I was the initiator of a new church in the city of Ostrava. We started as six long-term believers, and six fairly new Christians (from a girl who had been a believer for about a year and a half to a boy who had been converted for three months). After six years, there were more than seventy of us. These were exclusively people who believed through our ministry! It was not a transfer of Christians from other churches! By this I mean that I have a very personal, very intense and very positive experience with planting and leading a church of the usual Czech format. Praise the Lord for that!

Repeatedly I hear from key people on the Czech and Slovak evangelical scene that the most effective evangelism is planting new congregations. I agree! By the way, at six years of our church, about 20 believers left us to plant another church in other part of the city, which is also still functioning today.

I am very grateful for various church **planting initiatives**. I look at them with respect and sincerely wish that to result in congregations with new people from outside much faster!

You probably observe my great emphasis that these would be communities of **new** followers of Jesus; I don't mean regrouping Christians! Widely I am looking for believers who would be able to start a new congregation of the usual type. Do you see Christians within your reach who – with a small team – could start a church and, lead it to the number of fifty new believers „from the world“ let's say in five years? How many of these Christian leaders do you see in your circles? Too often I observe the attitude of many mature and very capable people in the style: „Should I start a new church? You can't be serious...“ And so I am thinking about the **PICTURE** that believers have in our country. According to their thinking, starting a new church is only for those:

- who have a special **gift** for it,
- extraordinary **call**,
- and at least some theological **education** or at least many years of experience in the church;
- moreover, church planting is mostly understood as a full-time **ministry**...

As far as practical matters are concerned, in the mind of potential church planters there are these heavy needs:

- Who will **preach** every Sunday?
- Who will lead the **worship**?
- Where shall we find a **room**?
- How shall we **pay** for the premises, the preacher and other costs?
- Who will take care of the **kids** who run around us?
- And many other challenges.

If you wanted to start a church like we started years ago, I would certainly sympathize very much with these embarrassments. For the first two years of our new fellowship, we all worked more than full time regular jobs. Only then the thought came that for faster development it would be good for me to become a full-time pastor; I stayed there for more than 10 years before the Lord took me elsewhere. As a side note, I would like to add that during planting and growth of the church, my wife Danka and I gradually had three small children! It was a wonderful and at the same time extremely challenging life period for us.

I wonder when was the last time I heard from potential church planters questions like:

- How shall we effectively connect with **non-believers** out there?
- How shall we **care** for new believers?
 - So that apart from following the Lord Jesus himself
 - and community involvement
 - they would immediately learn to **share the Good News** with their close ones...?

This idea can be a breakthrough for you. Those enormous demands for planting a new community come **ONLY** from **OUR IMAGE** of the form of such a community. When I look at how the churches multiplied in the New Testament, it comes as a great relief to me! Biblical grasp of the simple **functions of the New Testament church** makes the whole thing much simpler!

*Lord Jesus, thank You that You did not intend the church to be a burden that only the strongest ones can bear. You show us the ways how Your church can function as a **natural movement**...!*