



MNA Church Planter Assessment Policy on Evangelism

Every teaching elder in the PCA is called to be an evangelist. Biblical references abundantly refer to all Christians as ambassadors of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:17-21), as those who are commissioned to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-20).

The statement that is nearly a cliché is statistically true, “People come to Christ more through new church plants than they do through established churches.” But fruitful evangelism does not occur through every mission church. While only God can give the increase, it is the people of the mission church who plant and water, trusting God to bring in a great harvest (I Corinthians 3:6).

The mission church becomes effective in evangelism in the same way as the church becomes effective in any other ministry. The church planter leads in ministry. He sets the example by making evangelism a part of his regular practice. He trains mission church members in evangelism. He prays for the lost and calls his people to pray for the lost. He seeks every opportunity to proclaim the Gospel in preaching and in personal conversations, and he does everything possible to facilitate the proclamation of Christ through His flock. He calls people to come to Christ in his preaching. He calls people to come to Christ in his personal conversations, and he encourages his people to do the same.

MNA Church Planter Assessment includes assessment of the candidate’s experience, giftedness and skills in evangelism as a part of his overall qualification for church planting. The content below serves as a guide in this assessment. The first section includes selections from the *Book of Church Order (BCO)* that affirm the gathering of the lost as a hallmark of the Church and the role of evangelist as the calling of every teaching elder. The second section is a paper by Church Planter and Pastor Tom Wood. While not everyone is expected to articulate his calling to evangelism in exactly the same manner as this testimony, MNA uses this personal testimony as a strong example and guide for the church planter in his giftedness and practice of evangelism.

Section 1

PCA Book of Church Order – Part I – Form of Government (selected paragraphs)

Chapter 1 – The Doctrine of Church Government (selected paragraphs):

1-2. The Church which the Lord Jesus Christ has erected in this world for the gathering and perfecting of the saints is His visible kingdom of grace, and is one and the same in all ages.

1-3. The members of this visible Church catholic are all the persons in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and promise submission to His laws.

Chapter 8 – The Elder (selected portions):

8-3. It belongs to those in the office of elder... [to] set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples.

8-5. When a man is called to labor as a teaching elder, it belongs to his order, in addition to those functions he shares with all other elders, to feed the flock by reading, expounding and preaching the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador. As he bears glad tidings of salvation to the ignorant and perishing, he is termed evangelist. As he stands to proclaim the Gospel, he is termed preacher. As he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God.

Section 2

The Church Planter Evangelist: An Assessor's Evaluation and Debrief

Word Association

I'd like you to play a word association game with me. When I say the word, "NFL linebacker", what image comes to mind?

A lot of people think of a guy with a dirty, muddy jersey, maybe bloodied up some, large muscles etc.

Ok, now when I say, "Waffle House Waitress", what picture comes to mind? How about a Farmer? Or an Investment Banker? How about a surfer? Doctor? Rock Star?

Now, when I say the word "Evangelist" what immediately comes to mind?

Most people respond, "Billy Graham". Others though see a rather slick dude in white shoes waving a Bible, yelling and sweating a lot; or someone who does not have any social awareness about appropriate lines of relationship and is regularly offensive toward others.

I find that one of the reasons most of our church planter candidates have a dim view of being an evangelist is because of the unhealthy picture they have of an evangelist. Who wants to be a weirdo? We need a new picture. Why? Because nothing will be more daunting in your work as a church planter than being an evangelist. You have been "sent" as a missionary to reach lost people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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There are other reasons: namely fear and pride. Fear because of the cultural consensus that matters of faith and religion are private and not are to be discussed or talked about. Pride, because we want to be liked, respected and accepted by others, both professionally and personally.

The Call to Plant a Church

I do not want to detract from the high calling and valuable station of the pastor/teacher or pastor/shepherd, so please do not misunderstand—but the call to plant a church is a missionary calling to be an evangelist. Some Churches specifically identify the church planter as an “Evangelist”, not “Church planter” or “Organizing pastor”.

We can say that the primary function of a church planter is to evangelize lost people with the gospel--that “Christ died for sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” and those who turn away from self saving forms of trying to right their broken and sinful lives and believe the historically True Gospel, will be reconciled to God. Evangelists have confidence in the gospel.

All Christians and all pastors are commanded to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have (I Peter 3:15).

However, “The evangelizer, motivated by the gospel is able to make friendships easily, build trust and gather people. He has a well-developed skill in reading people’s reactions and knows ‘when’ and ‘how’ to guide conversations to talk about issues of faith and substance with natural ease. He anticipates a person’s objections to the gospel and handles these with grace.

“When appropriate, the evangelizer is able to present a sufficiently full outline of the gospel so that an awakened person can believe and trust Christ alone for salvation through faith in Christ.” (Dr. Allen Thompson, International Church Planting Center)

The USA/Canada is the third largest un-churched people group in the world. It is estimated there are over 225 million unchurched people in North America. Leadership Network suggests there are only about 58 million protestant evangelicals in the USA. We are in throes of moral, spiritual and cultural decline. Church attendance is declining.

A recent USA Today (3/9/11) article began, “The percentage of people who call themselves in some way Christian has dropped more than 11% in a generation. The faithful have scattered out of their traditional bases”. The report concludes, “So many Americans claim no religion at all (15%, up from 8% in 1990), that this category now outranks every other major U.S. religious group except Catholics and Baptists. In a nation that has long been mostly Christian, ‘the challenge to Christianity ... does not come from other religions but from a rejection of all forms of organized religion.”

The call to Church Planting is a call to go to a mission field of people that do not know God. It is not a call to go and care for the ninety-nine sheep already in the fold! What is your calling?

Distinctives of the Church Planter Evangelist

- 1. A Strong desire to “win” (kerdeso= a term used in financial terms of gain) lost people to Christ and rightly restored back to God. (I Cor. 9:20)**

Evangelists see the broken world around them; men and women living in slavery to their addictions, apart from God, on a path to certain death and are moved by it. Like Jesus, *“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”* (Matthew 9:36)

They sing, *“Oh Lord, this world is falling apart, Dying for love from a broken heart, Here am I send me, though there’s really not that much I can do, What I have seems so small, but I want to give it all to you”* (Keith Green)

They are motivated by the gospel of grace, freely given them. Like Paul, they say: *“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”* (I Cor. 9:20-22)

- 2. God uses them to “persuade” lost people to repent and believe the gospel.**

“As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ, he said.” (Acts 17:1-3)

“After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 18:1-4)

Church Planting Evangelists work to persuade lost people to believe the gospel. The word “persuade” (peiqo= to induce one by words to believe or to make friends of, to win one’s favor) involves using words, not just your lifestyle or your character. Paul was a church planter—and he went to each city and tried to get his hearers to believe the gospel; The Story; the Good News of Jesus.

It is not enough for the Church Planting Evangelist to try to make friends and ‘show them’ what a gospel life looks like. A Church Planting Evangelist uses words, in the power of the Holy Spirit no doubt, to try to persuade people to come to faith in Christ.

3. God brings about fruitfulness in their evangelism.

“But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized.... Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.” (Acts 8:12, 35)

“They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples.” (Acts 14:21)

“One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home... The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.” (Acts 16:15-16, 34)

“Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.” (Acts 18:8)

Church Planting Evangelists are people God is using to see others come to saving faith. They are not simply people who are hanging out and befriending lost people—or having them in their home, as good as that is. God is pleased to use Church Planting Evangelists to see people believe in the gospel, and be baptized, coming into the church community as disciples of Jesus.

4. Have a love for non-believing people.

“And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating and drinking with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ And when Jesus heard it he said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners.’” (Mark 2:15-17)

“The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds...” (Matthew 11:19)

Church Planting Evangelists are not thinking about planting a preaching station for themselves. Church

Planting Evangelists spend between 25-30% of their time with non-churched people. They are not afraid of going to places where un-churched people hang out. As a Church Planter, you generally don't have a church facility anyway. You have to go out and engage non-believers on their turf.

5. Willing to “lay down” their lives to see lost people come to saving faith in Christ.

“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel.” (Romans 9:1-4)

“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Cor. 9:20-22)

Paul said if it were possible he'd give up his own salvation to see his countrymen come to salvation.

Paul lists the salvation of others as his first reason for his willingness to relinquish his rights as a free man in Christ.

6. Intentionally and regularly prays to God for lost people and for Him to provide them with open doors of opportunity, because they know it's a spiritual work.

“Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.” (Romans 10:1)

“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ.” (Colossians 4:3)

Church Planting Evangelists ask God to save others. They also enlist the prayers of others to assist them in evangelizing others with the gospel.

7. Humble boldness in “telling” people about Jesus Christ and inviting them to turn by faith to Him for salvation.

“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” (Acts 4:29-31)

“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word

wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.” (Acts 8:4-5)

“But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” (Acts 16:28-31)

Church Planting Evangelists are people who are loving, yet bold.

8. Intentionally and regularly goes to where non-believers live, work and play in order to diagnose and expose their cultural, spiritual and personal idols, and then engage them with Gospel of Christ.

“So that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else’s territory.” (2 Corinthians 10:9)

“So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there...Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.” (Acts 17:17-23)

Church Planting Evangelists know they are being sent by God. They live with a profound sense of mission.

9. Does the work of an Evangelist.

“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:5)

Their lives are a gospel. It’s not simply a job or title or role. They do the work as evangelists as a way of life. It might be for this season of life, but they are doing the work during this season.

10. Asks God to give him the gift of evangelism.

“Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers...” (Ephesians 4:11)

Church Planting Evangelists realize that if they do not have a gift of evangelism, they want to have it so they can be used to see others come to saving faith. They will have other gifts, usually some type of apostolic and preaching gifts, but they want those gifts to be accompanied with the gift of evangelism. You might not presently have the gift of evangelism, but the missionary work of planting will be more effective if God’s Spirit grants you this spiritual gift. God’s calling is God’s enabling.

11. Creates an evangelistic culture in the new church.

Evangelists plant churches that form natural pathways for inviting their non-believing neighbors to 'belong' before they 'believe', so they can experience the transformed lives of Christians. The invisible God is made visible in part by the way the gospel is lived out in the community of Christians. The church also is on mission in the community, city or context by being outwardly focused—it is evaluated on its 'sentness'.

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love for one another."
(John 13:35)

12. Preaches the gospel in every sermon.

"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." (I Corinthians 15:1-4)

He preaches in a way that is evangelistic – faithfully proclaims Jesus Christ and him crucified, meaningfully engages lost people as well as believers, and invites/exhorts people to repentance and faith. He understands that the gospel is the power of God to save and allows the gospel to do its work!

13. Disciples new believers to be evangelists in their own spheres of influence.

"As you are going, make disciples...baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20)

Mission is part of true discipleship. New disciples learn to be hospitable, to embody Christ in the marketplace and 'tell' the Gospel story to lost friends, relatives and neighbors.

Make Disciples and You Will Likely Plant a Church

If you go into church planting with an aim to evangelize in such a way as to "make disciples", baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded, you will likely grow a church. Converts (disciples) need a church and that is what you are baptizing them into, the visible church.

However, there is no guarantee that if you plant a church you will make disciples. In fact most of the time we do not see the new work be a disciple making church starting, but rather as a gathering place for already church people. Be a gatherer of others who want to evangelize, empowering them to reach other lost people in their spheres of relationships. Your vision of the new church must be to have a community of believers missionally engaged in the city.

An Urgent Call to Re-evaluate Your Desire to Become a Church Planter

Be honest with yourself and your sense of calling. Is it to reach a lost city, or specific people group with the gospel, by engaging them with it through the words and deeds of the gospel? If you want to start a gospel movement in your city or community it will NOT happen by gathering a group of already church people who are unhappy with their current church, disconnected to their lost neighbors and then try to shepherd them into reaching lost people with the gospel. It rarely happens that way.

Past performance is a good indicator of future performance. If you have not seen people come to a saving faith in Christ, both through personal relationship and preaching, why do you think it will magically start happening once you are set apart as evangelist? What is your current track record in engaging lost people?

Has God gifted you in evangelism? You have to have more than a desire to move into a city location. Is God not only giving you a desire, but the gifts to do it? Are you “able to present a sufficiently full outline of the gospel so that an awakened person can believe and trust Christ alone for salvation through faith in Christ”? Are you willing to call yourself an evangelist?

My Confession. I am not a Church Planting Evangelist. I regularly pray for lost people I know or have met. I pray almost every day for opportunities to share Christ with others. I engage people with probing questions to see if they have any spiritual questions or curiosity...looking for open doors of opportunity.

But I am not a Church Planting Evangelist. I do not have that call now in my life. At the time I was planting, I saw many people come to saving faith through my personal interactions and through my preaching. My call was a Church Planting Evangelist.

Here is the point: If you think you are called to be a church planter, you will need a track record of faithful and fruitful evangelism. In other words, you will also see people believing the gospel because of your involvement with them. You need to care passionately for lost people and have a strong desire to see them meet Jesus. If you do not or have not seen God use you in this way, perhaps you should ask God to begin to work in and through you now as an evangelist and then perhaps you will be ready to be assessed as a Church Planting Evangelist.