

Distinctively Distinct

CHURCH PLANT WISDOM » SEEING THE CITY WITH THE EYES OF GOD

AS THE ANGLICAN MISSION breaks new ground in cities across North America, common attributes and threads of distinction arise alongside contextual ministry among church plants in urban areas.

In the Spring of 2008, a demographic study made clear that the mission field of the future is the city. Fast forward eighteen months, and the Anglican Mission has over 79 new works in the pipeline, specifically located in urban areas. Three have launched opening services in the past few months, each drawing hundreds.

On Sunday, September 27, St. Paul's in Manhattan, New York, held their opening service after months of planning, prayer and preparation with a core team. **"We are seeing new people every week,"** reports the Rev. RJ Heijman. **"The challenge is getting to know those who come to the services and help them plug in without overwhelming them."**

RJ finds that Manhattan residents commonly work sixty plus hours a week and often retreat to country homes on the weekends. **"We have to manage our expectations about how much people are involved and realize that if someone comes to worship**

twice a month, that's great."

Bishop Todd Hunter reports the same set of circumstances at Holy Trinity in Costa Mesa, California, launched the same day as St. Paul's. **"I had forgotten that almost no one goes to church every week in Southern California,"** said Hunter **"and normally a new church plant adds programming, prayer**

meetings and Bible Studies to draw people in and connect them. Our challenge is to find ways to keep church simple and do discipleship in a rhythm that works for busy people, not adding to already overextended lives."

Social networking, office prayer groups and on-line communities are innovations in discipleship for church planters



The congregation sits in circular booths around the perimeter of the former restaurant where Restoration holds Sunday worship.

See what is going on with these congregations here: **Restoration Church** www.restorationchurchonline.com **St. Paul's Church** www.stpaulsnyc.org

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Shelly Miller



Restoration Church team leads worship for over 200 city dwellers on their opening day.



St. Paul's celebrates standing room only for their launch service in September.



Holy Trinity: Bishop Todd Hunter's congregation reaches out to a broad spectrum in Southern California.

in urban settings. **"We have to be willing to take risks and try new things to reach people,"** notes RJ. **"The key is finding the balance between consistency and innovation."**

Restoration Church in Addison, Texas, a suburb of Dallas, meets in a former restaurant and celebrated their opening in October. The Rev. Jed Roseberry believes the unconventional worship space sparks interest and helps people overcome preconceived ideas they have about church. His theory seems to be paying off – Restoration is attracting a significant number of the unchurched and dechurched. **"One of our visitors said he hadn't been in church in over 25 years,"** shares Jed. **"He had tried everything and didn't know where else to go. He keeps coming back."**

Each of these three urban church planters have returned to cities where they had previous connections, and therefore already had long term relationships built within these communities. Their core or launch teams are comprised of both old and new relationships.

"There is something to be said about loving where you are planting and having your eyes wide open to a city before you move there," shares RJ.

Based on understanding the culture of their respective cities, each planter has adopted a strategy that reaches and speaks the language of those in their individual communities. Each utilizes social networking through Facebook, Twitter and their church website as a primary and effective means of communication.

"We asked our leadership to post something about our new church on their personal Facebook accounts that included a link to the Restoration website," explains Jed's wife Stacy. **"We saw lots of hits on our website, and it was definitely one of the keys to having over 200 people at our church opening."**

Those attending our urban churches value relationships and substantive messages rooted in tradition. These qualities, along with the spirit of adventure, innovation and managed expectations, point to success for those whose focus is reaching people in the city for Jesus Christ.