

Celebrating CBFNC's New Church Starts



Linda Jones

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Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. — Acts 13:1-3

The last 25 years have brought a shift in our culture. There are more and more people who profess “no religion” (24%). Today, Christians are not met with hostility, just indifference. People do not see the relevance of church and live comfortably without it. Yet, people are still asking age-old questions about life and meaning.

“Called” people from healthy churches are needed, ready to assist in starting new ones. Especially needed are Christians who will venture out into our culture with fresh, innovative ways of reaching people who will never cross the threshold of established churches. CBFNC has valued, encouraged, mentored, and financially supported new church starts from the very beginning. Two early new church starts share their stories.

MEET DANIEL SOSTAITA, PASTOR OF IGLESIA CRISTIANA SIN FRONTERAS,

meeting at Jefferson Christian Church, Winston-Salem. The day he received Christ, he received God’s call to do something for Christ. He came to the United States from Argentina in 1998 and started Baptist Theological University Cali in Colombia, graduating with an M. Div., (2010-2012). Seminary was a place to learn, but he was not really sure about being a pastor. The seminary director saw his potential and encouraged him which led him to Iglesia Union Cross (Winston-Salem) as a leader. One day, Iglesia Union Cross was celebrating its 10-year anniversary. A chaplain kept looking at him and after 3-4 hours, gave him a strong hug. “I’ve looked at you all morning. You are the real pastor of this church.” So in 2006, Daniel, his wife Irene, and daughters Barbara, Daniela, and Victoria moved to King, NC to start a new church, Iglesia Cristiana Sin Fronteras (Without Borders Christian Church). He saw a lot of needs in the community. Daniel states, “This church needed so much more than a Sunday pastor; the people attending church had so many situations and deep problems.”

Daniel talked to over 100 people about his vision and started a network. His vision: to share the gospel and also to heal as Jesus healed. Jesus walked in the neighborhoods and provided for all their needs. Daniel’s vision included providing a network of all the resources for the community. This network of resources now includes Wake Forest Baptist Hospital’s FaithHealthNC, immigration lawyers, Family Services, counselor services, Forsyth



Medical Center, the NC Department of Health and Human Services, a tutoring program, music lessons, and a Mexican Consulate. Also part of this network is the police chief, Forsyth County leaders, Faith ID, Spanish League, and the Forsyth County sheriff. Now there are meetings to care for domestic violence victims, soccer camp, VBS, and a yearly community festival. Daniel states, “Jesus always has a question: ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ We need to look at Jesus; he was a great pastor. I am imitating Jesus.”

GAIL COULTER PLANTED PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH IN JULY 2001.

Five pastors were meeting as a peer group and they decided that a new church start was needed in Hendersonville. Gail was the Associate Pastor at First Baptist Church, Asheville with no intentions to be a pastor but she participated in early planning committee work. CBFNC was involved from the beginning. Jim Fowler, the missions coordinator of CBFNC, coordinated conversations among the pastors at churches in Buncombe and Madison Counties about what a CBF church in Henderson County might look like. As the group discussed pastoral leadership, Jim was the one who asked, “Gail, how about you?” CBFNC provided financial support, along with Baptist congregations in the United Association of Charlotte as well as the sacrificial and faithful giving by members of Providence and members of other congregations. The Baptist State Convention was part of the planning. Once Gail was chosen as pastor, however, the BSC and the local association opted out. Gail states, “I think the huge thing is the buy-in of five area churches plus other churches that regularly gave. The amazing thing was the remarkable group of people that came out of the blue.”

Five CBFNC churches and several individuals financially helped. The music minister, a layperson at FBC Asheville, and her husband committed to serve for one year. FBC Asheville helped tremendously providing special music and Sunday School teachers. A local Lutheran congregation rented to Providence their building which Providence eventually purchased. Sermons centered around community and discipleship. The first Sunday School class was held at the adjacent barbershop and the children’s class at the tea shop on the other side! A clue to the successful start was a newspaper article about the start of Providence. The Hendersonville Times-News had a front page article and picture of Gail on Saturday, July 21, 2001 - the day before the first service was held in the movie theater - with the title: “A dream rekindled: Cooperative

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ANNIVERSARY FEATURE: Racial Reconciliation and Justice Ministry Team



by Olivia Wakefield | Chair

In 2007-2008 the CBFNC Strategic Plan identified diversity as a focal point for future ministries. In 2007, the CBFNC General Assembly approved the creation of a Diversity Task Force. (Ironically, the initial task force reflected the need to embrace and increase diversity in CBFNC as four Caucasian, relatively young, male pastors formed the original CBFNC Diversity Task Force. Fortunately, the group quickly expanded to include gender, ethnic, and age diversity!)

Early on, the task force decided to focus primarily on ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation, specifically between African-American and Caucasian churches and communities. As a result, the name changed to Racial Reconciliation Ministry Team. More recently, the name has changed to Racial Reconciliation and Justice Ministry Team. Reconciliation cannot occur without first having a relationship to reconcile, and then it must include responding to racial injustice and oppression in our local communities.

Along the way, we have sought God's guidance in how to promote racial justice and reconciliation initiatives as well as increase ethnic diversity in CBFNC churches. We have held regional gatherings, led workshops at our Annual Gathering, created a curriculum, sponsored interns at partner divinity schools throughout North Carolina and attended REI's (Racial Equity Institute) two-day Racial Equity Workshop Phase 1 as a team.

Our current initiative is providing scholarships for CBFNC ministers to attend REI's two-day Racial Equity Workshop



Phase 1 because we felt like it was such a powerful, eye-opening experience for our team members. Personally, I had attended several diversity training and prejudice reduction workshops in the past and was expecting the REI workshop to be similar. Instead, I was surprised by the emphasis on providing a historical context for how racism has been embedded in our nation from the beginning. By the end of the second day, I really was impacted by the power of looking honestly at the past, reflecting on my own ethnicity (and how that impacts who I am and what I value) and thinking about how this information changes how I respond to acts of racial injustice around me. If you are interested in attending this workshop and learning more about a scholarship, please contact Larry Hovis! It will definitely be worth the two-day investment.

We are continually trying to figure out "next steps" and challenging both ourselves as a ministry team and CBFNC churches/members to go beyond surface conversations about ethnicity and racial justice. One of our goals is to empower YOU as a layperson or minister in a local church to be the presence of Christ in your church and community so that healing, justice, and reconciliation can occur in your local context. My journey as an almost-charter member of this team has been and is transformative. My prayer is that your life too will be changed as we all seek ways to bring about racial reconciliation and justice to our communities. 🌈

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Baptist Fellowship congregation will begin meeting Sunday." Mary Apicella, the current pastor says, "One of my favorite quotes from that article, that I believe is still true to who we are: "Providence Baptist Congregation will be a place where people can be open about their faith," Coulter says. She wants those who attend to be willing to open their lives, minds, and hearts to God and see God work in their lives. 'I want us to be able to talk about things that are hard,' she said. 'We might not find the answers but we can still talk about them.'"

At one point in the church's journey, the congregation had difficulty getting a loan for a building. Believing in the work of God at Providence Baptist Church, individuals in the church signed promissory notes at 6% interest and the building was financed!

Starting a church was a lot of work; Intense work! Gail retired in 2008 and was followed by Julie Merritt Lee for seven years. The Sunday afternoon worship meal began during Julie's tenure. Gail recounts, "what's priceless about this church is the Sunday afternoon meal for anyone who wants to come." She says it's been an amazing journey. Things happened that she never expected; things that Gail didn't create or control. Gail declares it was the imagination of the Holy Spirit! Mary Apicella became the church's third pastor on June 11, 2017. The year 2021 will be Providence's 20th anniversary. 🌈

