

From the...

CHURCH PLANTING CENTER

March 2007

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The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary



NORTH AMERICAN
MISSION BOARD

In This Issue

- **Church Planter Profile:**
Dave Merrifield
- **Focus Area:**
Las Vegas, NV
- Some resources you may find helpful on the journey...
- Did you know this about NAMB?

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A Word from the Director

I am amazed how quickly the common cold and viruses spread from person-to-person. If someone in my household is sick today, someone else will usually become ill a few days later. The week prior to last Christmas was one of those times when it seemed like the plague had struck my family. Within a week, four of the five Paynes became ill. Since we were staying with other relatives for the holiday, this illness spread to their households as well.

Though we usually do not associate the gospel with a virus, there is something about how a virus spreads from person-to-person that is worth our reflection. It travels with natural contact, affects anyone regardless of his or her social status, and it travels quickly, spreading exponentially. In this light, I cannot help but think of the Apostle Paul's work in Ephesus. After two years of work in the city, "all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10, NASB). Can we see such a rapid and simple transmission of the gospel across North America and throughout the world today? I believe so.

In this month's newsletter, we hear from Dave Merrifield who also believes that such work is possible. Dave and his wife Monica were involved in planting churches on a college campus and a military base with the strategy to reach, disciple, model, and send out students and personnel to plant simple expressions of the Body of Christ across the world. We also turn our attention to the great need for new churches in Las Vegas, Nevada. I visited this city a couple of years ago, and there is much need for missionary work there. If you believe the Lord may be calling you to this city, contact the Church Planting Center so we can talk.

Until next month...

Take care,
J. D.

Church Planter Profile: Dave Merrifield

Names of family members

Monica and daughter Makana

Location

Tucson, Arizona

When did you graduate from Southern?

Both Monica and I graduated from Southern in December 2004.



Dave with his adopted daughter, Makana

Find out about church planting opportunities in North America: Fellowship events are FREE!

March 21

BRUNCH FELLOWSHIP

Hosted by Gary Irby &

The Puget Sound Baptist Association of Seattle, Washington

Where: The Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary

Legacy Center 310

When: 10:00am-11:00am

RSVP by 3/14

Cost: FREE!

April 20

LUNCH FELLOWSHIP

Hosted by Gary Smith &

The Canadian Convention

of Southern Baptists

Where: The Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary

Legacy Center 310

When: 11:30am-12:30pm

RSVP by 4/12

Cost: FREE!

April 27

BRUNCH FELLOWSHIP

Hosted by Guy Stevens &

Cleveland Hope

Where: The Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary

Legacy Center 310

When: 10:00am-11:00am

RSVP by 4/12

Cost: FREE!

RSVP:

Church Planting Center

N167

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What are your primary responsibilities in your ministry?

Monica and I were appointed as North American Mission Board church planters through the Nehemiah Project in 2004 and planted Crossroads to the Nations in Louisville, a church whose vision and mission is reaching, training, and the sending of international students as church planters across the globe. As a church planter, I see my primary responsibility to be in the area of disciple making.

Please briefly describe your ministry.

Currently, Crossroads to the Nations has sent Monica and I out to plant churches in the military context. We are working primarily with young men and women who are typically 18-24 years in age, experiencing their first time away from home, and know they will deploy around the globe in support of the Global War on Terror. I have permission from the base to meet with all the new young airmen to begin building relationships. Many of these airmen then are able to get connected to the new church plant called "The Ground Floor," which meets on the ground floor of a day-room in the middle of the dorm complex on base. Currently, we gather in six Bible study/community groups and hold corporate worship each week. We are raising up airmen to make disciples who will make disciples. In the next several months, I will be sent out by Crossroads to the Nations and The Ground Floor to begin a new work in the Middle East.

How did your church planting training at Southern help you in preparation for your work on the field?

The church planting training I received at Southern was academically focused, practical in application, and beneficial for laying the groundwork for a lifetime of church planting and making disciples. The training went beyond the classroom into hands-on experience through the valuable internships and networking with others who had a similar passion.

What is the greatest blessing received since you have been involved in church planting?

The greatest blessing I have received since being involved in church planting has been seeing God change lives, starting with mine. On this journey, God has allowed me the grace to cross paths with many international students and military personnel who have caught the vision of church planting. I have had the opportunity to see God at work in the lives of people that will go around the globe seeking to make Christ's name known and savored.

What advice would you give to those who are wondering if God is calling them to be involved in church planting?

If you are wondering if God is calling you to be involved in church planting, I would say: pray, fast, and surround yourself with other people who are passionate about making disciples. Consistently put yourself in places where people gather and ask God to break your heart for their souls. Step out in faith, believing that God will change hearts and lives and remember Jesus' words, "I will build my church." Consider how you can be connected with a church planter in the region. If you are near a seminary, take some church planting courses. If this is not convenient, there are some great resources online to help out at the NAMB website.

Future Training:

MARCH 16

RURAL CHURCH PLANTING: NO INSIGNIFICANT PLACES OR PEOPLES

Guest Speaker: Steve Neger
*Strategic Places Team Manager,
North American Mission Board*

Where: The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary
Legacy Center 310

When: 8:00am-1:00pm
Free Lunch!

Cost: FREE

RSVP by 3/8

APRIL 18

CHURCH PLANTING IN MULTI-HOUSING COMMUNITIES

Guest Speaker: Bob Burton
*Multi-housing and
Urban Church Planting,*

North American Mission Board
Where: The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary

North/South Galleries (Honeycutt
Campus Center)

When: 8:00am-1:00pm
Free Lunch!

Cost: FREE

RSVP by 4/12

MAY 1

CHURCH PLANTING FAMILY BANQUET

Childcare Provided

Guest Speakers:

George & Barbara Garner

Where: The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary
Heritage Hall

When: 6:00pm-8:00pm

Cost: FREE

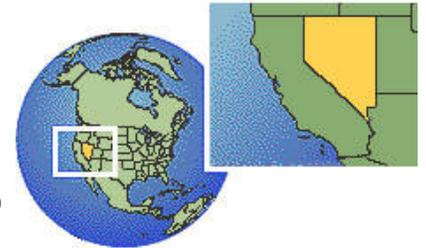
RSVP BY 4/25

Regarding church planting, what counsel would you give to those who are called to serve in established churches?

If you are called to serve in an established church, I would suggest that the Great Commission and God's heart for the nations be continually placed before the congregation as an integral part of the church's vision and mission and that these things be intertwined into everything the church is and does. In terms of church planting, I would then counsel this person to prayerfully put together church planting teams from within the congregation who are passionate about seeing God glorified. Provide training for them, consider them missionaries sent by the church, stay connected, network with them, and creatively support them as God leads.

Focus Area: Las Vegas, Nevada

- Known worldwide as "Sin City."
- Las Vegas has the most Alcoholics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous meetings per capita.
- It is estimated that only 9% of the residents of Nevada attend a "Christian" church each Sunday.
- Las Vegas is home to almost 2,000,000 people, with over 6000 new residents each month.
- 24.9% of the population is Hispanic.
- In 2006, there was one church for every 17,669 Anglos, 22,198 African Americans, and 22,017 Hispanics.
- 20.1% of the population is not affiliated with any religion.
- 35.7% of the population is Catholic.
- 17.3% of the population is Protestant.
- Southern Baptists worship in different languages each week including English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Filipino, Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Laotian, and Cambodian.
- In 2006, Southern Baptists grew by fourteen new congregations, with a present total of 67 churches and 40 mission congregations.
- The local Southern Baptist association's goals for 2007 include planting 20 mission congregations and 18 house churches.



For more information about serving in Las Vegas, contact the Church Planting Center.

502-897-4498, churchplanting@sbts.edu

NAMB Resource Link:

<http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/>

To View Previous Issues of the Church Planting Newsletter Visit:

http://www.sbts.edu/campus_life/Church_Planting_Center/Resources.aspx

“Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.”

2 Thessalonians 3:1 NASB

Resources for the Journey

Stuart Murray. *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (PA: Herald Press, 2001). Murray’s work is an attempt to offer a theological framework for church planting. In this book, the author argues for the importance of missionary contextualization and discusses the significance of ecclesiology. This is not a “how-to” book.

R. Stanton Norman. *The Baptist Way: Distinctives of a Baptist Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2005). Though this is not a book about church planting, it contains very important information for church planters. Norman’s work is an excellent overview of Baptist ecclesiology. This book is a must read for church planters.

<http://www.topfive.org/>

The Top Five website. This site offers the top five products, services, and ideas for church planters in various categories. This site is designed to save church planters time and provide organization in these areas.

<http://www.outreach.ca>

Outreach Canada is a Christian ministry specializing in church research, growth and planting, demographics, missions mobilization, and transitional ministry resources.

<http://www.cmaresources.org/>

The CMA Resources website. This site provides resources and articles from the Church Multiplication Associates.

Did you know this about NAMB?

- In 2006, there were 5153 North American Mission Board missionaries.
- In 2006, 1623 high school and college students participated in short term mission work resulting in 9041 gospel presentations and 677 professions of faith and 626 rededications.
- Click here to view a brief video about the North American Mission Board http://www.namb.net/site/c.9qKILUOzEpH/b.213011/k.F6C9/About_NAMB.htm