



CENTRAL STATES CHURCH EXTENSION

Church Planting · Church Rescue · Pulpit Supply

Serving the Great Plain States with IFCA International

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Newest Official Work: Longview, Texas

The Board of Central States Church Extension has chosen to officially designate Longview, Texas as the location of an IFCA Church plant. Pray with us as we seek the Lord's direction!

Another Church?

There was a report published in ReligionNews.com in 2021 that revealed a trend that does not reflect well on the church in America. "The study, which analyzed church data from 34 Protestant denominations and groups, found that 4,500 churches closed in 2019, while about 3,000 new congregations were started." Simple math shows that 1,500 churches are closed each year without replacement. It is not surprising that this is happening in independent Bible churches as well. I reflect on a time in the recent past when the IFCA had member churches in Oklahoma and Texas. As of writing today, there are NO IFCA member churches in either state.

I am privileged to serve as the Director of Central States Church Extension and on the IFCA Church Planting Commission. Our purpose with CPC is "To cultivate church planting as a core ministry of IFCA International." In addition to this, "Central States Church Extension exists for the purpose of propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the establishment of new churches and by assistance to existing churches with a view to their becoming and remaining independent fundamental churches; and to place pastors and Christian workers in fields of service." We are all about planting IFCA Bible churches. There is no apology here, for we have heard our Savior's call to "Make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). He has not taken back His command for us to go, nor has He created a plan B.

So, what is the issue with 4,500 churches closing in a single year? Obviously, we do not know all the factors that bring a church to dissolution. Thom Rainer, in his book *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, gives several symptoms that generally leads to the death of a local assembly. It may be that the church was focused on an individual rather than Christ. It might be that the church did not adapt well with changes in the neighborhood. It might be that their budget or their mission statement moved away from the things that cause a church to be healthy or reproduce. Lack of prayer or purpose also plays a significant factor. In our day, it seems that viability is based on size, facility appearance, and website appeal.

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Another Church? Continued.

I share with you my heart in all this. As one who has been blessed in the ministry of IFCA Bible churches over the years, I want to see more and more communities have this blessing in their town as well. Sound teaching, beautiful fellowship, and a heart to reproduce a healthy church into another community is at the center of the purpose of Church Planting Commission and Central States Church Extension. Truly, our harvest field is very large. Just in the CSCE arena, there are over 50 million people – and about 15 IFCA Bible churches.

When we go into a new community, be it Longview, Texas or Enid, Oklahoma, we recognize that there are other churches operating in the area and a few of them may be compatible with our own mission. A friend of mine set up a new funeral home in one of the cities where I lived. I asked him what he intended when he opened for business. His reply was that they were not seeking all the business of the city, but they were praying for their fair share. Clearly in a city like Longview, Texas with 81,000 people, no one church could minister to all who live there. More ministry is necessary to reach such a large population. In addition to the argument that more churches are needed, we add that specifically, an IFCA Bible church is nowhere to be seen in Longview. Our driving desire is to see that this lack be filled with a healthy Bible church that will reproduce itself into another community. We will probably not plant 4,500 churches this year (yet I am an optimistic!), however we are glad to start just one.... In Longview, in Sanger, TX, and in Enid, OK. Yes, another church! May the Lord bless and direct us in this great work. We beg for your prayers. We need workers in the Harvest. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest.” (Luke 10:2)

Dr. Robert Courtney, Executive Director

Please Pray with us:

Our Needs

Church Planters and Pastors

Partnering Churches to help establish new works

Our existing ministries for their healthy growth



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