

A Guide to Western Rite Orthodox Church Planting

by Fr. Victor Novak

A Fruitful Past, An Exciting Present, and A Promising Future

“God allowed the Russian Revolution to take place in order that the Russian Church might become purged and purified and that the Orthodox Church might be disseminated across the whole world.... The Church is one, but each nation has its own calling within that oneness” - St. John of San Francisco

“Never, never, never let anyone tell you that in order to be Orthodox, you must be Eastern. The West was fully Orthodox for a thousand years” - St. John of San Francisco

The Great Commission can only be fulfilled by church planting. It is not enough for people to hear the Gospel, or even to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour, they must embrace the fullness of the Orthodox Christian Faith and be grafted into the Orthodox Church - the Body of Christ - where they can share in its sacramental and corporate life. St. John of San Francisco said, “The Gospel of Christ must be preached in all tongues throughout the world *in an Orthodox context*,” and Scripture says, “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). True Christianity is not a private religion. It is ecclesiastical. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread [the Holy Eucharist] and in the prayers” (Acts 2:42). St. Ambrose of Milan reminds us, “One who seeks the Church seeks Christ.

Many people believe that the Orthodox Church is not a missionary Church and that it is not growing, but nothing could be farther from the truth. “The percentage of growth of Orthodox Christianity in America was higher than any other major classification of Christianity mentioned in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1995” [1]. And it is not just in America that the Church is growing. In 2007, Patriarch Alexei of Moscow wrote, “Orthodoxy is one of the few religious confessions whose membership is growing rather than declining” [2]. Today, the Orthodox Church has some 300,000,000 members worldwide and continues to grow.

It is often difficult to gather membership facts about Orthodoxy in America because religious studies often group Orthodox Christians with mainline Protestants as neither [Roman] Catholics or Evangelicals. However, the 2008 US Landscape Survey reported that 23% of Orthodox Christians in the United States, virtually one in four, are converts.

Orthodoxy in North America is no longer an immigrant Church. The vast majority of Orthodox Christians in America are native born. Only one in nine Orthodox Christians in America are foreign born today, and that is on par with the numbers of foreign born in the American population in general. About one fourth of Orthodox Christians in America are converts, and a full one third of the Orthodox clergy in America are converts. Many

of the clergy and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are converts, including dozens of Western Rite clergymen and their congregations. Three ROCOR bishops in America are converts, two from Anglicanism and one from Roman Catholicism. Much the same can be said of other jurisdictions in North America. Three out of four Orthodox parishes of all jurisdictions in the United States use English as the language of the Liturgy, and both the Russian and Antiochian Churches have thriving and growing Western Rite communities.

The resurgence of the Orthodox Church in Russia and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism has been miraculous, as has the growth of the Russian Orthodox Church throughout the world. Since the fall of communism, the Church in Russia has opened more than 25,000 churches, that is more than three churches a day, each and every day, and there is no slowdown in sight. During the same period more than 800 monastic communities have been established.

As of 2007, the total membership of the Russian Orthodox Church was 160 million world-wide, more than all of the other local Orthodox Churches combined, and more than twice the membership of the Anglican Communion. The number of Orthodox Christians under the Moscow Patriarchate but living outside of the Russian Federation totals some 55 million souls, about equal to all of the Lutherans in the world in their myriads of Lutheran denominations. There is an Orthodox resurgence taking place and the Orthodox Church is thriving, growing and advancing the work of the Great Commission on every continent on earth.

There are now dozens of Western Rite Orthodox congregations and monasteries, primarily in the United States, but also in Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and on the Continent of Europe, and this is just the beginning. The Western Rite has been restored, and the Church in the West is being rebuilt. The Third Millennium is proving to be a New Springtime for the Orthodox Church East and West.

The Orthodox Christian Faith is universal, for all peoples of all races, nations and cultures, for all time. With the restoration of the Western rites that were essentially lost to the Church after the Great Schism and the Norman Conquest, the Orthodox Church has another means to reach out to those who are of Western culture and heritage. Cross cultural evangelism can be difficult, but with the restoration of Western Orthodoxy the Church can now reach out to those Western people who have found the cultural barriers difficult or even insurmountable. God's field is certainly ready for the harvest, and a harvest is being reaped in America and all around the world, but still the laborers remain few and there is so much more to do. What is needed are more laborers, more church planters in the Lord's harvest field.

An Introduction to Church Planting

“The harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Matt. 9:37)

“The necessity of love seeks out the activity of the apostolate” - St. Augustine of Hippo

“Here am I! Send me” (Is. 6:8)

There is no ministry more exciting or more rewarding than that of church planting, for it is through church planting that the Great Commission of the Church is advanced; but it is never an easy task. The Church Planter is a missionary, whether he is planting a church in central Africa or the central United States. Virtually all new congregations start out with severely limited resources, inadequate facilities and few prospective members. Often the newly established congregation begins with no more than the Church Planter and his family. Everything seems to be against the new church; yet, new churches are started every year, and many of them grow and thrive.

While mega-churches get much of the media attention, they are not the norm. In fact, mega-churches have proven themselves much more effective in gaining members than in making disciples. It is in the myriads of smaller and little noticed congregations that the bulk of Christian living and growing takes place. It is there that real disciples are formed in close knit, faithful and caring Christian communities.

What many Christians do not realize is that “about half of all protestant [meaning non-Roman Catholic] congregations on this continent average fewer than 75 at worship, and about half more than 75. Thus it could be said that the the normative size of protestant [i.e. non-Roman Catholic] congregations on this continent is, give or take a dozen, approximately 75 at worship on the average Sunday morning” (The Small Membership Church, by Lyle E. Schaller; Abingdon; pp. 43-44; c. 1994)

The largest non-Roman Catholic denomination in the United States is the Southern Baptist Convention with over 15,000,000 members. Yet the average worship attendance among Southern Baptist churches is only 75 (ibid, p. 44).

Of their more than 35,000 local churches, “United Methodists report that one-half of their congregations average more than 57 at worship and one half average 57 or less” (ibid, p. 44). In fact 21% of United Methodist congregations reported an average worship attendance of 25 or less in 1991. That means that there are 25 or less in attendance on an average Sunday in more than 7,500 local United Methodist churches. Likewise, more than 3,500 Southern Baptist churches average 25 or less in attendance on an average Sunday. Church growth expert Lyle Schaller reports that, “It is possible that no more than 30 percent of the estimated 325,000 protestant [i.e. non-Roman Catholic] congregations in the United States average more than a hundred at worship” (ibid, p. 49). Statistically, a small church has 25 or less in attendance on an

average Sunday, a medium church 26 to 74 in attendance, and a large church 75 or more in attendance.

Local Roman Catholic churches are of course much larger, but that is because they have so few clergy that they have to group parishioners into ever bigger churches. Today there are some 1,300 parishioners for every Roman Catholic priest in the United States. Like the protestant mega-churches, these Roman Catholic mega-churches have been ineffective at making members into disciples. Weekly Mass attendance is very low, and the understanding of doctrine so poor that recent studies show that only around a third of Roman Catholics believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

The 2010 national census of US Orthodox Churches sponsored by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops reports that “as the total membership of an Orthodox parish increases, the proportion of parishioners attending frequently goes down. Put simply, in small parish communities a vast majority of members are likely to be in church every Sunday. Quite differently, in large churches relatively few members are present at worship services every weekend” [3]. It is in smaller churches, rather than the the more impersonal large churches, where authentic community is formed, where the pastor can be a real spiritual father to his flock, and where disciples are made. And church planting is the only means to establishing these congregations in cities, towns, villages and hamlets all across North America.

There are a number of different methods that can be used to plant a new local church, including Pioneer Church Planting, Mother - Daughter Church Planting, and Diocese or Mission Agency Sponsored Church Planting. The Pioneer Church Planter plants a new local church from scratch with little or no outside financial assistance. Mother - Daughter Church Planting occurs when an established local church plants a mission congregation in another section of the city or in a neighboring community. Usually parishioners of the mother church who live in the section of town or community targeted become the nucleus of the church plant, and the mother church usually provides ministry, oversight and financial assistance until the new church is well on its way. Diocese or Mission Agency Sponsored Church Planting is self explanatory.

Pioneer Church Planting is the method found in the pages of the Acts of the Apostles, is the most practical for a jurisdiction with limited resources, and holds the greatest promise for the rapid expansion and growth of the Church. This Guide is intended to provide step by step instructions for the Pioneering Church Planter. It is hoped that it will assist Western Rite Pioneer Church Planters to make a better start, avoid many of the mistakes that often threaten a newborn mission-church, and to be more effective in establishing a faithful, thriving and growing parish. It can also be used to help reboot new mission churches that have been begun but haven't grown or thrived. While this *Guide* has been prepared to assist Western Rite Pioneer Church Planters, there will be much in it that will be of help to Eastern Rite Church Planters as well, and Eastern Rite Church Planters are encouraged to adapt the information in this Guide to their situation and needs.

Pioneer Church Planting

“The Risen Christ sent the Apostles to preach to all nations. The Church of Christ was not founded for just one people, for any particular country; all nations are called to the Faith of the True God” - St. John of San Francisco

The Pioneering Church Planter goes out into his community or a nearby community and plants a church from scratch with little or no outside assistance. This is the apostolic method and is as old as Christianity itself. Under this method the Church Planter is usually bi-vocational, working a secular job while he plants a mission-church. Bi-vocational ministry is often known as “tent-making” after the example of the apostle Paul.

The Pioneering Church Planter must be a man of faith and of vision, and a well disciplined self-starter who is not easily discouraged. He must feel the leading of the Lord to advance the Great Commission by planting a new local church; and have the faith to follow wherever the Lord may lead, no matter how difficult the path. He must be a man of prayer, well grounded in the Orthodox Faith, a hard worker with a love for souls, and if married have a supportive wife.

To be successful, the Pioneer Church Planter must conceive the new church in his heart and be determined to bring it to birth. Because he is literally out on his own the initial success of the new church will depend to a great extent on his prayer life, leadership, work ethic, willingness to sacrifice, and commitment. While church planters are generally thought of as priests, churches have also been planted by deacons, readers and laypeople.

The rebuilding of Western Orthodoxy can only be done by church planting, and anyone can be a Church Planter if he has been called by God and has the faith to act. God often does not call the equipped, but He does equip the called. However, feeling an inward call is never enough. He must also be sent by the Church. Nothing should ever be done without the approval of ones pastor if there is one, and the permission of the bishop; and all church planting work must be done under authority of the bishop.

New churches can be planted by priests, deacons, readers and lay people. In the 19th and early 20th centuries many new Orthodox congregations were successfully planted by laymen, sometimes with no priest anywhere nearby. Some of these lay church planters later went on to discern a vocation to the ordained ministry. Two thousand years ago God gave the apostle Paul a “Macedonia Call” to proclaim the Gospel in new areas and to plant churches where there were none. God is still giving Macedonian Calls today.

The need for more Western Rite Orthodox churches in the United States, the British Commonwealth, Europe and throughout the Western World is great, but the resources

for church planters are few. The books commonly available on church planting are generically evangelical protestant. This *Guide* was written to help Pioneer Church Planters to plant Western Rite Orthodox churches, and to encourage those who are feeling led to plant a church to step out in faith and make a start. It will also be of help to those who have already made a start at planting a mission-church, but have not yet seen it grow and thrive.

A Guide to Western Rite Orthodox Church Planting is not the fruit of mere study or thought, but of years of experience. It is a short, easy to use and understand step by step guide based on Acts 16:9-15, that will help the church planter to conceive, give birth to, and begin to grow a new Western Rite Orthodox church.

Twenty-five Steps To Planting A Western Rite Orthodox Church

“The light of Orthodoxy is not lit for a small circle of people. No, the Orthodox Faith is Catholic; it is a commandment of its founder, ‘Go into all the world...’, (Mark 16:15). It is our obligation, therefore to share our spiritual treasure, our truth, our light, and our joy with those who do not have these gifts” - St. Tikhon, in his “Farewell Address” to America where he had served as Archbishop and Evangelizer.

The following twenty-five steps are an orderly step by step guide that the Pioneer Church Planter can follow to take a new church-plant from conception to birth. However, local situations sometimes differ, so the Church Planter must be willing to prayerfully adapt these steps to the situation at hand. Often these twenty-five steps can be followed step by step, but local circumstances may at times require altering their order, or even deleting certain steps, or adding new ones. The Church Planter should be flexible, but he shouldn't alter this plan too readily as it will help him to avoid many simple but costly mistakes, and to remain focused on reaching his goal step by step. These twenty-five steps presuppose that the Pioneering Church Planter has the approval of his pastor (if there is one) and the permission of his bishop, and that he is acting under the authority of his bishop, keeping him fully informed of his work.

Step One. Select a community. Many Americans commute to work today, driving 30 minutes or more each way. Likewise, most Americans regularly travel 15 to 30 minutes to go shopping, the theater, a ball game, or to church. Committed Orthodox Christians looking for an Orthodox Church will drive even farther. The same is true for Western Christians who are attracted to the Orthodox Church but are looking for a Western expression of the Orthodox Faith. At Holy Cross parish there are members who make a ninety minute round trip to church and others who make a round trip of more than two and a half hours on Sundays.

Orthodox churches are needed in the metropolitan areas, smaller cities, towns, villages and hamlets, everywhere where there is no local church or where the nearest church is far enough away to make the drive difficult for the average person. With only around

2,000 parishes and monastic communities in the United States, and Western Rite congregations and monastic communities numbering only in the dozens, for a population of more than 300,000,000 people, spread out for more than 3,000 miles from coast to coast, there is no lack of potential communities and areas in which to plant a new mission-church.

Step Two. Chose a name for the church. The name of the new church is of utmost importance. Be careful of selecting a name for the new church that may confuse people or throw up unnecessary barriers. Always remember that should the Lord tarry in His Coming the name of the church will outlive the Church Planter, so select a name that will be a good fit for a Western Rite Orthodox church and will be attractive to the people of the community.

Some Church Planters think that a name should not be selected until after the new church is fully organized and the congregation can vote on it, or that only a temporary name should be chosen. Such ideas are mistaken. The new church needs a name with which it can be identified and that will give the new church an appearance of permanence. It is difficult enough to get people to visit a start-up church and to make a commitment to it without making it more difficult by giving the impression that the church-plant may not be permanent. The church needs a name for advertising and outreach purposes, and a name change later would cause the new church to lose the name recognition gained by previous advertising and media coverage, forcing it to start all over as far as name recognition is concerned.

The Church Planter has conceived the new church and has committed to bringing it to birth. He should name the new church. The name of the church should be chosen immediately after the community has been selected and before any work begins.

Step three. Get a local mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. As soon as a community has been selected and a name chosen for the church, the Church Planter should obtain a post office box to serve as a mailing address. The post office box should always be in the community where the church is to be planted, even if the Church Planter lives in another community. If the new church-plant is in a small suburb of a major city it may be best to have a mailing address in the city rather than the suburb if the Church Planter is planning to reach out to the entire metropolitan area. A local address such as a post office box may also be necessary to do such things as open a checking account and incorporate among others.

The church planter's home phone number can serve as the church phone, but it would be much better to have a dedicated line. This will allow the church planter to record a church message and to answer the phone "N._____ Orthodox Church." Either a dedicated land line or a cell phone will work, but cell phones are more mobile and convenient. If the Church Planter does not live in the community where the church will be planted it is best that he gets a local cell phone number so inquirers can make free calls to the church number and so the new church-plant will be seen as really belonging to the community.

The Church Planter will also want to be sure that he has an e-mail address. Far more communication is done today via e-mail than by post or telephone. The Church Planter's personal e-mail address can do double duty for the church.

Step four. Open a bank account. As soon as the new church has a mailing address and telephone number the Church Planter should open a checking account, deposit his initial start-up offering, and begin tithing to the new church. Any offerings that come his way should also be deposited into the account. If the bank recommends incorporating as a non-profit before opening a checking account go to step twenty-four.

The Church Planter or his wife will often have to serve as a temporary treasurer and sign checks until the church becomes better organized and a treasurer can be chosen. Be sure to follow basic financial rules: A.) Do not spend more money than the church has, but remember that the Church Planter and his family will have to be committed to giving sacrificially if he is to see the new church take root and grow. B.) Ask for offerings from other Orthodox Christians and potential supporters (prospects, well wishers, extended family, friends, etc.); give an annual receipt for all money received and keep good records of all money spent. C.) Always be aware of how much money the church has on hand. D.) Pay all bills on time so that the new church will maintain both good credit and a good reputation in the community.

Step five. Gather a prospect list. The Church Planter should make a list of any prospective members in the community. The list should include relatives, friends, non-Orthodox Christians who have expressed an interest in Orthodoxy in general or Western Rite Orthodoxy in particular, and any isolated and unaffiliated Orthodox Christians (of whatever rite) known to him. The Church Planter should also ask his prospects for the names and contact information of anyone they think may be interested in the new church. The bishop should be contacted for a list of any isolated Orthodox Christians or inquirers into the Western Rite in the area.

Step six. Locate a suitable meeting place. Selecting a good location is vital for the success of a new church-plant. Never begin in a declining or dangerous area, unless such an area is your target. Lower income people are generally willing to attend Services in a higher income area, but few middle and upper class people will travel to a declining or dangerous part of town.

If the new church is being planted in a large community be sure to chose a location in a nice area and near a highway exit or main thoroughfare, allowing relatively easy access from as much of the community as possible. Make sure there is adequate parking. Parking lot access is much to be preferred over street parking.

Do not focus on finding an inexpensive location. The Church Planter should get the best meeting place in the best location that he can afford. In order to get people to commit themselves to a new church-plant the church must look serious and give people the

feeling that it will succeed. In church planting location may not be everything, but it is very important.

Most new churches will start out renting a meeting place from week to week. A wide variety of facilities can be and have successfully been used. These facilities include hotel meeting rooms, restaurant meeting rooms, clubhouses of apartment complexes, schools, YMCA meeting rooms, mortuary chapels, borrowed churches, private homes and more.

Restaurant meeting rooms can work and are often free, but the restaurant generally requires a certain number of meals be purchased every week and this can put undue pressure on new members and create discomfort for visitors. Restaurant meeting rooms also tend to be noisy; singing is usually frowned upon; and the smell of food can be distracting. Mortuary chapels seldom work well because many people feel uncomfortable using them. Borrowed churches can work if they are significantly different from the church-plant in either Faith, worship style, or Rite, and therefore will not be a competition for visitors, and provided they will allow the new church to meet at a good time on Sunday morning and have a place for fellowship after Services. Schools can work if the location is good with easy access, but the facilities offered are often not very inviting, with school desks, or the cold feel of a cafeteria. YMCA meeting rooms can work well if the "Y" is in a good area of town, with easy access, and has a nice building with an attractive meeting room. The same can be said for clubhouses. Apartment complex clubhouses seldom have Sunday morning activities, generally have a parking lot, sometimes have a kitchen, and are often tastefully decorated and inviting. Here again though, location and easy access are very important in larger communities.

Home chapels seldom work in urban areas. City dwellers generally feel very uncomfortable going to the home of a stranger. Adequate parking and even zoning are also issues. Because of these factors house churches in urban areas seldom get beyond the domestic oratory stage and therefore are not recommended. However, home meetings can work in very small towns where people tend to know each other and to feel comfortable and safe in their community. This is especially true if a semi-permanent home chapel can be set up in a finished basement or family room, and if the Church Planter is already known in the community. But even in the case of a small town, the Church Planter will need to move from the home meeting to a more public place as soon as the church-plant plateaus, which it will fairly quickly.

Perhaps the best all around choice is a hotel meeting room. Although they are often more expensive, they are generally worth the investment. Do not cut corners in choosing a place to meet in order to save money. Location is vital to the success of a new church. Invest in success.

Good quality hotels tend to be in the better areas of town, and near a highway exit or on a main thoroughfare. Visit local Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, or similar hotels and talk to the staff. Hotels can provide a table for an altar, a podium to serve as a lectern and pulpit, chairs for the congregation, and the floors are generally carpeted which

helps when kneeling. The hotel will even have the room set up before the church planter arrives on Sunday morning. The hotel can also provide tables in the back of the room for literature and to use for fellowship. Hot coffee for fellowship time can also generally be provided inexpensively.

Hotel meeting rooms are usually conservatively and tastefully decorated, warm, inviting, quiet and private, and there is seldom any problem with singing. Few prospects will feel uncomfortable coming to a hotel meeting room, parking is plentiful, the facilities are generally excellent, and set up and take down are done by the hotel staff. It is hard to beat a hotel meeting room for a new church-plant.

Whatever kind of facility is rented, the Church Planter must be certain that he can reserve *the same room at the same time* every Sunday for at least three months, and preferably for six months. A church that has to frequently move from location to location or alter its Service times will seldom be successful. Only facilities that can be used on Sunday mornings should be secured as Saturday evening, Sunday evening, or Sunday afternoon Services are seldom successful. They may suffice if there is already a committed core group, but real growth will be very difficult without traditional Sunday morning Services.

As the new church grows and becomes ready to move beyond renting a meeting room, the next step will often be to lease a more permanent facility. Storefronts are very good choices as people are comfortable visiting strip malls and similar facilities. However, not just any storefront will do. Remember to look for a facility that is clean and attractive inside and out, a facility that the church planter can transform into a Western Orthodox temple. The facility must be in a good area of town unless the church-plant is specifically targeting a low income area or a special part of the community. If it is to reach out community-wide, easy access to a highway or main thoroughfare is essential, as is adequate parking. The facility should be large enough for worship, education and fellowship, with room for numerical growth. Initially, the church office can be located at the Church Planter's home, and the adult Christian education class can meet in the chapel while the children meet in the fellowship area. The church should lease the best facility that it can afford. This is the time to take a step of faith and to stretch the budget as much as possible.

Step seven. Set a date and time for the first Sunday Service. The Church Planter should plan to conduct his first Sunday Worship Service four to six weeks after he begins his outreach activities. The best times to begin holding Services are the Sunday after Labor Day, the first Sunday in Advent, Christmas Day, the beginning of Lent, Easter Sunday, and during Eastertide. September is a good time to begin because summer vacations are over, the kids are going back to school, and life is getting serious again. Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter Sunday and Eastertide are all good times to begin because even in secular America these are times when people think about God, often have good memories of going to church as children, and are more open to the Christian message. Other times will work, but these are the best times. The most difficult time to begin holding Worship Services is in the summer.

Four to six weeks of outreach will give the Church Planter time to advertise, grow his prospect list, publicize the new church-plant, and prepare for the first Service. However, the Church Planter will have to make every moment of these four to six weeks count and will have to give the task his complete attention. The greatest initial dangers are conducting the first Service too soon and without proper preparation, or delaying the first Service too long and having interest wane. Everything the Church planter does to promote the new church-plant should focus on the day and time of the first Worship Service with the goal of getting enough people there to make a good beginning. Attendance does not have to be large, but a very small turnout can be a setback and hard on morale. The Church Planter should aim for an attendance of at least ten people from at least three households including his own. However, even if fewer attend, the Church Planter must be dedicated to his apostolate and determined to persevere.

The best time to schedule the main Sunday Service is between 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM. If the Church Planter is a priest the Service should be the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist. If a priest is not available then the Divine Office (Matins/Morning Prayer or Lauds) should be prayed. A church-plant without a priest will need to rely on visiting priests to celebrate the Liturgy from time to time, if they are available.

Initially, the Church Planter should focus on one main worship Service. If a priest, that would be the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist. He can always add Matins (Morning Prayer) or Lauds to the schedule later. For a reader or lay leader Matins (Morning Prayer) or Lauds would be the main Service. Christian Education classes (Sunday School) should not be established until the church is fully organized and functioning with a core group of committed members.

Step eight. Set up a Church Website. The single most important and effective means of outreach today is a good Website. The four to six week countdown to the first Service should not begin until a Website is up. The Website should be as attractive, informative and professional as possible. If the Church Planter is not capable of designing and publishing a high quality Website he needs to get help from someone who can. If he does not know anyone that can do this for him he should hire a professional. Be sure that whoever is entrusted with building the Website knows about *church* websites and understands the needs of a Western Rite Orthodox church.

A good Website is far more important than newspaper or telephone book advertising, press releases, flyers on community bulletin boards or direct mail; yet only seven out of ten churches in the United States have Websites, and many of those that do have Websites have poor quality Websites. The Website is where the new church (or any church) will make its first impression, so make it the best it can possibly be.

Use as many photographs on the Website as possible. Include a map to help people find the church. Have photos of the Church Planter, and the Church Planter and his family. If there are any initial supporters of the new church-plant have them in photographs as well. Use photos of individuals, couples or families and include quotes

from them saying why they are looking forward to the new church being planted and how excited they are. Be sure to avoid anything that looks tacky or cheesy on the church Website. Avoid holy card-like pictures, spinning crosses, and similar “art work.”

The Website must be reverent, professional, and appealing. Try to avoid “free” websites. You get what you pay for; and do not use a hosting service where you have to allow them to place ads on the Website in return for free or discounted service. A church Website is a place where the Church Planter should not cut corners.

Keep the Website current. As the new church begins to conduct worship Services add photos of the Services. Make sure there are people in the photos, not just an altar or a picture of the priest or Church Planter. Post candid photos of worship, fellowship and other activities. Even if there are only a few in attendance take the photos in such a way that the few fills the photograph. Don’t post pictures of empty seats! Potential visitors want to see people. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words.

An example of an effective Website is that of Holy Cross Orthodox Church in the Ralston suburb of Omaha, Nebraska. The web address is: www.holycrossomaha.net Of course a new church-plant will not have nearly as many pages or as much information, but the Church Planter can learn a lot from it. A little web-surfing with visits to various church Websites will give the Church Planter a lot of ideas as to what and what not to do. The Website can start small and grow as the church-plant grows, but make it attractive, informative and appealing from the very beginning.

Hannah Frederick is the Web Mistress at Holy Cross Orthodox Church (www.holycrossomaha.net) and a practicing Orthodox Christian. She can set up and maintain a high quality church Website inexpensively. Hannah can be reached by e-mail at: hfr frederick@outlook.com, or by phone (402) 677-1062.

As soon as the Website is up on the Internet be sure to get it listed on the Website of the ROCOR Western Rite, the main ROCOR Directory, the World Orthodox Directory and as many Orthodox websites as possible. A quality Website, linked on as many Orthodox websites as possible, will be the best and most effective form of outreach for the church. All brochures, mail pieces, flyers, press releases, business cards, and any other form of outreach should direct interested people to the church Website.

A Western Rite church-plant should always communicate the Orthodox Faith in a Western context so that it can be understood by Western people. That is the purpose of the Western Rite. Be careful not to erect unnecessary language or cultural barriers that mitigate the value and potential of the Western Rite. Don’t use “insider” language that outsiders may not understand. Think of the mistakes made by the Eastern Catholic Uniates (Latinization) and avoid making similar mistakes. A Western Rite Orthodox Church should be both thoroughly Orthodox in Faith and fully Western in culture, patrimony and liturgy.

Step nine. Order business cards. Order business cards from a local copy shop, office supply store, or an on-line printing company. Vista Print, www.vistaprint.com, can produce high quality, full color business cards very inexpensively and get them to you quickly.

Business cards are very important and should be printed professionally and not on a home computer. Professional business cards will give the impression that the Church Planter is serious about planting a church. The last thing that the Church Planter should risk doing is giving the impression that he is not serious or really committed. Use color on the business card and consider including an icon. The card should include the name of the church, the Church Planter's name, and contact information including the church Website and e-mail address.

Distribute these cards far and wide. If there is a core group, they should be given a stack of business cards to distribute. Be creative. Leave a card with a tip at restaurants, but be sure to leave a proper tip!

Step ten. Print an Introductory Brochure. An introductory brochure should be designed and printed immediately. Care should be taken to make sure that it is well thought out, appealing and creative. It may be helpful to obtain samples of what other churches are using, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox churches. The brochure should not focus merely on Orthodoxy in general, but on the new church-plant. It is possible to produce a very nice trifold on a home computer and to get quantities printed inexpensively at a local copy shop.

The introductory brochure should include A.) The name of the church; B.) Mailing address, Website address, phone number, e-mail address, Church Planter's name, location of meeting place and time of Services; C.) a brief introduction to the new church and the Western Rite, and its jurisdiction. D.) What the new church plans to offer, such as Biblical preaching, Orthodox doctrine and traditional Western Rite liturgy, Biblical morality, reverent administration of the sacraments, Christian Education for all ages; refreshments and fellowship after Services, parish organizations, guilds, etc. - even if some of these may not actually be in place for some time; E.) A brief introduction to the Orthodox Church and what the Church believes; and F.) A warm invitation to attend Services or to contact the church for more information. Be sure to emphasize the church Website.

Step eleven. Get a Facebook Page. Social media has become very important today, so the Church Planter should set up a Facebook page for the new church as well. Only four out of ten churches in the United States have Facebook pages. Not using social media today is a big mistake. If help is needed in setting up a Facebook page, get it.

Step twelve. Begin a Blog. A blog can be a very helpful communication and teaching tool and is easier to update than a Website. You may want to visit my blog, Fr. Novak's Blog, <http://frnovak.blogspot.com>, to see an example. A blog is simple to use and to post on. There is no advertising on my blog and it receives hits every day. A blog can be

linked to the church Website and the church Website can be linked to the Church Planter's blog. A blog can be an important addition to a church Website, but should never be considered as a substitute for one.

Step thirteen. Begin to promote the inaugural Sunday Service. You are now ready to begin promoting the inaugural Service of the new church-plant. Begin to publicize the new church four to six weeks before the date of the inaugural Sunday Service. Use every available means to get the word out to as many people as possible.

Send out a press release to the religion editor of every newspaper in the community, as well as to every Christian radio station heard in the community. The press release should tell about the new Western Rite Orthodox church-plant, and include the name of the new church and its jurisdiction, the Church Planter's name; the date, time and location of the first Sunday Service; that fellowship and refreshments will immediately follow the Service; the Website address for more information and the church phone in case of questions; and finally an invitation for everyone in the community to attend.

Run newspaper ads on the church page (usually found in the Saturday edition of a daily paper) every week in at least one well-read newspaper for the four to six weeks leading up to the first Service, and continue to do so following the inaugural Service. Advertise in more than one newspaper if finances allow. The ads should announce the name of the church, that it is Western Rite, and the date, time and location of the first Service. Newspapers are happy to help with professional layout so the ads will be as effective as possible. Be sure to include prominently the Website address of the church, as well as the phone number. Initial ads can be small, but the last two weeks before the inaugural Service should be as large as the Church Planter can afford. Always advertise on the church page itself. That is where people interested in finding a church will look.

Newspaper ads are not as effective as they were before the advent of the Internet, but they are still an important way for a new church to become known in the community. The Church Planter may want to sign an advertising contract if there are substantial savings in advertising rates and the local paper remains well read. While this means committing to as much as a year of advertising, it will reinforce in the Church Planter's mind that he is committed to planting a new Orthodox church in the community and that he is in for the long haul.

Radio and television advertising can be effective, but are usually beyond the means of a newly forming church. The Church Planter will generally have to rely on press releases to this media.

Print up 8 1/2" x 11" flyers and post them on bulletin boards in Christian bookstores, supermarkets, and convenient stores. Promote the inaugural Service and display the Website address prominently.

The Church Planter should send out at least two personal invitations by e-mail or by post to everyone on his prospect list and to anyone who has responded to the press

releases, advertising or other forms of outreach. The second invitation should be sent just a few days before the inaugural Service. Weekly contacts would be even more effective and are recommended.

A second press release should be sent out to all of the local print and electronic media just before the first Service. While the text should be different from the first press release, it should cover the same information.

Step fourteen. Obtain necessary church supplies. Be sure to obtain any remaining church supplies that will be needed well in advance of the first Worship Service. Such supplies may include an altar cross or icon and two candle sticks, a fair linen for the altar, communion set, cruets, communion bread and wine, altar linens, an alms basin (a wicker basket will do), offering envelopes, visitors cards and a guest book, vestments, and a handbell to announce that Services are about to begin.

An Altar Missal as well as other helpful liturgical books can be purchased from Lancelot Andrewes Press: <http://andrewespress.com/>. Liturgy booklets for use by the congregation can be printed, folded in booklet form and stapled at any local print shop such as Kinkos, Office Depot or Office Max. Copies of the Ordinary of the Western Rite liturgies can be found on the Sidebar of the Holy Cross Orthodox Church website, www.holycrossomaha.net or on the ROCOR Western Rite website, www.rwrv.org.

The Saint Ambrose Hymnal and The English Office Noted containing Matins (Morning Prayer), Vespers (Evening Prayer), and Compline with music (hence "Noted") can be purchased through St. Gregory the Great Orthodox Church in Washington, DC. The website address is: www.stgregoryoc.org.

Step fifteen. Prepare a temporary church sign. The church planter should prepare a sign to place on the door of the meeting room. The sign should be laminated to make it attractive and sturdy, and should include the name of the church and the time of Services. A friendly invitation such as "N._____ Orthodox Church Welcomes You!" may be added. It is also helpful to include the words "Come in, even if Services are in progress." If this is not done visitors who are a little late or timid may just leave rather than come in when they realize the Service has begun.

If using a hotel meeting room be sure to ask the hotel to list the church on a sign in the lobby with the name of the meeting room. They will be happy to do this. If using some other kind of facility ask permission to place a portable church sign on the side walk or near the street just before Services.

Step sixteen. Print a bulletin. The Church Planter should have an attractive and informative church bulletin printed for the first Sunday Service, and should continue printing a bulletin every week. The weekly church bulletin should include a warm welcome to visitors, important announcements, an outline of the Service with the page numbers of the Liturgy booklet or the Office book, and a listing of hymns to be sung. A quality bulletin will give visitors a sense that the Church Planter is serious in his efforts,

and a feeling of stability. Bulletins can be printed on a home computer using colored paper, or professionally produced bulletin covers can be purchased at a local Christian book store. Don't forget to have the church's Website address appear on the bulletin.

Step seventeen. Prepare the meeting place. Since the vast majority of new church-plants will be renting a meeting room on a week to week basis, all that the church needs for Sunday Services, Christian Education, and fellowship time will have to be carried in and out every week. Therefore, the Church Planter should prepare a checklist of what will be needed and make sure that he has everything necessary securely packed in plastic tubs or sturdy cardboard boxes.

If the meeting room provider is going to set up the room, be sure that they provide a table in front for use as an altar, a podium to serve as lectern and pulpit (or better yet, two podiums), chairs set up in theater style, with tables in the back for literature and to use later during fellowship time. It can be very helpful to prepare a diagram of how the room is to be set up for the staff of the facility.

If the new church will be meeting in a room that does not provide tables, chairs or a podium, these will all have to be brought by the Church Planter. Chairs and tables can be rented from a local rental company. Renting by the month rather than by the week can often save money and ensure that the needed tables and chairs are always available on Sunday.

Do not set up too many chairs. It is far better to have too few chairs and to have to bring out more, than to have too many and have the room look empty and attendance disappointing. The church planter should make a realistic and conservative estimate of how many he thinks will attend based on response to his outreach and then set up chairs to accommodate about 75%. If the response to the outreach is small, the list of firm prospects few, or the number expected to attend wholly unknown, it is best to set up about twelve chairs theater style, with a center isle between them. More chairs can always be added if needed, and adding chairs will be a morale booster.

The meeting room will need an altar for the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist. A rectangular table with a white cloth will work. In fact, a simple white twin bed sheet works well. Better yet, green, violet, red and white sheets can be inexpensively purchased and make nice seasonal coverings for a temporary altar.

The altar will need a fair linen, two candle sticks, an altar cross or icon, and if the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist is going to be celebrated an antimimension, a communion set, altar cloths (two corporals, or one corporal and a stiff pall, and a purificator) and a burse. The Church Planter will need to provide a small table to serve as a credence table. The credence table will need two cruets, bread box, lavabo bowl, and lavabo towel. Icons of our Lord, the Mother of God, and the angels and saints will also be needed. Liturgy booklets and hymnals should be placed on each chair, with more at the ready should more chairs be needed.

Communion bread (Prosphora) will need to be baked and be ready for the first Eucharistic Liturgy. An excellent recipe for leavened hosts can be found on the ROCOR Western Rite website, www.rwrv.org. These can be baked in quantity and frozen until needed.

If the Church Planter is a deacon or reader, and the first Service is of necessity something other than the Holy Eucharist, the meeting room should still be set up as noted above, with the exception that an antimimension, communion set, and credence table will not be needed. Regardless of the Service to be held, it is imperative that the meeting room be set up as a chapel with an altar-table, and that it have an ecclesiastical feel.

Step eighteen. The first Service. The Church Planter should arrive at the meeting room well in advance of the first Service so that he has time to prepare the room for worship. The altar and credence table must be set up, Liturgy booklets and hymnals put out, literature set out, and coffee prepared.

The guest book should be on a table in the back. The Greeter (often the Church Planter's wife) should be prepared to greet people as they arrive, hand them a bulletin, and direct them to the guest book. Every effort should be made to get visitors to sign in and give their address, phone number *and especially their e-mail address*. Introductory brochures should be placed near the guestbook or inserted in the bulletins. Offering envelopes should also be inserted in the bulletins.

If there are no men or older boys that are assisting the Church Planter, the Service can be conducted without acolytes. In no case should an older boy or man who is visiting be asked to serve. Serving in the sanctuary is a responsible ministry. Proven faithfulness and proper training are prerequisites. Even on a practical level, to have people vest and serve that may not return risks hurting the morale of those who really are interested in joining.

The Church Planter's first sermon is very important as he will never have a second chance to make a good first impression. It is vital that he makes a compelling case for the establishment of a new church from Scripture (the need for Western Orthodoxy, Christ's command to evangelize and advance the work of the Great Commission, etc.), and that he shares with the congregation his vision for the church.

Someone should be prepared to take up the tithes and offerings. Again, this may be the wife of the Church Planter. An offering should be taken at the inaugural Service and at every Sunday and Holy Day Service. The Church Planter should never be timid about this. God requires those who would serve Him to give as they are able (Deut. 16:17). It is an honor and privilege to worship God with tithes and offerings.

Fellowship time after the Service is very important. It should be a time of warm fellowship with refreshments. The church is not merely a house of worship or individuals gathered for worship, it is a community, and to build real community people must have

opportunities to get to know one another and to bond with one another. It is also vital that the Church Planter mingles with and talks with everyone who attends. He must win their affection and their trust if he is to serve as their pastor or leader. The best practice is to have fellowship and refreshments every Sunday after worship, and (after a core group has been established) a potluck luncheon one Sunday every month.

Step nineteen. Evaluate the first Sunday and follow up with those who attended. After getting a good night's sleep and giving his mind an opportunity to relax and reflect, the Church Planter should carefully and prayerfully evaluate the church's first Sunday. The Church planter should be honest with himself but not overly critical. It can be helpful for him to conduct the evaluation with his wife or any initial helpers that were there.

A follow-up letter should be sent to everyone that attended the first Service. The letter should be sent out immediately (Monday is best) by post or e-mail; and it should thank them for attending, share some good news about the first Sunday (attendance, enthusiasm, etc.), and future plans, invite questions or feed back by phone, e-mail or post, and close after inviting them back the next Sunday.

Those on the e-mail list should receive an additional e-mail on Thursday or Friday, and on Thursday or Friday of future weeks. This weekly e-mail should be a letter from the pastor, not a formal newsletter. It should contain news, upcoming events, teaching, encouragement, remind readers of Service times, and encourage them to invite family and friends to attend the next Sunday.

All follow-up letters and e-mails, updates and literature, should feature the Website address prominently; and the Church Planter should keep improving, updating and expanding the church Website. A report of the first Service, along with photographs, should appear on the Website as soon as possible. People love to see people, and visitors will be more easily attracted when they see pictures of other people who are already attending, so be sure to take photographs for the church Website. Pictures of the altar and the Church-Planter are fine, but photos of people are vital.

Step twenty. Continue to reach out. Outreach does not end with the first Service. Weekly outreach must continue. Keep advertising on the church page, get in the next edition of the telephone book, continue to contact the prospect list by post or e-mail, and send out press releases and put up flyers every time the church has a special event such as Christmas or Easter Services, an episcopal visit, a guest speaker, the beginning of Sunday School, a change of locations, etc.

Step twenty-one. Get people involved. Invite those who attend for several weeks to get involved. Involvement brings with it a sense of commitment and ownership. But start slowly. Making people feel "obligated" before they are ready could drive them away. Begin by recruiting people to serve as greeters and to take the offering, or put out a sign-up sheet to provide refreshments. Later a Sunday School, sisterhood, men's group, and a small choir can be organized, and older boys and men recruited and trained as acolytes.

Step twenty-two. Prepare the regular attending non-Orthodox for reception into the Church. As a stable group of regular attenders develops receive them as catechumens and begin the process of catechizing them in preparation for formal reception into the Orthodox Church.

Step twenty-three. Formally organize the church and adopt by-laws. When the new church has a stable nucleus of committed members, the church should be formally organized. It should be remembered though that those who are not already Orthodox Christians must be catechized and properly received before they can be considered members of the new church-plant and receive the sacraments.

The Church Planter should keep his bishop informed of his progress and of his plans to hold a congregational meeting to formally organize the church, and follow the bishop's counsel. Proposed by-laws should be prepared, and the by-laws should be formally adopted at the congregational meeting.

Step twenty-four. Incorporate the church and apply for a tax exempt number. This step may have already been undertaken earlier in the process, and once again the Church Planter must comply with all laws and regulations, and the directives of his bishop. In many states churches can easily incorporate without the assistance of a lawyer. It is generally a simple and inexpensive process. The office of the Secretary of State can often be very helpful.

Incorporation and tax exempt status will make the church "official" in the minds of the congregation and the community as a whole, and will make it easier for some prospects to take the new church seriously. It may even be possible to incorporate before the first Sunday Service is held.

Step twenty-five. Financing the new church. Money is vital to the success of the new church. Without adequate funding the church cannot rent meeting space, advertise, purchase supplies, support a pastor, or advance to a more permanent building. The Church Planter should never be embarrassed to talk about money, or God's plan for financing the work of the church - tithing. Tithing is repeatedly spoken of in the pages of the Bible. The Church planter should teach and preach about tithing, and lead by example.

The Holy Scriptures make it clear that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and the Church Planter and the local leaders should be teaching this principle to the congregation. If the Church Planter is a priest and will be remaining as a pastor, his support must be planned for. If the Church Planter is not a priest, the congregation must be planning how it will support even a bi-vocational priest in the future. While a church planting priest may have to go for some time before drawing any financial support, his support should be a priority for the new church.

Although the priest may be a bi-vocational “tentmaker” for some time, he should be paid a part time salary as soon as practical. Even a token salary will demonstrate a commitment to the priest and will be appreciated. Regular raises in his support should be given to the priest as the church grows, bringing him to half time and then full time support as quickly as possible. Financial support of the priest should be a priority, as a man who can give more and more of his time to the church can be a more effective pastor to his people, and can lead the church to stability and growth more quickly.

The priest who refuses to teach this important principle is doing his congregation a disservice. He may soon find that his family are the only ones that are really sacrificing, and that his congregation shows little concern for the financial needs of the church. The congregation needs to be taught to support the church with their time, talents and treasure (tithes and offerings).

The End of the Beginning

Completing these twenty-five steps is not the end of the process of planting a new church. The new church has been conceived in the heart of the Church Planter and brought to birth, but as with any newborn, the new church must be nurtured, guided and cared for as it grows and matures.

The Church Planter should review this *Guide* often, carefully reflecting on the twenty-five steps. Are there any steps that were skipped? Have any been only partially completed? Should any be repeated? These are questions that the Church Planter should be asking himself, his wife, and any close co-laborers.

The Church Planter must be thoroughly committed to the new church plant. Just as no loving parent gives up on a child because of health issues, but provides all of the care that the child needs to grow and thrive, so the Church Planter must be committed to the young church. He must be willing and ready to stick with it no matter what disappointments occur or obstacles appear in the way.

The Church Planter’s mission is to plant a church. He must never lower his expectations. The Church Planter must not allow difficulties, setbacks or slowness of growth to cause him to settle for merely establishing a domestic oratory or a prayer group. The Church Planter will have many crosses to bear in planting and growing a new church, but that is the nature of church planting - no cross no crown.

Having brought the new church from conception to birth, the Church Planter now takes on an additional role - that of Pastor. *A Guide to Pastoral Theology, The Orthodox Pastor*, by Archbishop John Shahovskoy (SVS Press, c. 2008) may be a real help to the Church Planter, especially if he is newly ordained, has only served as an assistant in the past, or is not a priest. “Although specifically written and tailored for those in the sacramental priesthood of the Orthodox Christian faith, this work contains valuable advice for all pastors charged with imparting ‘the one thing needful’ to souls within their

care. Likewise, church wardens, teachers, parents, musicians - and anyone involved in parish life - will benefit from the author's sage counsel regarding the Christ-like management of a parish community" (from the back cover). While this book was written with Eastern Rite pastors in mind, it is easily adaptable for use by Western Rite clergy and lay leaders.

Three Keys to Success: Commitment, Communication and Location

There are three keys to success in planting a new church: Commitment, Communication and Location.

The first key to successfully planting a new church is Commitment. The Church Planter must be thoroughly committed to planting a new church, and if married his wife must be equally committed. Church planting is a difficult and often lonely work. There will be obstacles, set backs and heart breaks. There will be times when those the Church Planter counted on for help and support will turn away, money will always be tight, resources few, leisure time will be more limited than ever, and all kinds of difficulties will arise. If the Church Planter is not thoroughly committed he will soon lower his expectations to establishing a home oratory or a prayer group, or give up altogether. If the Church Planter's wife is not equally committed, difficulties arising in the process of planting a new church can lead to domestic problems. But for those with the faith and commitment to conceive and bring a new church to birth there is no greater joy. After the new church is born and begins to grow, past difficulties seem like nothing and are soon forgotten.

Communication is the second key to success. This is the information age and the Church Planter must make effective use of modern technology. If he is not skilled in the use of modern technology he must be willing to get the help he needs. Do not cut corners in this area.

The most important tool the Church Planter or the Pastor has today is the Internet. A high quality church Website should be the priority of the Church Planter. Only seven out of ten churches in the United States have websites, and many of those who do have Websites have poor quality ones that are actually counterproductive.

Why is a Website so important? Because this is the information age and the Internet is the primary source of information for most Americans today. Recent studies show that 44% of online Americans use the Internet for religious purposes and 35% of all American adults!

Orthodox churches have a two-fold mission: 1.) to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him; and 2.) the fulness of the Apostolic Faith to those who do. In the past year 17.4 million non-churchgoing American adults visited the websites of places of worship. In addition, in the past thirty days 10.4 million churchgoing

American adults visited the websites of a church other than their own. In the past six months 21 million did so, and over the past year 28.7 million!

What are those who visit church websites looking for? 43% visit to find out about its worship Services; 29% what activities the church is involved in; 28% look for a map or directions to the church; 26% to watch video; 26% to listen to audio; 22% to see what the beliefs of the church are; 15% to see what denomination the church belongs to; and 12% to contact the pastor.

Those who are already members of a congregation also frequently visit the website of their church: 28% in the past thirty days, 44% in the past six months, and 57% in the past year. A church Website is vital for keeping members informed and for educating them in the Faith. Unfortunately, 32% of churchgoing American adults never visit their own church's Website, but that is very often because there is none. 30% of churches in the United States do not have a website to visit [4].

"Almost half of all American adults who are online are using the Internet for religious purposes, according to a new study from Grey Matter Research (Phoenix, Arizona). That 44% of online Americans use the Internet in this manner means the Internet is used for religious purposes by 35% of *all* American adults" [5].

"Nineteen percent have visited a website designed to provide religious instruction or learning during the last six months. Seventeen percent have read religious-oriented blogs once a month or more.... Among online Americans, Internet use for religious purposes is more common among the young. Fifty-seven percent of online adults under age 35 use the Internet for religion, compared to 48% who are 35 to 49 years, 36% who are 50 to 64, and 31% who are 65 or older.... However, religious use of the Internet does not tend to vary much according to which religious identity people claim. Protestants and Roman Catholics are equally likely to use the Internet for spiritual purposes.... One exception is evangelical Christians. Ninety-one percent of evangelicals who are online use the Internet for religious purposes, which is much higher than for any other religious group measured" [6].

80% or more of all the visitors that a local church that is online will get through the door come through the church Website. Newspaper, phone book, and all other types of advertising should be designed to direct people to the church's Website. A high quality and effective church Website should be the priority of every Church Planter and of every Pastor. Yet, only seven out of ten American churches have a website, and as already pointed out, many of those that do have them have websites of such poor quality that they are actually counterproductive.

Church Planters and Pastors should make having a quality church Website a high priority. The Webmaster or Webmistress should not only have the necessary technical knowledge to design a Website and get it online, but should know and understand the Orthodox Faith and the Western Rite, have marketing savvy, and be artistic and creative.

A good rule of thumb is that you get what you pay for. The church should never agree to allowing a hosting service to place ads on the Website in return for free or reduced cost service. Having a first class church Website designed and put online is not expensive and is worth every penny. Once it is online the Website is reaching out 24 hours per day, seven days a week and 52 weeks per year. Do not cut corners in this area.

If the Church Planter does not have the skills or time to design and maintain a high quality church Website, get it online, and serve as Webmaster, he needs to get someone to help him. Do not hesitate to hire a professional if necessary. There are many website professionals in the United States and throughout the world.

The Webmistress at Holy Cross Orthodox Church is Hannah Frederick. She is an Orthodox Christian and a member of Holy Cross parish. She can design, get online and maintain a Website for Orthodox churches inexpensively. She can be reached by e-mail at: hrfrederick@outlook.com or by phone at: (402) 677-1062. She can answer your questions and is ready to help.

The third key to success in planting a new church is Location. Choosing a suitable meeting place for a church-plant to hold Services is absolutely vital. As pointed out in Step Six, there are many possible meeting places. All but one (meeting in a home) will cost money. Do not cut corners here. Location may not be everything, but it is very important.

Unless the church-plant is going to be made in a small town (a town of hundreds, not thousands) where the Church Planter is already known, a new church-plant should never begin in a home chapel. Such church-plants seldom succeed and at best linger on for a while as a domestic oratory. Even in a small town, the Church Planter must see a home meeting as a very temporary step to something better and more effective.

Home meeting places in cities and larger towns do not work. People are very reluctant to visit the home of a stranger, and there are often parking and zoning problems as well. While the Church Planter may be able to initially gather his family and a few friends to meet in his home, the church will quickly plateau and stagnate. Do not settle for this.

While many different kinds of meeting places from borrowed churches, to mortuary chapels, schools and YMCA meeting rooms have been successfully used, depending on the local situation, what is available to rent and cost, perhaps the best all around choice of a place for a Church Planter to begin a Western Rite Orthodox Church is in a meeting room of a hotel.

Hotels are public places and few would feel uncomfortable or unsafe visiting a hotel meeting room. Good quality hotels are usually in better parts of town and located near Interstate exits or on a main thoroughfare, and are well kept and tastefully decorated. They are quiet, and the staff can set up tables and chairs for the Church Planter and often provide coffee for fellowship time after Services. While not cheap, hotel meeting

rooms are reasonably priced and can be reserved for months guaranteeing the Church Planter the same room at the same time for many Sundays to come. A six month commitment can often gain the Church Planter a discount in the rent. In addition, the room can also be rented for important holy day Services such as Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Ascension Day.

Having a good location is crucial for a successful church-plant. Don't cut corners in this area. The Church Planter needs to step out in faith in this area, stretch the budget if necessary, and get the best meeting place that he can. It is well worth the investment.

Conclusion

Church planting is an exciting ministry, and the only way that the Great Commission can be fulfilled. Today there are more than one hundred million unchurched in America, plus around two hundred million more who are non-Orthodox Christians or who belong to non-Christian religions, making the United States one of the largest mission fields in the world. The mission of the Pioneer Church Planter must be to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him, and the fullness of the Apostolic Faith to those who do.

There is a tremendous and ongoing move of the Holy Spirit today leading Christians of all Western traditions to the Orthodox Church. Twenty years ago Anglicans made up the second largest number of converts to the Orthodox Church, today they may well make up the largest single group of converts; but Western Christians of all traditions are finding their way home to the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church is the Church of the fathers of all Western Christians because the Orthodox Church is the original and only Church founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the first millennium of Christianity there was but one Church and both Eastern and Western Christendom were Orthodox. Western Christians entering to the Orthodox Church are just coming home to the Church of their fathers.

Christianity is an Eastern religion, having originated in the Middle East; but Christianity is also Catholic or Universal, meaning that it is for all peoples, of all races, nations and cultures, for all time. To say that to be Orthodox a person must change cultures is little different from the Judaizers in the early Church who said that for Greeks to become Christians they had to change their cultural identity and become Jews. No, the Orthodox Church is Catholic and this Eastern religion can be proclaimed and lived within the context of any culture. As St. John of San Francisco said, "Never, never, never let anyone tell you that in order to be Orthodox, you must be Eastern. The West was fully Orthodox for a thousand years."

With the restoration of Western Orthodoxy which was lost to the Church due to the papal schism in 1054 and the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, a new way of evangelizing Western people is now possible. Cross cultural evangelism is always difficult, and while many Western people have entered the Orthodox Church others

have found the cultural barriers difficult or even insurmountable. With the restoration of a thriving and growing Western Rite, the Orthodox Church can now reach out to such people in a cultural context that they understand and are at home in. This is not a mere accommodation. Western Christendom was Orthodox for a thousand years, producing many Church Fathers and untold numbers of saints. There is no reason why Orthodox Christianity cannot thrive in a Western cultural context once again.

The need for more Western Rite Orthodox churches in the United States, the British Commonwealth, Europe, and throughout the Western world is great, but the resources for church planters are few. This *Guide* was written to help Pioneer Church Planters to plant Western Rite Orthodox churches, and to encourage those who are feeling led to plant a church to step out in faith and make a start. It will also be of help to those who have made a start at planting a mission-church, but have run into obstacles or haven't seen it grow and thrive. Existing church-plants can be rebooted and this *Guide* can help.

A Guide to Western Rite Orthodox Church Planting is a short, easy to use and understand step by step guide that will help the Church Planter to conceive, give birth to, and begin to grow a new Western Rite Orthodox church-plant. Now it is up to you. If I can answer any questions or provide any needed advice do not hesitate to contact me. I am here to help. I can be reached by phone at (402) 573-6558, or by e-mail at venovak@hughes.net

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3. Five Interesting Facts About Orthodox Church Geography and Demography in the United States, Alexei Krindatch, Research Coordinator, Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in North and Central America, p. 12.

4. Statistics gathered from, New Research Reveals Why People Visit Church Websites, Christianity Today Liveblog, May 31, 2012; and from Almost Half of online Americans use the Internet for religious purposes, Grey Matter Research & Consulting, Original Release Date May 17, 2012).

5. Almost Half of online Americans use the Internet for religious purposes, Grey Matter Research & Consulting, Original Release Date May 17, 2012).

6. Ibid, Grey Matter Research & Consulting.

c. 2015, by Fr. Victor E. Novak.

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