

EFCA'S OPEN CITIES POLICY

It is the policy of EFCA National Ministries Church Planting Team to regard cities, towns, and rural within the United States as "open" for the presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the means of starting new church churches and/or the expansion of established churches.

What motivates us is to see the Kingdom of our Savior increase by our fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.¹

"Open" cities and rural areas in this context means several things:

1. **Kingdom:** It means that we will think strategically of what will best increase the Kingdom of Christ. Thus, we will seek to cooperate with other evangelical denominations who have similar initiatives concerning church planting and revitalization of established churches, so that theirs as well as ours will become spiritually healthy and reproductive for Jesus Christ.

2. **Mind of Christ:** It means that we will have the mind of Christ in planning, and not foster or contribute in any manner to a negative or a divisive spirit of competition concerning geographic locations, building sites, people groups, styles of worship, or names used to identify churches.

3. **Open City:** It means that when any of our EFCA churches have an already established presence or ministry in a city or rural area, that we will not consider that presence to be an exclusive right to be the only church permitted to win people to Christ. Thus, having first demonstrated such openness, we will also invite established churches of sister denominations to embrace it when we seek to start a new church within a community in which they have an established presence.

4. **Choices:** It means that in seeking to win the lost to Christ, we recognize that cities, people groups, and churches each have a unique style and personality that is different and will attract different types of people to them. One size of clothes does not fit all people, just like one style of church does not appeal to all people. Thus, within a city or rural area, it is very

possible to have more than one church from the same denomination or a different denomination, with different styles of ministry that appeal to different types of people (i.e. a established traditional church with traditional worship forms doing ministry within the same region as a new church with contemporary worship forms, each appealing to a different segment of the population, or a boomer church for boomers, a gen X church for gen Xers etc.)

5. Communication: It means that before we initiate a new plant in an area, we will first seek to communicate and partner with established EFCA churches within that area. Also, when a concern is expressed by an established church about a different new ministry start (by either a sister denomination or from our own EFCA), we will enter a process of discussion with the concerned church [and/or denominational leaders] and seek to arrive at a mutually beneficial understanding concerning the specifics of the new proposed ministry. We will do this with kindness and respect, as we consider demographical factors, ministry philosophy, different target groups, and strategic Kingdom goals. We will attempt to resolve legitimate concerns so that both ministries will prosper for Christ and the name of Christ will not be tarnished in the community.

¹ This paper was originally written by the Great Lakes Baptist General Conference district. They did an excellent job of presenting a balanced position. The EFCA National Ministries Church Planting Team adopted this paper as our operational policy on March 6, 2000.