

Church Planting Guide Book



TRAC Board of Evangelism

November 2013

SEND YOUR BEST!

A guide book for internal self-assessment of readiness for start-up of Preaching Point with a Vision of Planting a Church

*“... let us overflow continually with the
proclamation and witness by our life to the
Lord Jesus – that we may plant churches that
will plant churches.”*

*(Rev. Ong Hwai Teik,
Chairperson,
Board of Evangelism, 1995)*

Table of Contents

I. The Purpose of this Guide Book	3
II. Success Factors.....	4
1. Challenges faced in becoming a Local Conference	6
III Failure Factors	9
1. Challenges faced resulting in Closure of Preaching Points ...	11
IV. Church Planting Guidelines	14
V. Self-Assessment Form for Church Planting Readiness (<i>centre page as a pull-out</i>)	

I. The Purpose of this Guide Book

This guide book can be the starting point for your church in praying and discussing your internal self-assessment of readiness for starting a Preaching Point with a vision of planting a church.

There is no single model in church planting that applies to all cultures, contexts, and ministry realities. Some of them are more effective in new population growth areas, while others are more effective in areas where Christianity may have been in existence for a long time but where the church is in a stage of stagnancy (maintenance mode) or even decline.

The TRAC Board of Evangelism had been working on gathering feedback from among our TRAC churches on our church planting efforts since the last quadrennium (2009-12). We would like to share the feedback and experiences that we have received through responses to the surveys conducted, interactions with different people and book resources.

It is our prayer that the sharing and information within this Guide Book will be of substantive help in your church planting initiative.

TRAC Board of Evangelism

November 2013

SEND YOUR BEST!

II. Success Factors

Firstly, we would like to share the responses to our 2012 Survey from successful church planting endeavour.

- **Prayer:**
 - Meeting regularly for prayer.
 - Morning prayer meetings in church premises.
 - Prayer: dependence upon God to carry out the work.
- **Core Group:**
 - Strong core group (pioneers).
 - Core group of committed leaders who persevered in overseeing the Preaching Point that was entrusted to them.
 - Unity and having the same vision.
 - Committed covenant members with long-term commitments.
 - Active and committed core group of people; people who were willing to come out and immerse themselves fully to the local church planting project; leadership team was able to work together well.
 - Core team – small, dedicated, sacrificial, united, prayerful and yet willing to act when necessary.
- **Pastoral Support:**
 - Adequate pastoral and pulpit support.
 - Support of mother church Pastor
- **Vision:**
 - Vision and focus: To evangelise the surrounding area.
 - Clear vision of starting a Local Conference.
- **Discipleship:**
 - Teaching and fellowship, meeting in Care Groups.
 - Establishment of Sunday school which meets the needs of parents.
 - Vibrant Bible Study and Cell Groups.

- Sound and solid teaching – Bible-based preaching and small group study; example – in everything, leaders set the example.
- **Serving in ministries:**
 - New Christians: willing to learn, supportive of ministries, eager to serve.
 - Willing to sacrifice time and resources, to be Charter Members, involved in serving by organising into teams.
 - Every member ministry – everyone was encouraged to do something, no matter how small (e.g. worship team, serving and washing, fetching, etc).
- **Outreach:**
 - Sunday visitations to non-Christians.
 - Regular visitation to neighbouring community (engaged 2 paid staff); outreach programmes – free tuition, medical awareness programme; festive celebrations – Christmas, Easter.
 - Complete dependence on Holy Spirit to empower us to reach out.
 - Frequent visitation: building contacts with the community – personal touch and pastoral care; outreach activities: brought people into contact with the church (e.g. Alpha, Easter and Christmas Evangelistic gatherings).
- **Fellowship:**
 - Regular Church events that brought people together (e.g. celebrations, family day).
 - Bonding through home fellowship groups, promoting fellowship among members (Sunday lunches).
 - Community – intentional cross-generational friendships led by the older adults, learning names, home-stay, foster-parenting.
- **Support from Mother Church:**
 - A ‘little push’ from the mother church at the right time. Prayer, preaching and initial financial support.
 - Strong continued support from the mother church through prayers, through visitations by groups and providing resources (pianists, preparing order of worships, etc).

- Support of Church Pastor, key leaders, finance.
- **Connections:**
 - With TRAC, with churches and youth groups, youths bringing their friends, social networks.

II-1 Challenges faced in becoming a Local Conference

Preaching Points and new Churches will face different sets of obstacles and challenges. Here we share some of the experiences of such challenges. Some ways in overcoming the challenges are shown in *italics*.

- ✓ **Internal Strife within Leadership**
 - Differences of personality and the way of working. Those who were not in agreement eventually dropped out of the initial core group: *(The group as a whole didn't have time to process these differences.)*
 - Difference of opinions in decisions: *(Pray.)*
- ✓ **Leadership**
 - Needed direction and committed leaders: *(Mainly new Christians, therefore committed visionary leaders were crucial.)*
 - Shortage of leaders and a group of new Christians: *(Weekly Bible Studies and attend seminars/training.)*
 - Handling problems – complaints, stressed-up members, etc: *(Soft approach – showing understanding, love and counseling, and leaders showing good examples.)*
 - Catering to the different needs of the congregation: *(Pray.)*
 - Insufficient worship enablers: worship leaders and musicians: *(Need to 'import' musicians from other churches.)*
 - Not enough equipped members: *(Multi-tasking by the core covenant members. Train and equip before starting.)*

- Rented premises – faced mounting rent increments: *(Relocate to cheaper place, and ultimately purchase own premises.)*
- ✓ **Core Group**
 - Initial ‘start-up’ group of regular worshippers (10-12) was too small: *(Resulted in much more time needed to reach required number of 35 regular worshippers to be constituted as a Local Conference.)*
 - Pioneer core leaders had no prior experience or training in planting a church – hence on-the-job learning, i.e. by trial and error! *(Equipping church planters is crucial.)*
 - Core group members (pioneers) transferred out – due to work and other reasons: *(Need to rope in the new members.)*
 - Getting continued commitment from covenant members by creating avenues for close bonding initially through organised fellowship lunch after Worship Service at restaurants: *(The latter evolved to members bringing food for fellowship lunch after Sunday Worship Service and also through Church camps and home fellowship.)*
 - Those who serve may have to hold on to their posts/ responsibilities for longer than 2 years: *(Start mentoring younger people to take over.)*
- ✓ **Support from Mother Church**
 - Needed strong support: *(Finance, sharing of preachers, worship enablers from sending/home Church.)*
 - Lack of accountability and transparency with the mother church.
 - No key leader from mother church came to the Preaching Point on a permanent basis.
 - Inadequate meetings with leaders from mother church and Preaching Point for discussion and mutual encouragement: *(Could have been slightly longer – a year.)*
- ✓ **Prayers**
 - Inadequate focus on intercessory prayer.

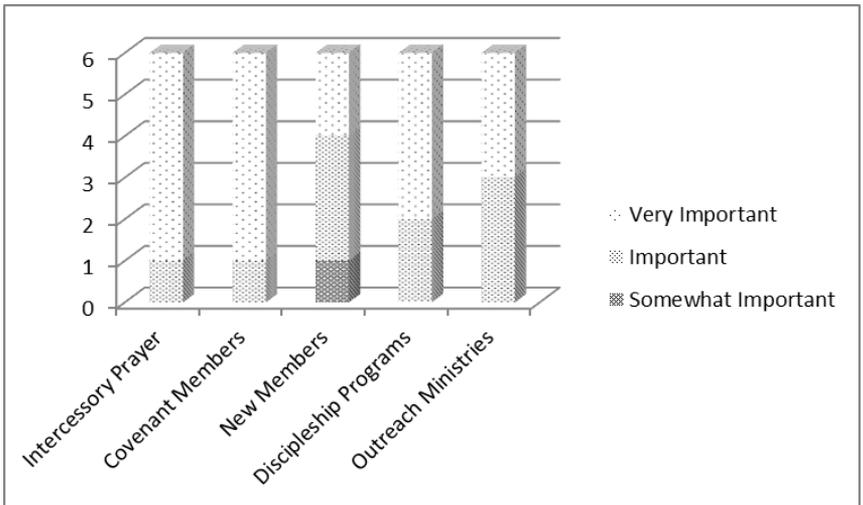
✓ **Bridging the Community**

- Make the Preaching Point known to the people: (*Distribution of flyers, outreach programmes, e.g. Easter Cantata with assistance from mother church, Christmas outreach programmes.*)
- Students as a migrant and transitory population: (*Accept the given reality.*)
- Bridging the generational gap: (*Intentional friendship with older adults taking the lead and setting the example; all activities are inter-generational – worship, small groups, recreation, etc.*)

✓ **Pastoral Care**

- Lack of a resident Pastor. (*Team ministry led by older adults, with students in the team intentionally.*)

Possible Reasons for Preaching Points being constituted as a Local Conference



Other Reasons for Preaching Points being constituted as Local Conferences

- Roadmap for spiritual growth and making disciples.
- Visionary, Spirit-anointed and inspiring leadership.
- A heart for missions.
- Food fellowship
- Adults intentionally making the effort to ‘come down’ to the level of the students and connecting with them (learning names, talking, eating, etc). Fetching students by car (conversations), home-stay over weekends and foster parenting, post-Sunday service lunch and fellowship, weekly social events e.g. badminton.

III. Failure Factors

Secondly, we would like to share the responses to our 2012 survey regarding the failure factors, which may differ depending on the context of each Preaching Point.

Slow Growth

- Target of 35 confirmed members in the Preaching Point could not be met within the 1 year time-frame. Not enough committed members to constitute as a Local Conference.
- Lack of new members. Poor attendance.
- Community/Village became smaller by migration and death through the years.
- Transfer of most membership back to East Malaysia.
- Dwindling numbers. Young people moving to Kuala Lumpur to study or work.
- Inability to maintain the growth of membership.
- Members left the church either for personal reasons, or transferred or relocated to other places.
- There were outreaches but resulted in few conversions.
- Lack of activities, lack of community bonding, and lack of sense of belonging.

- Lack of commitment from local members to serve. Poor support from members.

Logistics

- Financial constraints.
- Transportation problem.
- Physical location was a bit difficult to find.

Leadership and Core Group

- Lack of leadership and support from leaders.
- Core group did not know how to start a Church.
- Core group was too small to sustain it and serve. Same group pioneered the work alone.
- No core group of people to commit themselves to the work. The number was small and core group of members was not able to be formed.
- Those who were committed to the Preaching Point had to take time-off for a period of time due to other commitments.
- No sense of ownership.

Pastoral Care

- Difficult to get preachers and need to depend on the Pastor from the mother church to conduct Worship Service.
- No Pastor stationed at the Preaching Point or preachers had to come long distances to preach and return home.
- Lack of focus in terms of intercessory support.

Community Selection and Changes

- No proper survey was done prior to the launching of the Preaching Point.
- Ministry in English language was difficult in small towns.
- Young Mandarin-speaking converts moved away after they left school. Chinese school population became smaller (from 200 to 50) over the years.
- Other bigger churches attracting seekers.
- Local authorities were raiding and arresting illegal workers in factories and different places. Warnings were given concerning the harbouring and assisting such workers.
- New immature community.

- Worship Service was held in the evening, which 'conflict' with members' need for time for other matters.

III-1 Challenges faced resulting in Closure of Preaching Points

Some reasons (compiled and summarised from different Preaching Points that were closed) given for closing of Preaching Points

Selection of Community for Church Planting

- Area was predominantly a Muslim community. / Community is predominantly a Malay area.
- Logistics of getting to Preaching Point. Town of few houses hidden from main road point. Attendance dropped to 4 - 6, and all depended on the van to bring them to worship.
- Community was mostly Chinese-educated with Buddhist background and some Indian community. However, the target group was English-speaking working adults who were not the majority in that area.
- There were other churches around the area, i.e. Chinese Methodist Church and other churches which could easily be located and with proper signage.
- Outreach in English language in small town has little/no future.
- Though some members could do outreach in Mandarin and reached small group of students (via tuition projects and children's outreach), bi-lingual Worship Service was a problem, and having the message summarised in Mandarin was not effective.
- Most of the residents in the area are from Chinese-educated, lower middle income background.

Witnessing and Sharing the Word

- Spiritual stronghold to break through hindering evangelistic work.
- No focus on evangelism, and also lacked the skill to do it. No Pastor for more than 2 years.

- Pastor in charge had to come from afar and serve the Holy Communion, while other preachers also came from far away towns and cities
- Lifestyle of leaders inconsistent to Christian witness.
- No resident Pastor to do bi-lingual (Mandarin and Cantonese) ministry. Unable to find Chinese-speaking preachers.
- Time of Worship Service (evening) was not convenient for outstation preachers.

Capacity and Ability to Support

- Poor support from members. No covenant members were established.
- Started as an English-speaking Preaching Point; had few baptisms and new members, but could not maintain the growth and there were not enough committed members to constitute as a Local Conference.
- Lack of highly committed team members to conduct the services and medical work every Sunday.
- Some Church members staying in the vicinity of new Preaching Point did not want to transfer membership to the Preaching Point, and returned to the mother church now and then for the Worship Service there.
- Difficulties in convincing members to attend the Worship Service. No excitement for members who attended the town Church as the same sermons were preached.

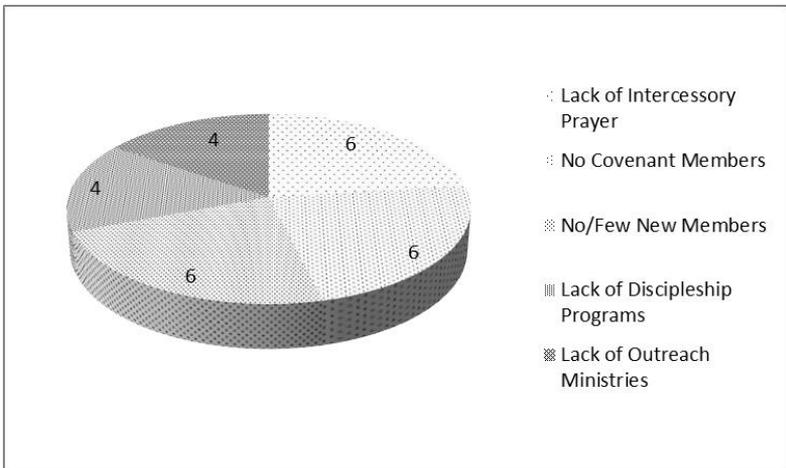
Running the Church

- No sufficient publicity of the Preaching Point. Awareness programme not given sufficient support.
- Evening Worship Service (5pm) in the Preaching Point was not attractive, and some members attended only when they missed the morning Worship Service in the mother church.
- Shop lot was under-utilised (used between 4.30pm and 7.30pm on Sundays). There was no presence of Church outside the Worship Service hours.
- No full-time worker to man the premises and coordinate activities that can reach out to surrounding residents. Could not find a full-time ministry worker to live there and do ministry.
- Worship Service on 1st floor hindered the elderly members from climbing the stairs. Not suitable location – isolated, hence

out-of-sight from public; not conducive to hold Worship Service; not enough space to have both IMYF and Sunday School activities.

- Critical mass of members cannot be built up.

Possible Reasons that Caused Preaching Point to be Closed



Other Reasons that caused Preaching Point to be closed

- Missing out activities in mother church.
- Lack of activities during weekdays and awareness of church presence to the community.
- Lack of perseverance to continue.

Note – specific names, dates and places have been removed for reasons of privacy.

IV. Church Planting Guidelines

The following are proposed guidelines based on the feedback from TRAC Churches and information gathered from different sources

1. Committed to **PRAY** for the Lord's leading in Church planting initiatives (at District / Local Church levels).
2. A proper **SURVEY** to be conducted on the specific area / location. Demographics of the area need to be studied and thought through (cf <http://www.statistics.gov.my>).

Conduct a strategy and feasibility study of needs and possibilities for starting a new Church in a new area. A community survey is vitally important whenever starting a new Preaching Point. Mapping out the area, noting where other churches are located, pinpointing the availability of public transportation, utilities, and zoning are all involved in a total community survey. The receptivity of the area is of vital importance.

Receptive areas for new churches could be the growing areas of a city or town. When people move into new areas they are more receptive because they have given up their friends and their established Church and are looking for new friends and possibly a new congregation. Social challenge in re-settling into a new area provides areas of needs that a newly planted Church can serve.

3. **VISION** to plant a church: sharing it to the congregation and explaining the reasons of starting a Preaching Point in the specific area / location (e.g. timing – membership increased, large parishes or home fellowship groups, potential for outreach ministries).

Develop the vision! A leader without vision cannot lead, a Church without a Godly Vision perishes. The ability to see what can be done, even in adverse circumstances, is a quality that is necessary for the planting of a Church,

4. **EVANGELISM:** Goal of the Preaching Point is reaching out and expanding God's kingdom. Churches need to have

regular equipping programmes to train its leaders in evangelism and also establish contacts in new areas. The leaders will then be able to replicate these programmes in the new Church to reach out to the planted community. The *spirit and discipline of evangelism* must be pervasive with the congregation of the home churches before the idea of planting a Church can be sown in the hearts of the congregation.

5. Proper **TRAINING** in church planting, leadership, small group, evangelism and ministries.

Many men and women in our Churches will have little or no experience in Church Planting, but proper and consistent training with the visionary church leaders can equip them for the work to which God has called them.

Train and equip teams of workers for areas of needs in the planned Preaching Point. Most churches have more than one worship leader, musician, Sunday School teacher, etc. These workers will join the core team in the new church plant and assist them with the initial formal services and/or activities. While these teams of workers start by doing the ministry themselves, they immediately identify and train people in the new Church plant to assume these ministry roles in the new Church — worship, discipleship, and so on. The teams of workers may choose to remain as part of the new Church or return to their home Church.

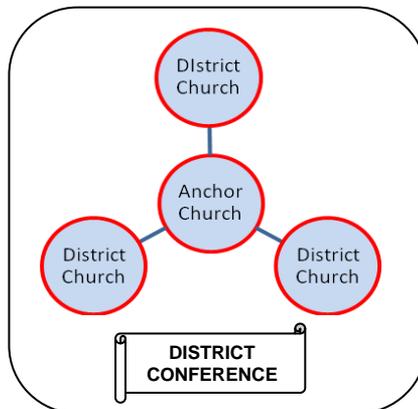
6. Strong **SUPPORT** from mother church: Pastor, leaders, prayer, financial and other resources. In the traditional Church planting model of Mother Church-Daughter Church, the committed support of the Mother Church becomes essential to its survival and flourishing into a Local Conference.

The principle is that the mother church “gives blood” to start a daughter congregation, and then nurtures it until it reaches adolescence and eventual adulthood. The mother church must be willing to “give up” some of its key members (“giving blood”) in order to give life to a new congregation.

The Mother Church must commit to initial investments on behalf of the Daughter Church (key leaders, instruments, furniture, printing, transportation, and even facilities, if possible). The Mother Church must be willing to let go when the time arrives for the Daughter Church to move on its own feet.

7. **COVENANT / CORE GROUP** Members: Members of the mother church need to pledge wholeheartedly to be committed as members of the Preaching Point (min. 25 to a max. 35 or more). There must be a sense of *ownership*. This group of members “donated” by the mother church becomes the “core” of the daughter church that will eventually expand into the new Church. The mother church supports them during the initial stages of the Church planting endeavour.
8. **ACCOUNTABILITY** and transparency to mother church and Local Conference.
9. The **INTER-CONNECTION** of the TRAC Churches can be a strength in Church planting. The challenges of a new Preaching Point can be shouldered at a District level where the District commits their churches to the nurturing and development of new Preaching Points. It is foreseeable that there will be the need of a nucleus or anchor Church. On the other hand, the other Churches need to play a more concrete and permanent role in the Preaching Point (PP) as well. By taking a District approach, at least a few more Churches in the District can make the commitment to make the PP as their evangelism ministry as well.

ONE Preaching Point



10. **DISCIPLESHIP** programmes: Follow-up on new believers, spiritual growth towards maturity, small group ministry (with goals of nurture, accountability, care and service – internal and external), etc. We are to *make disciples*, not merely bringing people into the family of Christ.

11. Develop **VIBRANT AND GOD-HONOURING WORSHIP SERVICES** for the new congregation will include:

- *Attractive gatherings.* People will want to go to Church because there is something that draws them to worship and serve the Lord.
- *Power of God.* People need to sense the presence of God in the Worship Services.
- *Involvement.* Involve your people in all kinds of ministries. If there is not a job for them to do, create a meaningful one. One of the most important words is “trust.” Trusting people, particularly new converts, is one of the best ways to train them for the work of the ministry.
- *Solid biblical, evangelistic preaching.* People are hungry for the preaching of God’s Word that challenges, encourages and inspires them to learn and do the will of God.
- *Worshipful music.* Music enhances the vibrancy and at the same time the reverence of God in our worship. Where appropriate, find ways to develop the musical ability of your people and to create a music atmosphere in which they will want to be involved.
- *People inviting people.* People must be friendly and want to see the church grow. A Church that expresses love will reach people quickly.
- *Meaningful impact on the community.* A Church exists to minister to both the spiritual and physical needs of the community where it is planted. “*People don’t care what you know till they know you care.*” Meaningful engagement in the community ensures on-going presence and vitality.

Self-Assessment Chart

Question No.	Yes! (ready, we will trust God for it)	Willing (to work at it)	Open (to idea)	No (not now)
1	A	B	C	D
1.1	A	B	C	D
1.2	A	B	C	D
2.1	A	B	C	D
2.2	A	B	C	D
2.3	A	B	C	D
3.1	A	B	C	D
3.2	A	B	C	D
A	A	B	C	D
B	A	B	C	D
C	A	B	C	D
D	A	B	C	D
E	A	B	C	D
3.3	A	B	C	D
4.1	A	B	C	D
4.2	A	B	C	D
4.3	A	B	C	D
4.4	A	B	C	D
5.1	A	B	C	D
5.2	A	B	C	D
5.3	A	B	C	D
5.4	A	B	C	D
6.1	A	B	C	D
6.2	A	B	C	D
6.3	A	B	C	D
7.1	A	B	C	D
7.2	A	B	C	D
7.3	A	B	C	D
8.1	A	B	C	D
9.1	A	B	C	D
9.2	A	B	C	D
9.3	A	B	C	D
9.4	A	B	C	D
9.5	A	B	C	D
9.6	A	B	C	D
9.7	A	B	C	D
9.8	A	B	C	D
9.9	A	B	C	D
10.1	A	B	C	D
10.2	A	B	C	D

- Note:** 1. Circle the alphabet in the Box corresponding to the questions and responses.
 2. Connect the circled alphabets from the first to the last question, starting from the top.
 3. If the drawn line is nearer to the LEFT, it indicates your Church may be ready to establish a Preaching Point. RIGHT – vice-versa.

Acknowledgement

A word of thanks to all Board of Evangelism members, people too many to name individually, towards the production of this Guide Book.

We also wish to acknowledge Louie Bustle and Gustavo Crocker, the authors of “Principles of Church Planting”. Their book has provided very useful ideas and insights in successful church planting.