



## WHY I OBSESS ABOUT CHURCH PLANTING

*By Haley Thramer | Administrative Assistant | Plymouth, MN*

To borrow a phrase from recovery language, “Hi, I’m Haley, and I’m obsessed about church planting.”

Can you help me? Not many can. Ever since I became a follower of Jesus, as a young girl in northern Minnesota, I have always wanted to be used by God to impact the world. But now I’m seeing the great need for my generation to start new churches, and I can’t stop thinking about it.

When I was in high school, attending a small Lutheran church in Roseau, Minnesota, I didn’t know about the opportunities of church planting. I didn’t know that God could use me to be part of the mission. But after I left Roseau, I enrolled at a dynamic two-year Bible College, and the Lord began to open my eyes to what he was doing all around the world.

After my second year of Bible College, I served on a summer team that visited church plants. I loved getting to meet new people. I became captivated by the children. I saw the need they had for the gospel. My heart craved to be in each of those cities longer than a week. So following that experience, I signed up for a program to help new churches grow. As a part of that ministry, I was sent to Springfield, Missouri at age 20. My heart was excited to get to be in one place for a whole year. It was a unique opportunity to pour out in a different church other than my hometown church. These opportunities stretched me, challenged me, and grew me.

Now I’m into it deeper.

I now serve as the Administrative Assistant for church planting into our national church association, the AFLC, a group of 253 churches. Our mission for ALFC Home Missions is “to help churches plant new churches.” We eat, drink and live it. When I get to talk to people about our mission of helping AFLC churches start three new local congregations every year, something sparks inside of me. I think what excites me the most is that God wants to use us, my generation, and the young adults around me who seem hungry for the task. I’m reminded of Hans Nielson Hauge (saved in 1796) who started



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planting churches in his twenties. Within 30 years of his death there were 3,000 new prayer chapels in his country. Yes, God can use us. I'm encouraged by rural Minnesotans who moved to Hawaii. Those young adults started a church aimed at sinners. It's not a church building, it's the people. It's gathering people together, sharing the Word and fellowship. Encouraging one another and building each other up.

It takes a team.

My generation needs you. And you need us. In 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."

That's all I think about now. I write letters to donors and supporters. I send weekly Knee-mails to 1,000 people who have committed to pray. I help administer checks to support young pastors in Hawaii, Arizona, or subsidy checks to places in Colorado and rural North Dakota. I get to help a man from China with a doctorate who instead of becoming a professor, wants to be a soul winner with his wife at a new AFLC Chinese Church.

I think of all the times that God was able to use me on summer teams. The times where I felt discouraged, "Am I sure the kids are understanding me?" I didn't get to see the fruit of what was shared, but I take comfort in that fact that it isn't me doing the work. It is God. It is God who uses us to share but He does all the growing and His Word doesn't return empty.

Let's not just build buildings, let's build congregations.

I'm passionate about getting my generation excited about Christ's mission. It's a basic calling: simply gathering people together to grow in Jesus. I'm praying that my twenty-something friends will help us to dig into our free and living congregations and live a life, lived out, full-speed, without social or spiritual distance. Let's infect a world that needs Christ with the Gospel. God has called us into a fearful and paranoid world to bring the healing power that Christ offers in the cross and the resurrection.

We can't wash our hands of that responsibility.

It's our obsession.



3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd.  
Plymouth, MN 55441  
(763) 412-2018  
homemis@aflc.org

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