

EFCMM and Church Planting

April 24, 2016

Old Idea

Church planting was part of EFCMM's founding in 1956, with help from First Free in Rockford. Church planting has been an emphasis in the EFCA and a priority in EFCMM missions. Church planting was considered by EFCMM in 2004-05, but did not have sufficient support. Church planting continues to be brought up occasionally among our elders.

New Opportunity

We have a family interested in helping to see a new church started in Sterling. We believe there would be others from EFCMM and beyond who could help make this a reality. We are in a period of attendance growth and financial strength. Our EFCA Great Lakes District offers consultation and support for these projects.

Eternal Dimensions

A church is not merely a religious organization or an institution based on tradition. It is a God-ordained family/community/fellowship for worship, discipleship, and witness. We are a people whom God called by the gospel and commissioned for gospel ministry. Our first responsibility is to our home community, but we want the gospel for the world! We want to be faithful and faith-filled: prudent and courageous as good stewards of the gospel.

Counting the Cost

This could involve sending up to 10% of our congregation, but no more than two current elders. Some could commit to help for a certain amount of time before returning to EFCMM. It would require a lot of work on the part of the core team—more than just regular attendance. It would involve a financial investment by EFCMM in helping to support a planting pastor. There is always the risk that the plant may not become viable.

Eyes on the Prize

Church planting helps reach the lost and renew the church (its "mother" and others). Studies have shown that new churches are often the most effective at reaching the lost. New believers are less likely to leave their home community to go to church elsewhere. It is most natural for established believers to worship in, serve, and reach their own community. Planting challenges the sending church to utilize more people and develop more leaders. Planting creates room for growth in the sending church.

Local Context

The Sterling / Rock Falls area is not devoid of the gospel, but more solid churches are needed. It is the largest population area in northwest Illinois that does not have an EFCA church. We are poised to be a strategic partner in seeing a church planted there.

Healthy Enough to Plant

As stated above, we are in a period of attendance growth and financial strength. We have gained some committed and gifted believers in recent years. Reinvesting in a plant may be the best way to maximize these gifts for the kingdom. While it's possible to overextend ourselves, this could be the better way to "preserve" EFCMM.

We need your prayer and welcome your input. As this year continues, we plan to bring you further information and perhaps a proposal for your approval.