



GROWING UP NOT OUTGROWING

THE UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO CHURCH PLANTING IN THE ACNA

By the Rev. Alastair Sterne

After his resurrection, Jesus found his apostles gripped by fear, hiding away in a room. He drew close, offered peace, and breathed on them saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” This moment was then amplified on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit descended and empowered the church to become witnesses of the gospel. The church was enabled to step back outside with courage. Through Spirit-filled proclamation and evangelism, the church reached the lost, cared for the marginalized, and made disciples of all nations. The growth of the early church was characterized by continually reaching people and commissioning missionaries to establish churches in unreached areas. Throughout history, the movement of Jesus has depended on the principle of churches planting churches.

The ACNA has wholeheartedly embraced this core principle. It is integral to our identity and mission. The commitment to reach North America with the transformative love of Jesus is inseparable from the work of planting churches. Archbishop Bob Duncan’s original call to plant one thousand churches has been persevered and flourished under the guidance of Archbishop Foley Beach and the ongoing efforts of Always Forward. This past year, I joined the Always Forward team, and I’ve had the privilege of seeing this core principle in action as we work alongside our dedicated church planters. Our efforts involve assessing, equipping, commissioning, and coaching people for this significant work. Together, we rely on the Spirit and prayer to establish gospel-centered, sacramental, and missional churches – and we’re encouraged by the stories

of people finding and following the way of Jesus through our church plants.

When I encountered Jesus in my early twenties, the first church I joined was a plant. Though it no longer exists, its legacy lives on in the lives of past members, including mine. Church planting was embedded in my spiritual DNA. Years later, I planted St. Peter’s Fireside (ANIC), and this church has also raised up leaders and sent out laborers to plant more churches. My life was transformed because a church planted a church, which in turn sowed seeds that bloomed years later into more church planting.

Whether short-lived or enduring, a church plant’s humble efforts are never in vain. Because the gospel is freshly proclaimed, God’s wisdom is made manifest, and lives are eternally changed. As we celebrate 15 years as a province, on behalf of the Always Forward team, I want to express our gratitude for the faithful work of planting churches. We invite you to pray with us for the Spirit to empower the church to be witnesses of the gospel, and for the Spirit to prevent us from shrinking back in fear from our mission. Although the ACNA continues to grow up, we can never outgrow church planting – it is central to our identity and our mission. May planting churches always remain infused in our DNA as we work to reach people with the transforming love of Jesus.

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