

## World Leaders Unite for Community Church Planting

By José Hernández

As a person involved in ministry and leadership positions, I have been to many conferences and training events. All of them had made an impact in my life and ministry, so I cannot recall any unfruitful conference. Some of these events have been with a training purpose, others to discuss and deal with ministry or denominational business, and others are more a combination of business with a time of celebration for what the Lord has done. But none of these previous events can be compared with the Community Church Planting gathering in an undisclosed location in the Middle East.

Eighty leaders from North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East representing 16 nations spent time together for five days. We learned from each other about the blessings and challenges involved in the development of church planting efforts. Also, we took time to listen to powerful presentations about the biblical implications of Community Church Planting, to pray for our own geographical areas, and to make cohesive plans for the next three years.

I was personally impressed by the work developed so far by the Latin America team, especially the progress in Community Church Planting efforts in Costa Rica and a creative access country. Moreover, the phenomenon in that creative access country is similar to the church of the book of Acts as members have been forced to spread out and leave their local communities. As they cross the border into neighboring countries, they are spreading the gospel and planting churches. The pioneering efforts in hard-to-reach places in Asia and West African countries brought us into the reality of how difficult it is to spread the message of salvation in many cultures. But from all of these presentations, in my opinion, the most impressive was the report from the Middle East. It was a powerful experience to listen to the presentations from individuals that are in the middle of persecution, suffering and even death, and still they are planting thousands of community churches.

When the time came for Europe's presentation, South Area Director Josh Fajardo used as an example the "granadas" or pomegranates, and

Josh and Susy Fajardo brought a couple of giant size pomegranates from Cyprus. The pomegranate is the fruit with the most seeds in the planet. Christians should be — spiritually speaking — pomegranates, producing seeds and spreading them throughout this planet. Churches should be pomegranates reproducing themselves into hundreds of community congregations. The leaders should also be pomegranates as they reproduce their spiritual DNA in other people in order to proclaim God's Word into every nation, city, village, neighborhood, household and individual on this planet.

Bishops David Roller and David Kendall were magnificent as they ushered us into the presence of the Lord. The sermon preached by Acts 12:24 Superintendent David Harvey is still in my mind as we reach out to people in creative ways.

We are in the midst of exciting times. We have been called to fulfill Matthew 28:18-20. Therefore, we need an entrance strategy, a gospel strategy, a discipleship strategy, a training strategy and a multiplication strategy. It is the time to do research and target areas of possible development for Community Church Planting, mapping and planning. We need to have prayer walks to ask the Lord for workers willing to serve in the harvest of those particular communities and seek for people of peace that will open the doors of their homes to do evangelism work and provide the initial discipleship work. We need to enter into the discipleship of new believers, gathering them into worship groups, baptizing them, and developing them into leaders with the call to go out and do the same for others.

We are preparing the next generation of leaders in order to have pastors and deacons planting the second, third and fourth generations of churches. Like pomegranates, every community church group must reproduce itself several times. You do not need a half-million-dollar budget or a group of 100 people to start a church plant if you follow the model laid out for us in Scripture.

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