

# One-Year Church Planting Residency

## Raising Support



**Dylan & Christina Dodson (and Finley)**

Partnering with  
Stadia Church Planting Network and  
Lifepointe Church, Raleigh, NC

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## The Urgency

### Bad News

We all know the number of people connected to a local church is declining. According to Gallup, Inc., no matter how the question was asked:

- Only about 40% of Americans presented themselves as regular church attendees.
- Fewer than 40% of the country's adults are actually in church on Sundays.

And this is only attendance; those actively involved in a church community is even lower.

In Wake County, the area in which we live, **88% of people do not attend an evangelical church on a given Sunday.** In fact, the Barna Group recently ranked Raleigh as the 69<sup>th</sup> most post-Christian city in America. What this means is that Raleigh is increasingly moving away from the Gospel. This isn't some other country or a traditionally non-Christian part of the county we're talking about. It's here, right in our own backyard, and in our own neighborhoods.

### Good News

But there's good news! And it's the Gospel, and the power of the Gospel to change lives. Because of that, we are committed to playing a significant role in reaching those in our sphere of influence who live their lives far from God. That role includes planting a church in a local Raleigh community within two years so we might be *"the light of the world--like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden."* (Matthew 5:14)

## Why Raleigh?



Raleigh is currently one of the fastest growing cities in America. In fact, according to *Forbes* 2014 list, it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest growing in the US, and it's projected to stay that way for at least the next fifteen years.

As Raleigh continues to experience exponential growth, more churches are needed to cover this growing metropolis. Even if the ratio of churchgoers were linear to the number of churches (which it isn't as we'll explain below), Raleigh will need more churches just to keep up with its growth. It's obvious that Raleigh needs *more* churches, and healthy ones at that.

Additionally, between the list of colleges and universities in the Triangle area, and the excellent job opportunities there as well, Raleigh is not only growing substantially domestically, but within the international community. Because of this, we'll not only have the opportunity to impact the city of Raleigh and its surrounding communities, but even other nations and nationalities.

When you consider all of the above, the question isn't "Why Raleigh?," or even, "Why not Raleigh?" Rather, the question is "What are we waiting for?"

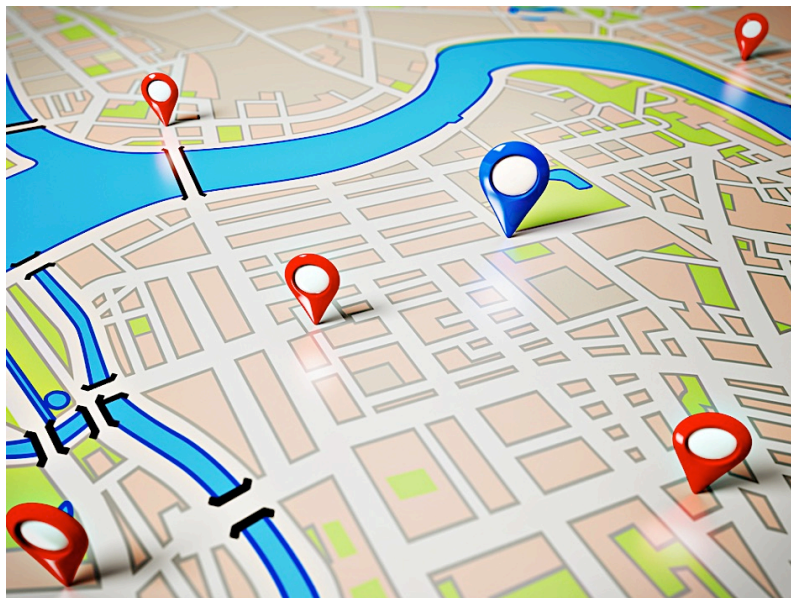
## Do We Really Need Another Church?

It's true; there are already a number of great churches in the Raleigh-Durham area. So why another one? More specifically, why a new church plant? Tim Keller best explains the why behind it in his book, *Center Church*:

The way to grow the number of Christians in a city is not mainly through church renewal, but through church planting. When stagnant churches go through a renewal phase and begin to grow, it is typically through transfer growth from other churches. Strong programs attract believers who are suffering under poor preaching, poor discipleship offerings, or other signs of unhealthy discipleship elsewhere. But even older renewed churches cannot integrate unchurched persons like a new congregation can. Studies confirm that the average new church gains one-third to two-thirds of its new members from the ranks of people who are not attending any worshiping body, while churches over ten to fifteen years of age gain 80 to 90 percent of new members by transfer from other congregations. **The average new congregation, then, will bring new people into the life of the body of Christ at six to eight times the rate of an older congregation of the same size** [*italics Dylan's*].

And how many churches are too many? More from Tim Keller:

Studies and anecdotal evidence indicate that if there is one church per ten thousand residents, approximately 1 percent of the population will be churchgoers. If this ratio goes to one church per one thousand residents, some 15 to 20 percent of the city's population goes to church. If the number goes to one per five hundred residents, the number may approach 40 percent or more. ***The relationship of the number of churches to churchgoing people is exponential, not linear*** [*bold Dylan's*].



## The Power of the Local Church – Christina’s Story

If the previous info is not compelling enough, consider Christina’s story. She tells how a local church helped to completely transform her life, and why she believes so strongly in the life-changing power of a strong, evangelical church within a community:

I grew up in a broken home with its own share of abuse and neglect. As far as my religious beliefs, I was an atheist. I couldn’t fathom that there existed a loving father because I didn’t feel cared for. I concluded that there couldn’t be a God, let alone a so-called loving one.

In high school my lifestyle was bent on pleasing other people in attempts to feel loved. I was promiscuous in attempts to feel loved by boys, dabbled in drugs and alcohol in order to feel popular with friends, and strived in an unhealthy, perfectionist manner to get good grades and be the perfect daughter in order to feel loved by my family.



*Christina serving on a mission trip through Port City Church*

One week before leaving home for my first year of college, and out of boredom and with the intent to mock Christians and their beliefs, I read a book called *A Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. I learned so much about God, myself, and what I was created for. For the first time I saw my own sin for what it was and I realized that I couldn’t save myself; I prayed for God to save me and to show me how to follow him. I specifically prayed for God to help me meet people who would help me figure out how to follow him.

God answered that prayer. As soon as I got to college I met my friend, Virginia, who took me to church at Port City Community Church in Wilmington, NC. She helped me get plugged into a small group, a college ministry, and into serving. Through that local body of believers, I met other Christians who helped deepen my faith, helped me understand how to read the Bible, and showed me how to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Biblical teaching, gathering in worship with other believers, and the community that was provided by Port City Community Church literally transformed my life. I learned how to walk in faith, know Jesus personally, abide in the Holy Spirit, share the gospel, and serve and love God’s people. I learned how to be a disciple of Christ, and I learned how to make other disciples.

Best of all, because of the work and influence of this local church, I truly learned that God is not only a loving heavenly Father, but He is *my* loving, heavenly Father.

## Saying “Yes” to God – Dylan’s Story

Dylan grew up attending and benefitting from a strong, evangelical local church—Hope Community Church in Raleigh. And it was at the age of 19 that he knew with great conviction God’s call on his life to plant a church in a community in need of one, and to pastor that church with integrity, humility, selfless generosity, strong, godly leadership, and to make it his life’s mission—no matter the cost—to make disciples who make other disciples. In Dylan’s own words:

I grew up in and around the church my whole life, and I loved God deeply, but working in ministry was not something I intended nor initially desired to do. Although my faith was always important to me, I never thought of myself as pastoring in any capacity. That all changed following the death of my father when I was 19.

Shortly after he died, and after speaking at his funeral and sharing the gospel there, I couldn’t shake the compelling vision or calling of doing anything other than pastoring. It became clearer and clearer to me that the Spirit was changing my plans, heart, and desires, and leading in me in a new direction—not just towards ministry in general, but church planting and pastoring specifically.

I changed my college major to Religion, wrote and published a book (*True Pain, True Grief, and a True God*), and began serving in greater leadership capacities at my local church—leading and teaching small groups, volunteering on the programming and production side of services, playing keyboard in the band, and speaking during youth services. During that time I completed both my Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree in Religion, and married my beautiful wife, Christina, herself a deeply committed Christ follower, and who was working on a large church staff at the time. I began taking on even more ministry responsibilities at church, including speaking periodically in the services. My heart and passion were and are for making solid, growing disciples of Jesus Christ.

Since that time, I’ve had other experiences working at and volunteering at various churches, including helping to plant Live Oak Church from its beginning stages in Wilmington, NC. Through all of these undertakings, God was steadily building into my wife and I, and moving us step by step closer to the calling we share today.

What I know above everything is that planting God’s church is not about me. It’s about Jesus. In fact, this quote from 18th century German Pastor Nicolaus Zinzendorf sums up my place in this journey completely:

***“Preach the Gospel; die forgotten.”***

It’s God’s story and God’s church, not mine. I’m simply putting my “yes” on the table before Him. I’m asking you to prayerfully consider partnering with us in this calling and mission.



*Beach Baptism at Live Oak Church where two guys in Dylan’s Small Group were baptized*

## Next Step – Church Residency

### Our Response

Because the local church has played such an irreplaceable role in our spiritual growth and discipleship, it is our heart's mission, and what we feel is a clear and compelling call from God, to pursue the ministry in order plant a church in the Raleigh area within two years.

To do this, we have submitted to the Stadia Church Planting Network to better provide Dylan with the practical training, accountability, leadership, and resources necessary to equip him as a church-planting pastor.

We've chosen to partner with Stadia because they are successful, national church planting ministry providing necessary training, invaluable resources, connections to other churches and leaders, and leadership accountability, especially within the first few years of a church plant. In addition, churches planted in partnership with Stadia have over a 90% success rate.



### One-Year Church Residency

Joining with Stadia means that Dylan's next step toward becoming a church-planting pastor includes a one-year full-time residency program with a local church in which he will be provided hands on biblical training and practical, real life ministry experience.



For this official year of residency, we have chosen to partner with Lifepointe Church, a multi-site church in the Triangle area that is also a Stadia Network partner church.

Dylan's residency begins soon. As with most ministry residencies, we must raise the financial support that will sustain us throughout his year of intense training. At the conclusion of his year-long residency, this, along with his previously completed theological training (a B.A. and a Master's in Religion), as well as his additional previous ministry training, will provide a solid foundation for the realistic realities of vocational ministry, pastoral leadership, and church planting.

## Your Partnership

The truth is, Dylan cannot fulfill his residency without your help. Church residency requires a full-time commitment of 40+ hours each week, and Dylan must raise 100% of his financial support (equivalent of a full-time salary) through September of next year.

We believe God has called us to accept this challenge, so we are asking for your help. We are asking you to give (and live) generously. Will you consider making a year's financial commitment to partnering with us in this mission? And know without a doubt that your commitment of generosity will have far more long-term and far-reaching results than just one year as the fruit of it pours into the life and future of a new church and its community.

Will you partner with us by committing to give **\$100 per month** through September 2016?

Donations are tax-deductible, and there are two ways to give:

1. Checks made out to Lifepointe Church with "Leadership Resident" in the memo.
2. Online at [lifepointechurch.com/give/](http://lifepointechurch.com/give/) -- Simply click the "Give Now" button and enter your information allotting it to "Leadership Resident - Dodson" in the giving reference drop down menu. You can also sign up for reoccurring giving.

Your ongoing monthly support for the next year, no matter the amount, will be invaluable and deeply appreciated as Dylan completes this next step of critical pastoral and church planting training. If you are planning to support us with a reoccurring or a one-time gift please let us know by emailing Dylan or Christina so that we can keep that information for our records.

## Contact Info

Should you have any questions, or just want more details, please don't hesitate to contact us. You can also find this info online at <http://dylandodson.com/support-us/>

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