

## FY18 Church Planting Report

This past year I had the privilege of accompanying three couples to the Converge Church Planter Assessment Center (AC). The AC is an intensive 4-day process in which candidates are assessed by an experienced team of church planters and movement leaders on their ministry plan, preaching, call to ministry, evangelism, and spiritual and relational health, among other things.

Jayson & Christi Wittrup attended the Dallas assessment last October in preparation for Faith Baptist Fellowship's ministry expansion into west Sioux Falls, SD. Stephen and Carol Christian attended the April AC in Detroit, while Chase and Rachel Hill attended the June AC in Seattle. Both the Christians and Hills are new to Converge and are each planting in Wichita, KS. All three couples received either a Recommend or Conditional Recommend and have met the prescribed conditions and are ready to go!

In November, we held our 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Church Planter Retreat at Ponca State Park in Nebraska. The 24-hour retreat was an opportunity for church planters to get to know each other better, rest, and encourage one another in the Lord. In February, Jim Hays (River Market Community Church, Kansas City, MO), Keith VenHuizen (Converge Heartland) and I traveled to Orlando for the Converge church planter conference in conjunction with the Exponential Conference. Exponential draws church planting leaders from all over the world and is billed as "the largest gathering of church planters on the planet." We all came away from the conferences challenged, encouraged, and inspired to be "Hero Makers" by developing and equipping others.

I have also spent the past year working on three different projects:

- The Converge Heartland Church Planter Expectations Agreement (completed) lays out what prospective planters can expect from their relationship with CH and what we expect from them in return. Stephen Christian and Chase Hill are the first ones to sign this new expectations agreement.
- CH Church Planting Systems (near completion) details how we will fund, recruit, assess, support, coach, train, and multiply church planters. Much of this is laid out in the expectations agreement.
- The Church Planter Residency (nearing implementation) is a 2-year leadership training program designed to give hands-on experience working with local churches, with personal coaching and competency-based training to equip emerging leaders to become successful church planters.

As we look to the future, we believe the best way to grow a vibrant, healthy church planting movement across the Heartland is by empowering and equipping regional LEAD Teams to discover, parent, and fund church plants in their own backyards. The mission is too large, the needs are too great, and the stakes are too high for anyone of us to do it alone. We truly are better together.

Together in Christ on mission,

Jeff Gauss

Director of Church Planting, Converge Heartland