

**Prospectus for a
Missional Church Network**



By The Rev. Gerry Schnackenberg

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Rector, Epiphany Anglican Fellowship

Background

In 1995 after a frustrating vestry meeting in an Episcopal church in Denver, God kept me awake all night thinking about a different kind of church model that would be less likely to burn out its priest or pastor. He unfolded a vision of a kind of multiple but connected “house church” network.

When I left the Episcopal Church to start an AMiA congregation The Light of Christ in Denver, much of the original “attraction church” model followed along, but when I was released from that congregation in 2002 to go and start new churches along the northern Front Range of Colorado, I was able to simply come before God and ask “what would you like me to do?”. I was given the opportunity to develop and expand the vision of a “house church” network, and put it into practice.

As a result, a form of church has been emerging that is very exciting and new. It could be called a Missional Church Network. In some respects, this model is similar to existing multi-site churches, except that we have no real “mother” church.

Epiphany Anglican Fellowship – a Missional Church Network

Epiphany Anglican Fellowship exists as multiple small groups that meet throughout the week in many different locations. We have four “congregations” or “clusters” that gather for Sunday worship each week and a new emerging congregation in the Boulder/Niwot area. Each congregation has multiple opportunities for its members to meet during the week in homes, coffee shops or anywhere.

Currently, our five congregations are as follows: Longmontt worships at 8:30 led by site pastor and Priest Gerry Schnackenberg; Broomfield worships at 10:15 led by site pastor and Deacon Chris Bollegar and Erie also led by site pastor and Deacon Chris Bollegar worships at 4:00 PM.. Lakewood worships at 10:00 Am led by site pastor and Priest Lee Martin, and North Boulder worships at 5:30 PM and is lead by site Pastor, Deacon Dick Miller.

The Priests / Deacons periodically rotate to visit all the congregations, and we have gathered together as one body at Easter and for visits from the bishop.

In 2007 we spun off a new Church, Christ Our Hope in Fort Collins that will in turn be starting new congregations in the north of the Front Range of Colorado. We highly value our

Lord's promise: "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matt. 18:20)

Our MISSION is "To know Jesus and to make Him known in the context of authentic community."

Our VISION– What's with the Aspen Grove?

Our vision is to be like an aspen grove. Aspens are a community of free-standing trees with an interdependent root system. This symbolizes our organic, multiplying Christian fellowships, all rooted in Jesus as the center of our life and mission, tying together small groups and congregations throughout Colorado. There really is no limit to the distance a Missional Church Network can go. We value our ancient traditions and historic faith while reaching out to love and serve those who are lost and hurting.

Our "DNA"

D – *Divine Living*: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind [and strength]." (Matt. 22:37). Jesus is the Lord of my life. I am filled with the Holy Spirit. Reflected in developing a personal life of prayer, worship and walking with the Lord.

N – *Nurturing Relationships*: "Love your neighbor as yourself," and "...love one another as I have loved you." (Matt. 22:38; John 15:12). I will be open with and accountable to others in leadership. Expresses itself by living in authentic Christian community through small groups and friendships.

A – *Apostolic Mission*: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19-20). I am committed to being a missionary. Expresses itself by involvement in "middle space" events, engaging in spiritual conversations with others, and participating in outreach and evangelistic ministries.

Our Core Beliefs

1. That Jesus is Lord of our lives and the Head of the Church;
2. That the solemn declarations of the AMiA and historic teachings of the Anglican Church are foundational for us;
3. That we are a people on mission to fulfill the first commandment (Matt. 22:37), the second commandment (Matt. 22:39) and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18:20).
4. That small is beautiful—we will honor and value small Eucharistic Fellowships and seek to start new ones in adjacent communities whenever the Lord prompts us too.
5. That we will seek to create in every gathering from two to many an "authentic Christian community".

OUR CORE VALUES:

PRAYING--- Always, in the beginning, in the middle and at the end.

BEING TRANSFORMED--- Allowing Jesus to transform us and the world.

BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT --- The Holy Spirit is our strength and our guide, revealing Jesus.

BEING IN COMMUNITY--- We will discover God within our spiritual community.

CHILDREN ARE HIGHLY VALUED--- God communicates with and through children.

GIVING--- God gave Himself for us and inspires us to give ourselves for others.

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION---Through Holy Communion we discover and receive grace.

BEING PEOPLE OF THE WORD--- Our standard containing all that is necessary for salvation.

Organization and Leadership

While I serve as rector of the entire Fellowship, and hold final authority and responsibility for carrying the vision and seeing that all we do meets God's outline for us, I have five wonderful, gifted clergymen, a youth pastor and a Chaplain / Spiritual Director, assisting me and living in communities fifteen to forty-five minutes away. Also, we have numerous awesome lay leaders who carry out various ministries throughout the week. There is little structure or "order" to the management of these ministers or ministries. However there is close community with those in leadership.

Organizationally we rely heavily upon living out our core beliefs in the following ways.

1. The Senior Priest (Rector) meets monthly with clusters of the assisting Priests/Deacons and leaders for prayer, fellowship, sharing, encouragement, strategizing and laughter! We meeting for about four hours each month in two locations – one in the North with Christ Our Hope and St. Peter's (with Uganda), and one in the middle for those working with Longmont, Erie, Broomfield, North Boulder and Lakewood. We usually begin with Morning Prayer and personal prayer, followed by an informal agenda of sharing all God is doing among the people we serve, challenges in our ministries, and discussing ways of seeking those we hope to reach. Father Gerry also meets on occasion with Father Tom Johnston of Resurrection in Casper, Wyoming, and with Dwayne Borgstrand a Deacon/ in Cody, Wyoming.
2. Our "Epiphany Leadership Team" began with one very gifted man who met with Father Gerry weekly. He remains a kind of COO, and has been joined by three other laymen and our bookkeeper. These leaders meet with Fr. Gerry to oversee the budget

and finances, insurance, connection with the larger AMiA (regional and national) vision and some strategic planning.

3. Each congregation also has a “leadership team” made up of congregants selected by the Site Pastor. At first we had just one leadership team representing all the zones, but it grew to about 30 people and that was too many. So in the last months of 2005 we began to form three leadership teams, one for each zone. Now in 2009 we have a Leadership team for each site and also have an “Uber” team called our “Administrative Team” with a rep and the site pastor from each congregation. We will work alongside the leadership team, especially in the areas of vision and strategy.
4. Currently, all of our bookkeeping is managed by an extraordinarily gifted volunteer lay woman. All the offerings from all five congregations come to her each week, and she deposits the money in one common account, from which all bills are paid: rent for the five sites for Sunday worship, salaries of the priests, pension, insurance, etc. We always have two people from different households count the money at each service. Both the administrator and I can access the bookkeeper’s records online at any time.
5. We have a part time paid Youth Leader who works faithfully to lead a youth meeting every other week and to lead outings and a mission trip each year. They also are thinking creatively about how to support those youth who live in the more distant congregations.

Life Groups

The heart of our life groups are the Compline prayer groups, where people gather during the week to worship and pray. Added to the traditional Compline service are intercessory prayers for every person in the group, and those whom God lays on our hearts. We pray by name for those the Lord is bringing to us who are unchurched or searching, for leaders, for the missionaries we support, etc. All members of the Fellowship are encouraged to belong to at least one small group. Many belong to two.

We have several “mens” groups that meet weekly and several “womens” groups that meet weekly. They all have the elements of sharing, prayer for one another, Bible reading and prayer for “lost” and searching friends.

Some of these groups are of two or three and are Life Transformation Groups that intend to multiply as soon as four people are present. Others are ongoing fellowships.

Finally we have Life Groups of anywhere from five to eighteen adults that meet once a week or every other week again for fellowship, prayer for one another, Bible sharing and some form of outreach. We have at least six of these.

Levels of Belonging

1. *Sojourners I*: Seekers, people who are exploring faith, and enjoying the company of others in small groups or attending worship at Epiphany Anglican Fellowship.

2. *Sojourners II*: Seekers who are exploring a relationship with God through Jesus, beginning to read the Bible, beginning to pray, considering making a commitment to accepting Jesus' salvation and entering into a personal relationship with Jesus as their Lord.
3. *Members*: Those who:
 - a. Have accepted Jesus as their savior and committed to follow Him as their Lord in all of life;
 - b. Have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and in water;
 - c. Are committed to regular Bible reading and prayer;
 - d. Are committed to attending church or cell/care group weekly;
 - e. Receive Holy Communion regularly;
 - f. Give financially to Epiphany Anglican Fellowship.
4. *Confirmed Members*: Those who fulfill all the commitments of members, plus:
 - a. Are in full agreement with the 39 Articles of the Faith;
 - b. Are in full agreement with the Solemn Declarations of the Anglican Mission in America;
 - c. Are in agreement with the Epiphany Anglican Fellowship vision, mission, core beliefs, "DNA" and strategy;
 - d. Are confirmed or received (if they have been confirmed in another tradition).
5. *Leaders*: All of the above for members, encouraged to become confirmed members, plus:
 - a. Are part of a leadership training group/mentoring relationship;
 - b. Lead a small group or are an apprentice to lead one, or leading a ministry in the Church;
 - c. Give at least a tithe (10%) of total income to Epiphany Anglican Fellowship
 - d. Live in fullness/release of the Holy Spirit, discovering, developing and deploying the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
6. *Ordained Deacons*: all of the above, plus:
 - a. Does not need to be a leader of a small group, but must connect the church to the world in some way and the world to the church. Examples: Feed the poor, clothe the naked, house the homeless, minister to the sick, etc., and help the church to do so as well.
 - b. Must hear the call in the context of the body. A discernment group from Epiphany will meet with and hear the call with the candidate.
 - c. Must complete whatever training is required by the AMiA and be approved by the National Discernment and Network Discernment teams.
 - d. Must be approved by the Bishop of Epiphany.
7. *Ordained Priests*: all of the above, plus:

- a. Be a leader of a group that multiplies (making disciples who make disciples) and must have led at least one person to faith in Christ in his lifetime (preferably multiple persons).

Growth

We began with six adults and two children in December, 2002. Now, six years later, we have approximately 230 members, five “congregations” averaging from 20 to 70 in attendance on Sundays, with 15 small groups: eight home fellowships, five Bible study groups, two “Compline” prayer groups, two men’s groups, and two women’s groups. And we have “birthed out” a new Church, Christ Our Hope in Fort Collins that is averaging almost 85 a Sunday and has been financially self supporting from the beginning.

Outreach

From the beginning we have sought to give generously to God’s work outside Epiphany. We embraced and have been faithful in giving a tithe to the AMiA, and also support five missionary families with prayer and money and two missionaries with prayer but no money. In addition we support Voice of the Martyrs and several Christian para church organizations with money and prayer,

In Closing

One final comment: prayer is the heart and power of Epiphany Anglican Fellowship. We seek in all ways to glorify God and to draw strength from him in prayer. Without the centrality of prayer, none of this could have happened.

Helpful Books and Resources

The Shaping of Things to Come, by Alen Hirsch and Michael Frost

The Organic Church, by Neil Cole

The Celtic Way of Evangelism, by George C. Hunter (Abingdon)

Lost in America, by Tom Clegg/Warren Bird (Group Publisher)

The Connecting Church, by Randy Freeze (Zondervan)

The Soul of Celtic Spirituality in the Lives of Its Saints, by Michael Mitton, (Twenty-Third Publications)

www.house2house.tv (Greenhouse church starting movement of “organic” church planting and small groups)

www.missio.us or www.organicchurchplanting.org

Church Multiplication Associates (CMA helps teach the fundamentals of church planting in an organic fashion.

ADDENDUM

We embrace much of what is written below!

My Next Church

by Kent C. Williamson

My next church will not look much like my current one at all, and most likely, not like yours either. It will not look like the mega-church I attended in the suburbs of Chicago, nor the "new" church I visited in Southern California, nor the Presbyterian church I was married in back in San Antonio, nor the Christian & Missionary Alliance Church I loved so much on the Virginia coast, nor the little struggling Baptist Church I joined in upstate Wisconsin, nor the home church a dear friend of mine invited me to in his home state, nor the Bible Church that holds such a dear place in my heart from my youth in El Paso. No, I imagine it will not look like any of these at all. As a matter of fact it may more closely resemble the non-organized, highly persecuted, low-key, huge impact church in China I recently witnessed first hand than any Main Street, Maple Street, side street, back street, high school gymnasium, or strip mall church that exists today in America.

My next church probably will not have a building (nor a building fund, a building program, or any building aspirations). This will save enormous resources and of course will eliminate any potential arguments over carpet color or pews versus theatre seating, but more so it will mark an enormous shift in ideology. No longer will the church be so inwardly, self-centered in it's focus. No longer will the church be isolated from the community it claims to serve. No longer will the church be seen as a refuge from the woes and worries of the world... instead by the power of the Holy Spirit we will face them head-on.

My next church will not be about Sundays and Wednesday nights. Imagine if Christ had compartmentalized his life and ministry in the way the church of today does. His example was a 24/7 one, which by the way, is what our current post-modern culture begs for. The church has no set hours. If ministry waits for the doors of the church to open, ministry opportunities will be missed. There will be more living and breathing the Gospel and as a result more impact on the communities in which we live. My next church will not be about church membership.

The goal will not be for more people to walk our aisle, fill our pews, or join our club. The focus will not be on more numbers or others joining us in our sanctuary from the world. Instead it will be about people called by the Spirit of God to join along side one another in action and deed, ministering to a broken people in a critical time. Please do not confuse this with a works-based faith. It is not, but as James points out, a faith without works is dead. And I will add that a self-serving faith, one that is only about our own "spiritual growth" (the trademark of the modern church), is equally as dead.

My next church will not be about "worship services". It will not emphasize corporate worship over life worship. It will not relegate worship to a few minutes of singing jammed in-between announcements and a sermon. It will not negate the power and beauty of corporate worship, but it will focus on an individual's life as worship. It will enable believers to more fully understand that using our gifts and living our lives is just as much worship as singing can be.

Our vocations will become instruments on which we play the hymns of my next church. Whether we are filling prescriptions, fixing mufflers, home-schooling five children, preparing tax forms, or making motion pictures, the attitudes of our hearts will be worshipful, not a worship of ourselves and our talents, but a worship of God for the talents He has given us and the work he performed through his Son on the cross.

My next church will not be about more church programs. Actually it will be the opposite. It will be about less church programs. And in doing less it will do less better. It will not be about more programs for the youth and children's ministry. It will not be about more adult class options on Sunday nights. It will not be about adding a second, third, contemporary, or alternative service into the mix.

The one thing my next church will be intentional about is discipleship. Whether you are 6 or 60 you will be challenged towards becoming a better disciple of Christ.

My next church will not focus on a denominational title. I'm confident outsiders will attempt to label it this or that, but in its mission and purpose it will be about putting aside labels. It will be about looking at the heart of the individual rather than his pre-given denominational identifier. Will it be void of all doctrine? No, it will be doctrinally sound in regards to the core message of the gospel. But it will discourage argument for arguments sake over the finer points of theology that have divided so many for so long.

My next church will meet in the community. It may gather at a coffee house, a restaurant, or a neighbors yard today, and a playground, a theatre, or a parking lot next time, but the focus will not be on meeting to cloister ourselves from the world. Instead we will meet to spur one another on toward action. And our main action will be, 'loving our neighbor as ourselves.' In lieu of a building, our prayer closets will become our sanctuaries where power will be given to us to enter and engage the world according to God's purposes.

My next church will actively engage the culture. It will not wait patiently for seekers or the lost to wander through its doors. No, instead it will prayerfully seek them. It will not abandon the arts, but instead will actively pursue them, both in creating them and experiencing them. It will attempt to live culturally relevant lives, not to be seen by the world around us hip or in, but in an attempt to become all things to all men so that more may come to know Him.

Finally and probably most importantly, my next church will be about the great commission and the greatest commandments. It will actively pursue making disciples (not merely converts) of all men. It will actively be about loving our neighbor as ourselves. And it will actively attempt to love the Lord our God with all our heart soul and strength. The message of my next church will not change, but its methods will. And as a result of these actions my next church will need to be more prepared for persecution. Like our brothers and sisters in China, we will need to be prepared for anything and everything that may come our way. But imagine the impact of the church on our culture if the resources spent making "church" happen were instead spent on reaching out to the community. My next church is not for the

faint of heart and it is definitely not for the weak of faith either. It is not for those who sit comfortably in the pews. It is not for those who are content with the way things are, but it is ready for me... or more so, I'm ready for it.

(Kent is an owner of Paladin Pictures, Inc., a film and video production company dedicated to the production, distribution and promotion of family-friendly, morally strong entertainment and educational media. He lives with his wife and five children along the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.)

Goals and Objectives for 2009

- 1) Continue to have vital, vibrant worship in the five congregations Sunday gatherings
- 2) Grow from the present 170 attending on Sunday to 200 attending on Sunday
- 3) Grow from the present 5 Sunday congregations to 6 Sunday congregations
- 4) Grow from the present 15 small groups to 18 small groups
- 5) Grow from the present contributions of about \$300,000.00 by members to \$340,000.00.
- 6) Develop a path for training Lay Leaders or Catechists.