

The Church Planting Process in Bluebonnet Baptist Association (BBA)

Overall Approach to Starting a New Church – We plant a new church through a God-called planter/pastor who is empowered to lead and who is accountable to a group of partners called the Strategic Planning Team.

Basic Steps – This process has proven to be an effective way to start new churches that accomplish the Great Commission and partner in planting other new churches. Therefore, we follow it without compromise.

1. Application

- Focus of this step is to begin the planter candidate process and receive initial feedback from the BBA Executive Director.
- **The planter candidate purchases and completes the online Lifeway Church Planter Assessment at <http://churchplanter.lifeway.com> and submits it to the BBA Executive Director. Upon receipt of the completed assessment report, BBA will reimburse the candidate for the full cost of the Lifeway assessment.**

NOTE: The Church Planter Initial Assessment from the North American Mission Board (NAMB) may be substituted for the Lifeway assessment. See your state convention representative to see if they require the NAMB assessment.

- **In addition to the online assessment, the candidate also submits the following to the BBA Executive Director: Resume, list of references, brief bio & testimony, a faith-and-practices statement (form provided by BBA), a criminal background check release form (provided by BBA), and audio or video recordings of two sermons (online or other medium).**
- The planter candidate begins the candidate process with the Texas Baptist state convention of his choice.
- The BBA Executive Director reviews the application and provides feedback to the candidate.
- If both BBA and the candidate agree, then the process proceeds to step two.

2. Assessment Team Interview with the Planter Candidate and Wife

- Focus of this step is on BBA and other potential partners making a final decision about partnering with the planter candidate.
- **The planter candidate and his wife meet with a BBA assessment team for a 2.5 to 3-hour interview based on the Church Planter Profile, a set of behavioral characteristics**

that are usually found in successful church planters. The BBA Executive Director is the leader of the assessment team.

- The assessment team submits their report to the BBA Executive Director.
- The BBA Executive Director reviews the assessment report with the candidate and with potential planting partners.
- If there is general agreement, then the process proceeds to step three.

3. Formation of the Strategic Planning Team

- Focus of this step is getting the church plant underway.
- **The planter candidate submits a planting proposal and the first quarterly budget proposal to the BBA Executive Director.**
- The BBA Executive Director calls a meeting of all those desiring to partner in the church plant. This group consists of the association, state convention, BBA partner churches, and the planter. This is the Strategic Planning Team (SPT) for the church plant. The BBA Executive Director is the coordinator of the SPT.
- At the initial meeting of the SPT, the planter candidate presents his proposal and budget. The partners make the official decision about calling the planter candidate as planter/pastor of the new church. The partners also determine how to fund the initial budget of the new church.
- The SPT covenant is the governing document of the plant and the SPT is the governing board of the plant until such time as the plant constitutes as an autonomous church.
- Following this initial meeting of the SPT, the planter/pastor proceeds with implementing his plan for the church plant per step four.

4. Operating Under the Strategic Planning Team

- Focus of this step is to provide the planter with support, protection, and accountability as he leads the church plant toward becoming a self-funded and constituted body of believers who are effective in accomplishing the mission of the church.
- **The planter submits a monthly report to the SPT using the reporting system of the partnering state convention.**
- **The planter meets with the SPT quarterly to report on the progress and finances of the plant, propose ministry plans and budget for the next quarter, and deal with any issues related to the plant.** The partners determine a funding plan for the next quarter's budget.
- Each new quarterly budget will reflect a higher percentage of the plant's operating funding coming from tithes and offerings of members and attenders (and thus a lower percentage coming from the SPT partners). The SPT expects that **the operations of the**

plant will be substantially self-funded (80% or higher) by the end of 24 months, and completely self-funded by the end of 36 months (sooner if possible).

- **The planter/pastor is fully empowered by the SPT to lead the church plant. He is empowered to make all ministry, staffing, policy, and management decisions of the plant and to utilize the budget as approved by the SPT. He may delegate or form ministry teams within the plant as he sees fit, but the planter is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the plant.** Unless the planter is doing something that is immoral, unethical, illegal, or unbiblical, the members of the SPT will not interfere with the planter's leadership.
- The BBA Executive Director, acting on behalf of the SPT, will intervene to discipline, and remove if necessary, any plant member or attender who is attempting to oppose or undermine the leadership of the planter/pastor. The BBA Executive Director will also intervene if any member of the SPT is attempting to control the decisions of the planter.
- It is expected that **the planter will lead the plant to constitute as a self-governing church no later than 60 months from the start of SPT funding** per step five below. (Note: Before a plant can take on indebtedness or large or long-term financial obligations, the plant must become a constituted church and thus take on full responsibility for its own obligations.)

5. Constituting as a Self-Governing Church

- Focus of this step is to move the new work from church plant status to autonomous church status within Bluebonnet Baptist Association.
- **The planter submits proposed bylaws to the BBA Executive Director.**
- The SPT meets to consider and approve the bylaws. Once the bylaws are approved, the SPT dissolves and the new church is self-governing.
- Bluebonnet Baptist Association immediately relates to the new church as a member of the association and as a partner in ministry, assisting the church as needed and partnering together according to the ministry priorities of the church and the association.