NUTS & BOLTS

GETTING STARTED AS A CHURCH PLANTER

NUTS AND BOLTS

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INTRODUCTION

MATT ROGERS

Matt is the pastor of The Church at Cherrydale in Greenville, SC (www.tccherrydale.com). He is a graduate of Furman University (BA in psychology), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (MA in Counseling), and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (MDiv in pastoral ministry) and is currently completing his PhD from SEBTS in Applied Theology. Matt is the author of Aspire, Seven Arrows, and Mergers. This all pales in comparison to the joy Matt finds in being the husband of Sarah and the father of Corrie, Avery, Hudson, and Willa.

There are people for whom details come naturally. I am not one of them. In fact, many guys I know who have planted churches would not claim to be a master of the small things. They think in broad strokes, big visions, and five-year plans–not in spreadsheets, punch lists, and daily tasks.

Church planting, however, is filled with seemingly small projects. These projects, while appearing insignificant, can have massive ramifications for the realization of long-term vision.

This is particularly true in the early days of a church plant when you are developing a plan, raising money, and building a plant team. During this time you are likely to face an onslaught of projects that have to be completed–including naming the church, developing a mission statement, creating a logo and church website, and the list could go on and on. If you are not careful, you may be prone to overlook the critical nature of this work.

WHY DO THESE "NUTS AND BOLTS" DETAILS MATTER?

You are always communicating vision. Many of us like 45-minute sermons and lengthy presentations. These allow us to develop robust vision and communicate it clearly. Most people, however, will first see your vision in sentences, logos, and names. There you have a chance to tell people who your church is and why it exists for the first (and most important) time.

YOU CAN MAKE POOR DECISIONS.

Not all details are the same. There are bad church names, sloppy logos, and unclear mission statements. Throwing together something that lacks careful thought may backfire on you in the long run.

YOU WILL POINT TO THESE DETAILS OFTEN.

How many times are you likely to communicate your church mission statement? All the time. How many places will you see that church logo? Everywhere. Since you will see and say these details thousands of time in the first year or two you better make sure you like them and they represent you and the church you are called to plant.

YOU WILL HAVE TO LIVE WITH THESE DECISIONS FOR A WHILE.

You can't change your mind every two months in a church plant. People will be confused and lack trust in your clarity with decision-making. Sure, you may be able to change the church name at some point down the road but not three times in the first year. The same is true for you church logo, website, and mission statement. Better to take the time to develop something you like, then try to change course on critical details too quickly.

YOU HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO MODEL EXCELLENCE IN ALL THINGS.

Details present a church planter with a chance to model excellent work. We preach the sermon "Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31) and make application to the lawyer, schoolteacher, or janitor. "Your job, no matter how mundane, matters to God and presents an opportunity for worship," we say. Surely, then the same is true for you and I. We have a responsibility to do excellent work–not only when we are on the stage and in the public spotlight, but also when we are alone at our computers working on the details.

WRITING A MISSION STATEMENT

DEAN INSERRA

Dean Inserra is the founding and lead pastor of City Church in Tallahassee, FL. He is a graduate of Liberty University with a degree in Biblical Studies. Dean is a member of the advisory council for the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. He is married to Krissie and they have three children.

During the pre-launch phase of City Church, when we were just a core team, I remember we spent what seemed to be hours and hours together trying to develop our mission statement. It was stressful! Seven years later, here are some thoughts on developing a mission statement for your church:

MISSION STATEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT NOT AS IMPORTANT AS THEY ARE OFTEN HYPED.

Above all else, mission statements give churches clarity, and that is important. That clarity allows churches to continue to see that "THIS" is what we are about. Mission statements aren't so important that you have to spend hours trying to get the exact wording correct.

THE SHORTER THE STATEMENT, THE BETTER.

To quote Bill O'Reilly, "Keep it pithy." You want people to be able to memorize the statement, which leads me to my third point, which I think is the most important, concerning mission statements.

YOUR ENTIRE CHURCH NEEDS TO KNOW THE MISSION STATEMENT, NOT JUST YOUR STAFF.

A mission statement is often a phrase that is kept on the church website, that a few staff members can recite if they think about it long enough. If you are going to go through the trouble of having a mission statement, let it be something the entire church can tally around, that provides clarity and a sense of urgency about why you exist as a church in the first place.

At City Church our statement is "For the Gospel, For The City." Those words are plastered over everything City Church-related, and our members can say it in their sleep. We believe that theology is what fuels mission. Since we believe deeply in the exclusivity of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are committed to making it known in our city. It truly is that simple. We want to make disciples in Tallahassee, because we believe the gospel. Since we are for the Gospel, we want to reach a whole lot of people in our city.

Our Church is about a 100% blend of theology and mission. Not 50/50, but 100%. "For the Gospel, For the City," helps us stay focused on why we started in the first place. What is it your church needs to rally around and constantly have in front of them? Don't get caught in semantics, but rather, get caught up in what you do, and why you are doing it!

KEEP IT BIBLICAL.

The simplest task for a church planter should be choosing a mission statement.

Why? It has already been chosen for all local churches. We call it the Great Commission. It is interesting that "Sunday School answers" get a bad rap, when those very answers are usually true. When it comes to your mission statement, you need to refer back to the old Sunday School answers you now (for reasons unknown) make fun of in your small group. The answer is this: the Great Commission is your mission statement.

If it is something different, we probably don't need to be funding you as a new church start, because you aren't necessary. If it is something different, you are probably a church split pretending to be a plant, or you just really want to be in charge somewhere.

DO NOT COMPLICATE MATTERS.

The reason why the mission statement gets so complicated is because we are letting buzzwords from the Christian subculture influence us more than the Bible. In the Great Commission we see evangelism and discipleship linked together to give Christians their mission to fulfill as the Church. The more you get caught in semantics, the more likely you are to miss the point. As you develop the mission statement, refuse to allow people at the table to get off track about why you are planting in the first place. Yes, use your own wording that is appropriate and understandable for your context, but don't reinvent the wheel. Nobody in your town thinks your mission statement is as cool as you do, so don't try so hard to be trendy. Try hard to be focused, clear, and most of all, biblical.

If you started the church because of the Great Commission, creating your mission statement will only be stressful if you complicate matters. Reach the lost and equip disciples to make disciples. That's a mission worth giving one's life to make happen, by God's grace.

CHAPTER TWO

ARTICULATING YOUR VALUES

MATT ROGERS

Every church has values. These values may be actively taught or simply passively communicated by the members of the church. For example, a church may value tradition and make decisions based on what best protects or adheres to the tradition of the church. Or, the church may value teaching and create a robust ministry for instructing its members on a wide range of theological and doctrinal issues.

As a result of the Fall, no church drifts towards godly values. Sin causes churches to value the wrong things or value the right things in the wrong ways. If the pastor passively assumes that the church knows or pursues the right values, they may be dismayed to learn that their members have no clue what the church values or have false assumptions about those values.

Pastors must actively, aggressively, and clearly communicate the values by which they pray the church will be defined. Clear values aid the church in a number of critical ways.

VALUES CLARIFY WHAT IS IMPORTANT.

Values help the church point out the defining factors that should mark the church of the living God. To do so, these values must reflect the features

of the church defined in the New Testament. Pastors are not free to make up values based on their personal preferences. Rather, they should work to discern the pattern for the church found in the Bible and articulate the foremost features of their vision for the church to the people. Often these values include discipleship, evangelism, prayer, worship, or other aspects of the life of the church seen clearly in the Bible.

VALUES MAKE CLEAR WHAT IS DISTINCT.

Values also help to define the unique features of the contextualized mission of a particular local church. These features may reflect the unique location, age, or passions of the church. This is why a leader should work to do more than simply parrot the language used by other churches to define their values. It is important that each church work through the process of defining their values and then personalizing them for their context. For example, a church may value one-on-one discipleship, ministry to the least of these, or a liturgical worship style.

VALUES ALIGN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

The church's values aid the church in saying "This is what we are about!" Those entrusted with leadership and the mobilized membership of the church can be empowered to work towards the values defined by the church. For example, if a church values training future leaders then others know that goal should be a priority around which they should all pray and serve.

VALUES HELP THE CHURCH MAKE DECISIONS

Values help the church know where to prioritize the time, money, and manpower of the church. When budgetary or strategic decisions are required, the church leaders can point to the church's values as a determinative fac-

tor in making decisions. For example, a church may be approached about sponsoring an after-school reading program and choose to fund this ministry because they value mercy ministry to the inner city poor.

VALUES HELP UNITE A CHURCH PLANTING TEAM

The process of developing values may seen like an arduous process. Why not simply pick five prominent words and use them? The process of crafting values, writing them with specificity, and communicating them to the church will help clarify for the leaders the mission they are undertaking together. The work of writing values will serve as an invaluable tool for church planters and their teams to promote unity and mission.

Values are unavoidable. Healthy churches do the work to ensure their values are biblical, clear, and compelling in order to mobilize the church for meaningful mission in the world.

CRAFTING A CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

MATT ROGERS

Is there any less desirable task for a church planter than writing a Constitution and Bylaws? If you are like most of us, I'd imagine that this task rivals the annual process of filing taxes on the list of things you'd rather avoid. For many, this work seems like an antiquated byproduct of the traditional church that we'd prefer to discard altogether. Why would we want to spend time developing an organizing document outlining the way in which our church will operate that may be seen by only a handful of people?

The early days of church planting may feel like you are playing football with a group of fraternity brothers. You draw up plays in the dirt and run them as best you know how. If one play doesn't seem to work then you discard it and run another. This process is fun, fast-paced, and life giving.

Surely organizing principles and documents will merely slow this down and impede our progress. We've heard horror stories of churches embroiled in crisis and hamstrung from making the needed changes by their organizing documents. These fears may cause us to overcorrect and fail to develop important operating principles at an early stage in the life of the church. These documents, while time-consuming to create, can prove invaluable in the following situations:

WHEN THE CHURCH GROWS

The desired growth of the church will make it less likely that informal systems and structures can sustain the weight of equipping an increasingly diverse church. A Constitution and Bylaws can help orient the members and the leaders to the way in which the church is organized to accomplish its mission.

WHEN CONFLICT ARISES

The need for formal processes often manifest themselves in the face of conflict, which are inevitable in the life of a developing church. Conflict over leadership, philosophy, and decision-making can be clarified (though not eliminated) through a well-written Constitution and Bylaws. This is never truer than in the process of exercising church discipline – where a clear, objective written process will be vital to protecting the church and its leaders from some of the shrapnel that may result from this process.

WHEN LEADERS NEED TO BE APPOINTED (OR REMOVED)

A Constitution and Bylaws can also serve to explain the process by which leaders are chosen and appointed for roles within the church. Clarity in this pathway can protect from subjective processes that easily devolve into personality conflicts.

WHEN THE CHURCH UNDERGOES A TRANSITION

It's hard to think about the days when you, or another key leader, may transition out of the church. These transitions, while common, may prove fatal to the church if there is not a clear plan by which new leaders are appointed and the church moves forward.

WHEN THE CHURCH FACES DECLINE, MERGER, OR CLOSURE

Not all church plants will survive. Faced with impending closure, many churches go into scramble mode trying to determine what to do next. This often results in squandered resources that might otherwise be used for kingdom purposes. A good Constitution and Bylaws will define what will happen in the event these situations develop long before they may become a reality.

Here are a few quick pointers if you are considering writing such a document:

DON'T SAY TOO LITTLE.

Make sure the document is clear and outlines the major processes that need to be in place at the outset. Assumed process and unwritten policies will ultimately cause you and your church more harm than you expect.

DON'T SAY TOO MUCH.

Avoid sabotaging your long-term health by adding unnecessary details that will impede the agility of your church plant. Remember, you can always add details later as they become necessary, but you cannot easily remove details once they are in the document.

MODEL YOUR DOCUMENT AFTER A CHURCH THAT YOU RESPECT.

Find a like-minded church, with a thoughtful leader, who has carefully crafted a Constitution and Bylaws. Ask three or four churches to share their document and use it as scaffolding to build you own. Consider finding a church that is only one or two life-stages in front of yours in order to avoid replicating a document that has become increasingly complex over the years.

DESIGNING A CHURCH LOGO

KENT BATEMAN

Kent Bateman is a pastor and communications director at Midtown Fellowship in Columbia, SC, and is preparing to be sent out as a church planter to Knoxville, TN in mid-2016. He lives in Columbia with his wife Ana.

I think most of us would agree that a logo is far from the most important thing about a church. If ever we find ourselves in a scenario where we are relying on a church logo to be what attracts people to us, we may have missed the point.

However, a church logo can be a valuable way to reflect your church's identity and be a helpful signpost to who you are as a community. So for those in the early stages of creating a logo, or those looking to rebrand, here are 6 pointers on creating a church logo:

YOUR LOGO SHOULD REFLECT YOUR CHURCH.

If your logo looks younger and hipper than Urban Outfitters, but you are an older, more established church, that's going to be a disconnect for people. Inversely, if you're a collegiate church plant, make sure your logo isn't stock from fifteen years ago.

LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO BE UNIQUE.

It's fine for your logo to be a cross on a hill with the sun setting behind it, but something like that will probably blend in with the other logos like it. Look for ways to go beyond the typical church logo.

SIMPLER IS (ALMOST) ALWAYS BETTER.

When in doubt, don't try anything crazy. Using nothing but a strong typeface for a logo is better than a complex concept that can't be pulled off. That being said, it is possible to go too simple. But most of us don't err that way.

ASK A DESIGNER'S OPINION.

My designer friends may hate me for saying this, but there's no harm in emailing an idea you've put together to a designer for their thoughts. Most designers, like myself, love expressing their opinion. Don't ask them to design a logo for you for free, but feel free to ask their opinion on an existing concept.

THINK ABOUT THE END USES.

Keep in mind all the places your logo will be used. You want it to look good on a sign outside your building, but it has to look good on the top of a letterhead too. If there's too much detail in your logo, it'll be a mess when it gets printed for smaller uses.

DON'T REBRAND UNNECESSARILY.

A logo is meant to represent your church. So the more often you change it, the less representative it becomes. There are appropriate times to change your logo, but err on the side of stability. Land on a logo you like, and stick with it until there's a good reason to change.

Whatever you decide, rest assured that your success as a church will not rise or fall on how awesome your church logo is. The important things are your commitment to the gospel, your devotion to one another as a church family, and your unwavering dedication to living on mission together.

Focus on those, and then a logo can just be a logo.

CREATING AN ONLINE PRESENCE

KENT BATEMAN

Never has there been easier ways for local churches to get their messages out to more people as there is today. It's now simpler than ever to post information about your church, get sermons out, and help people get connected online.

With that in mind, creating a church website can feel like an overwhelming task. It can cost lots of time and money, and often we don't know where to start. So whether you're designing or redesigning your church website, here are some things to help:

MAKE SURE IT'S MOBILE-FRIENDLY.

Well over 50% of web traffic is now via mobile devices (phones, tablets, etc.). Which means if your site is not designed with those devices in mind, people probably won't use your website very often. For clarity, "mobile-friendly" means a person can navigate the site without constantly pinching and zooming.

USE ALREADY-CREATED PLATFORMS.

You don't have to hire a design firm and pay thousands of dollars, especially

when you're just getting started. There are lots of platforms online to build your church website that are very affordable, and don't require tons of expertise to set up.

MAKE SERVICES AND SERMONS EASY TO FIND.

The two things people are most looking for online are 1) service time(s) and location(s), and 2) sermons. Make those two things obvious on your homepage.

PICTURES, PICTURES, PICTURES

Keep in mind that a lot of people visiting your site want to know what it will feel like if they visit on a Sunday. Graphics are great, but photos tell stories. You may have someone in your church willing to take some photos for free. If that's not an option, look online for fair use photos of your city to use. Just make sure they're labeled for re-use.

EASY TO REMEMBER URL

If there are obscure letters, numbers, or multiple backslashes in your URL, people are gonna have a hard time remembering it. Look for ways to shorten and simplify your domain name. If the one you want is taken, try adding intriguing words (for instance, christchurch.com may not be available, while wearechristchurch.com might be).

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Keep in mind that a new user to your website probably doesn't know what a "D-group" is, and definitely doesn't know what your "Inspire" ministry on Tuesday nights is about or who it's for. Err on the side of over-explaining things online, so that a new person doesn't feel alienated by insider language. By explaining any new words or ideas, you help outsiders feel like

insiders, and help insiders remember the purpose of things that they may have forgotten.

REDESIGN OFTEN, BUT NOT TOO OFTEN.

Most web professionals will tell you to redesign your website every 2-4 years. I think it's important to keep your website relatively close to current trends and industry standards, but redesigning too often can make frequent users unfamiliar with how to navigate your site.

Always be looking for ways to improve your website so that people feel welcomed, even when they're looking you up online. Websites can make people more comfortable with a first visit, and a great way to make members feel comfortable sharing information online.

UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA

KENT BATEMAN

Organizations across the world have integrated social media into their culture at a breathtaking rate. I still remember when our staff sat in a room and debated whether we should start a Twitter account. Now, it's hardly even a question for most churches.

Social media can be a useful tool for the kingdom when used well. So the question becomes, how do we use it well? Below I've listed 7 helpful tips for using social media for your church. For purposes of discussion, I'll mainly be referring to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, only because other platforms differ too much to include in the same post.

DON'T USE SOCIAL MEDIA UNTIL IT MAKES SENSE.

Once you open a social media account, you're going to want to fill it with content, and content takes time and effort. Especially in the beginning stages of a church plant, there may not be a good reason to have a Facebook or Twitter account. In that stage, you could easily communicate with anyone you need to via email or text. A good time to begin to use social media is when you "go public" at your church's launch.

KEEP IT CURRENT.

You don't want someone checking your Twitter feed only to realize nothing has been posted in several months. In today's world, that may lead people to infer that your church no longer exists. Even if it's just posting a bible verse every other day, figure out ways to keep the content coming.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TWO-WAY STREET.

If you are on social media, people will want to communicate with you there. Social media is often the most convenient way for a person to ask for service times, getting connected to a group, and whatever else. So if you have social media, make sure someone is checking it at least every 24 hours or so to respond to people's questions.

PHOTOS AND STORIES ARE KING.

The best content is made up of photos and stories. Find a person in your church with Instagram skills and let them post photos from their iPhone at your next event. In addition, use staff meetings to collect any encouraging stories, then contact the people involved to ask if you can share it on social media.

FOLLOW YOUR MEMBERS.

Some may disagree here, but consider following your members on social media. You'll get to see the type of content and information they interact with, and you might just see them posting about something happening in your church. In addition, they'll often follow you back.

USE TWEET-SCHEDULING APPS.

You'll save yourself (or whoever runs your social media) a lot of trouble if you schedule tweets in advance. We take about 30 minutes on Mondays to schedule posts for the whole week, and then don't have to think about it much.

THE ONLY CONSTANT IS THAT THERE IS NO CONSTANT.

Because social media is still relatively new, best practices are continually evolving. Following large organizations on social media and reading social media blogs are great ways to learn and adapt as the field changes.