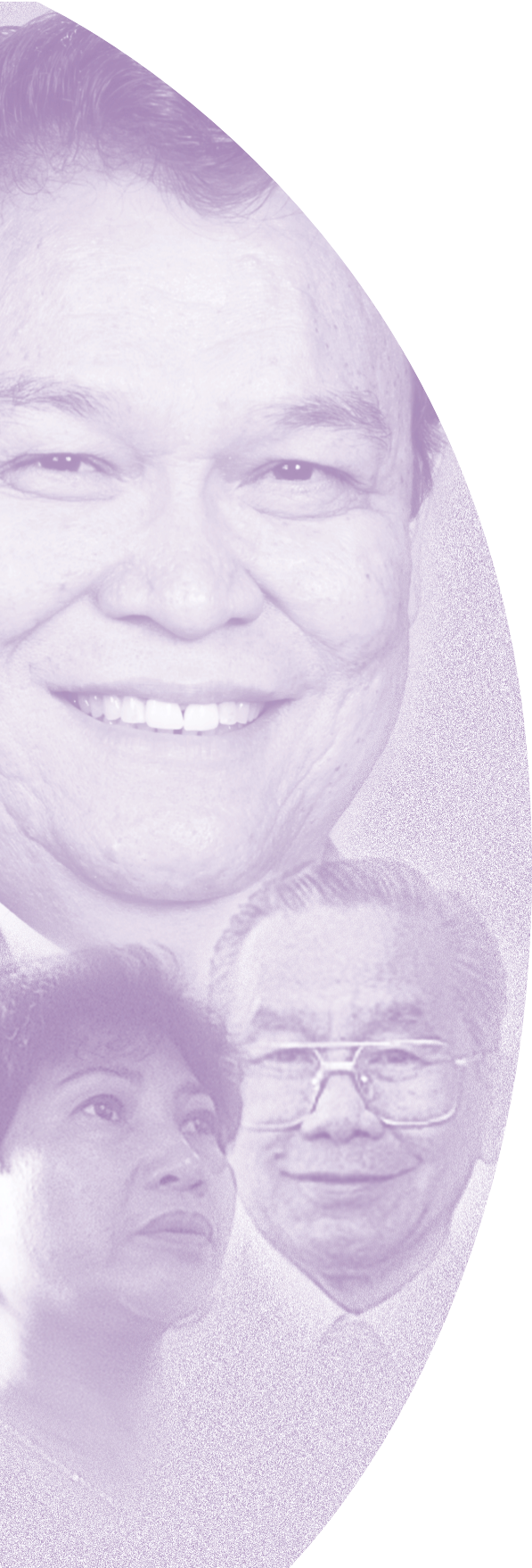


FILIPINO CHURCH PLANTING GUIDE

BY
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NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD



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INTRODUCTION

The *Filipino Church Planting Guide* is one of the series of guides based on their generic version Ethnic Church Planting Guide written by Oscar I. Romo. He served for many years as the director of the Language Church Extension Division of the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board), Southern Baptist Convention, until his retirement in 1995. This guide provides pragmatic approaches for evangelism and church planting strategies relevant to Filipinos. The principles of evangelism and church planting came from the writer's experiences in starting, growing, and reproducing churches among his own people group.

The *Filipino Church Planting Guide* is prepared to challenge and train Filipino leaders to start healthy congregations in the cultural and linguistic context of their people. It clearly deals with the cultural, historical, racial, educational, societal, economic, and spiritual characteristics of the Filipinos in the United States and Canada. It has been updated to include newer selected bibliographical materials and related aspects for evangelism and church planting with the second-generation Filipinos in North America.

May the *Filipino Church Planting Guide* assist effectively the church planters, pastors, missionaries, ministers of missions, churches, Baptist association and state convention leaders whom God has given the vision and passion to start and grow reproducing Filipino churches in North America.

Jaime G. Prieto, Manager
Asian Church Planting
North American Mission Board
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FILIPINO CHURCH PLANTING

“**T**he Christian movement exists in a world that is characterized by changes. People are affected by changes. Their spiritual needs do not change with the passing of time, but these may be expressed in different ways.”

The Southern Baptist Convention is committed to evangelize any and all groups of people in North America and around the world. Incorporated in this missionary challenge is the planting and growing of churches in the languages and cultures of people evangelized with the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a great need to intensify this task even as more and more immigrants are coming from all parts of the world into the United States and Canada. An ethnic group that has come and is here to stay is the Filipino people, one of the Southeast Asian countries.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CHURCH PLANTING

After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples of the universality of the gospel. The book of Acts contains the ground plan of evangelism and church planting in Jerusalem (see chapters 1-7), Judea and Samaria (see chapters 8-9), and the ends of the earth (see chapters 10-28).

Cornelius’ conversion marked the first time a Gentile was publicly and officially welcomed into the Christian fellowship without conforming to Jewish law. The Caesarea congregation paved the way for Gentiles to worship Christ as Savior and Lord in their cultural and linguistic contexts. Believers of Jesus Christ were allowed to maintain their cultural heritages, worship in their languages, and be part of the body—the church.

The New Testament shows that where Paul stayed and preached the gospel, local congregations of believers grew. Each local congregation had



its own identity and culture, but all were the same in Christian nature and mission.

The New Testament church is commanded to communicate the gospel to all cultures, making it relevant to people in their settings. This is the pattern for Southern Baptists to follow in evangelizing and congregationalizing Filipinos and other ethnic groups in the United States.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR CHURCH PLANNING

Some bases for ethnic church planting and growth are:

- Anthropological: Church planters should recognize, understand, respect, and appreciate people in other cultural and linguistic settings. Missionaries/church planters should learn to identify with the people they are trying to win for Christ.
- Sociological: It is natural for people to fellowship and worship within their sociological groupings. Filipinos can understand, believe, appreciate, and incorporate the gospel into their lifestyles and values.
- Communicational: Communicating the gospel to Filipinos demands the abilities of speaking their native language.
- Cultural: Church planting among Filipinos is not a ministry to Anglicize them or to change their culture, language, and foods, but to lead them to Jesus Christ.
- Organizational: Filipino people respond more readily to the Christian witness of someone they know and respect—preferably a fellow Filipino. Filipino congregations grow healthier under Filipino leaders and their own form of organization.
- Testimonial: The fast growth of Southern Baptist Filipino congregations affirms the

rationale, challenge, need, and strategic planning for evangelizing and planting churches among them. Today there are more than 300 Filipino Southern Baptist congregations in 26 states. Seventeen Filipino congregations have been planted annually since 1974, when the first Filipino congregation was established in Los Angeles, Calif. Filipino leaders have set a goal to double their number of baptisms, mission gifts, pastors, and congregations by A.D. 2005.

- Denominational: The Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board established the Church Multiplication Team. The team's purpose is to work with and assist churches, associations, and state conventions in their efforts to bring people identified with ethnic groups into a right relationship with God, to establish ethnic/language-culture congregations, and bring those churches to self-support.



CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

An in-depth knowledge and understanding of Filipino history, culture, language, mentality, behavior, and environment provide fertile ground for relating to Filipinos the necessity of biblical and personal conversion to Jesus Christ.

Filipinos from the Republic of the Philippines are rice eating, religious people who are related to most Southeast Asian and Pacific peoples. They are Mestizos—mixtures—of racial cultural ancestries. Their way of life is a combination of Malay warmth and generosity, spiced with Latin temperament, and seasoned with Western optimism. Many Asians see Filipinos as the least Oriental of all Orientals.

Filipinos first came to America as skilled laborers on Hawaiian plantations and in Alaskan fish canneries. They began serving in the U.S. military in the early 1900s. Today Filipinos are hardworking and law-abiding residents in every state. They come as professionals, mostly in the medical field. They are here to stay, and are waiting for their relatives in the Philippines to join them in the land of freedom, justice, equality, and opportunity. They assimilate well into American society. Yet they retain their cultural uniqueness.

Although exposed to the gospel via American evangelical missionaries, literature, radio, and television, Filipinos retain their traditional Spanish, Roman Catholic religious lifestyle. Southern Baptists can sincerely say *mabuha*—welcome—to Filipinos by “beholding” them as part of God’s world and bringing them to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.



Filipinos in the United States are classified according to their place of origin, dialect, religion, education, profession, economic standing, and length of residency in the United States. Eighty-five percent of the U.S. Filipino population professes to be members of the Roman Catholic Church, a religion of tradition, superstition, and the Bible.

Three cultural influences affect Filipinos' thoughts and decisions: (1) their Malayan timid passiveness, (2) their superficially absorbed Spanish pride, and (3) their Americanized democratic ideals. Often, when arguing or fighting with non-Filipinos, they may easily conform to their opponents' positions or withdraw, not out of fear, but from embarrassment.

Knowing the differences in generations of Filipinos in the United States can be helpful in witnessing to them. First-generation Filipinos (Filipino-Filipinos) transport to the United States their cultural and linguistic lives and values. Second-generation Filipinos (Filipino-Americans) endeavor to assimilate into American society. Third-generation Filipinos (American-Filipinos) easily assimilate into American society. Fourth-generation Filipinos are Americans by language and by culture. Each of these generations demands an indigenous approach for evangelism and church planting strategies. It is important to have compatible leadership and ministries directed for each targeted generation of Filipinos in North America.

Significant differences can be observed after Filipinos experience conversion to Jesus Christ. The following values change after their conversions.

FAMILY

Filipinos have a strong sense of family loyalty and unity. Their respect for vertical familial authority does not imply blind authoritarianism, but, rather, family support and solidarity. Conversion to Jesus Christ increases their family values. Once converted to Christ, they work hard to witness to family members and to be united in their new faith, church, service to God, and heaven.

EDUCATION

Filipinos regard education highly as a stepping-stone to better employment, lifestyle, and improved social status. Parents sacrifice to put their children through the best schools. After conversion, Filipinos aspire to become biblically educated Christians so they can understand the Bible and be good church leaders.

POSSESSIONS

Filipinos measure success and social status by their possessions. When they come to America, they dream of owning cars and homes. Conversion to Christ lessens or balances their attitudes toward material wealth.

RELIGION

Conversion to Christ gives Filipinos a more personal, dignifying, and practical definition of biblical faith. They learn to relate their goals and needs with their spiritual lives and churches.

TIME

Most Filipinos are not time conscious. In their native land, a meeting or event began whenever the people arrived. In America, Filipinos discover that church services and other events are dictated by the clock, beginning at set hours.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

As believers, Filipinos embrace American-Christian democratic ways of expressing their feelings. After conversion, they become more committed to interpersonal relationships in marriage, business, and society.

FOOD

There is evidence of a change of diet for evangelical Filipinos in terms of refraining from drinking liquor or participating in fiestas honoring patron saints. They enjoy church potluck dinners and fellowships.

SELF-ESTEEM

Conversion to Christ elevates Filipinos' sense of self-worth. Their understanding of the equality of people under the Creator gives them a greater desire to treat others as equals, and a greater aspiration to be treated as equals, in a multiethnic or pluralistic society.

Understanding Filipinos' spiritual conditions and the opportunities for church growth in existing Southern Baptist Filipino work is important. It challenges Southern Baptists to prayerfully and intentionally plan and implement effective methods of evangelizing them. It also helps in planting churches among them, equipping both leaders and congregations to become healthy and reproducing leaders and churches.



PHASE **ONE** VISION AND PLANNING

EVANGELIZING AND CONGREGATIONALIZING

Filipinos in the United States require prayerful planning and preparation. Strategic and adaptable contextualized methods should be implemented to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to Filipinos in each of their four generations. These methods must be based on biblical principles of church planting contextualized to their particular needs and situations.

PRAY

The real power and foundation of a plan for planting a Filipino church is prayer. Everyone associated with this plan should seek and depend on God's guidance and blessings. Prayer empowers God's people to fulfill their vision to do God's work with appropriate actions for rewarding results. Church planters must have committed prayer partners. Prayer unites believers to do God's work in a chosen community and for a targeted group of people to evangelize with a purposeful plan to gather believers to be disciplined to become a healthy congregation.

ENVISION THE OPPORTUNITIES

Filipino church planters should envision, with optimism and enthusiasm, the types of congregations needed and the strategies to be implemented. Knowing the people, their community, their demographical, psychocultural, and religious characteristics will guide the church planter in deciding what strategy should be used to start and develop a growing and reproducing Filipino congregation.

FOCUS ON THE PEOPLE

Filipinos are respectful, hospitable, and grateful to those who help them. Their shyness and politeness are not evidences of prejudice or inferiority



complexes. They are loyal to family and home country. Their exposures to evangelical witnesses in their communities through the churches around them, radio and television, and reading materials make them more responsive to a church planter and his group planning to start a new congregation in a community where many Filipinos live. Filipinos are turned off by anyone who negatively criticizes their Roman Catholic religious upbringing. Baptist church planters need to be friendly and positive in their approaches to witness to Filipinos with the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ.

EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES

Knowing the number of Filipinos in a community and where they live is helpful in determining the need for and location of a new work. *The Church Planting Laser* guide has been designed to assist churches in their efforts to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. This guide, available from the North American Mission Board's Church Multiplication Team, is a valuable instrument for exploring evangelistic possibilities. It helps pinpoint a community's Filipino characteristics, indicating a need for a Filipino ministry and exploring the possibilities of starting a work. Community indicators are Filipino businesses, churches, civic and social associations, cultural organizations, and Filipino names in the local telephone or business directories.

SELECT THE LOCATION

Location is important. Often people will not venture outside of their worlds. If living in the community where the new work is to be located, a church planter may choose to start a Bible study in his or her home. Bible classes may also be held in homes or offices of responsive Filipinos. Existing churches' facilities, public and private schools, hotels, community centers' facilities, and even funeral homes are possible places to hold temporary worship services or Bible studies.

PLANTING A NEW WORK

Having considered and used the factors in Phase One, the church planter and core group needs to develop plans to gather the people. This may be done through visitation, phone calls, mail, or mass media.

INITIATE THE MEETING

As soon as souls are won for Christ, they are invited to attend church on Sunday mornings.

The church planter and team will request the new Filipino believers to begin Bible studies in their homes and encourage them to be concerned for other Filipino families. They need to be taught of the great blessing in leading others to Christ. While a few new believers will be hesitant, most will welcome this opportunity. Once the Bible study is in place, information about the meeting is often passed throughout the neighborhood by word of mouth and posters in Filipino stores.

DEVELOP THE CONGREGATION

An invitation and encouragement to attend the first meeting go hand in hand. Mail flyers about the upcoming meeting, its location, and meeting date. If the partnering church is going to share its facilities with the Filipino congregation, arrange mutually convenient times to hold Sunday School and worship services.

If the Filipino group has only Sunday School, invite those participating to attend the English-speaking worship services. Many will decline because of the language barrier. Keep inviting them to the services, making sure to remind them that they will soon have their own worship service.

If possible, schedule the Filipino worship service at the same time as the partnering church's services. The partnering church may not have room for both congregations to meet simultaneously. In such cases, mission services may take place in the afternoons. The mission Sunday School may begin at 11:30 a.m., and the worship service may begin at 12:30 p.m. This type of arrangement is successful in many churches.

The partnering church should plan with the new congregation for its organization into a church. The new congregation should plan to be a self-supporting church. Second-generation, English-speaking Filipinos need to have their own classes or fellowship groups. Their leader must be one of them.

TRANSPORTATION

Forming car pools is helpful to Filipino refugees. If a church bus or van is not available, the pastor/leader of a work may find it necessary to use his own car as part of a car pool. If the partner church has a van or minibus, arrange for its use with the Filipino congregation. Today many Filipino families have cars. Members of the Filipino congregation who have cars may offer to transport the others, especially newcomers, to and from the church.

ESTABLISH PRIORITIES

Knowing the people, their status, primary cultural traits, and their needs helps the church planter to determine the types of leaders, ministries, materials, place of meetings and promotion needed to reach and minister to Filipinos.

SECURE A PARTNER

Partnership is somewhat similar to adoption. It is a sacred trust accepted by those committed to exercise responsible guidance to the new group of New Testament believers. The partnering church provides nourishment, leads, but is not dictatorial, and guides without smothering the new Filipino congregation entrusted to it by God.

The partner church should have a committee composed of people from both congregations. The financial investment of the partnering church, partnering Baptist association, and state convention should be known to the new mission congregation. The new congregation should be led to assume financial responsibility through the handling of its financial operation and gifts to local and world missions through the Cooperative Program. A budget within the economic context of the people should be devel-

oped, thus helping the Filipino congregation achieve self-support. Such plans should include helping the new congregation acquire its own facilities.

The partnering church and other partners should lead the new congregation to develop programs of Sunday School, stewardship, and methods of equipping believers to become effective supportive and mission-minded leaders.



PHASE TWO PLANTING A NEW WORK

GATHER THE PEOPLE

Having carefully chosen the place and leader—layperson or pastor—for the new work, plans need to be developed to gather the people. This may be done through visitation, phone calls, mail, or mass media. The Filipino core group and an outreach/visitation team from the partnering church can plan to have a house to house contact for the Filipino families in the their community.

DEVELOP THE CONGREGATION

The church planter should observe leadership traits and abilities of members of the newly gathered congregation, especially those from evangelical backgrounds. Physical arrangements of the meeting place—leading the music, prayer, and Scripture reading—taking the offering and inviting people to the meetings should be delegated to selected qualified or trained people.

Committees for Sunday School, leadership training, stewardship, mission education, and music should be organized.

Chairpersons of these committees, as well as the church clerk, treasurer, and pastor, will serve on a church council. This council assists the pastor in planning church programs, short- and long-term planning of church ministries. The partnering church should plan with the Filipino mission congregation for its organization as a duly constituted local Baptist church.





PHASE THREE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHURCH

ORGANIZE THE CHURCH

When the Filipino mission congregation has matured as an indigenous body of believers, it should plan to constitute into a local church. The new church should follow the laws of the area where the church is located. It should draw up its own constitution and bylaws, which describes its various operational aspects. At this stage, the partnering church and the Filipino congregation should rewrite their agreement regarding mutual use of facilities, phasing out of financial support, fellowship, and partnership.

CALL A PASTOR

The newly constituted Filipino church should call its own compatible pastor. Basic qualifications of the pastor is in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. These qualifications should be included in the constitution and bylaws of the church. It is best to call a pastor from the ethnic group he will lead and one who speaks the same language. The pastor is a Christian example, a motivator responsible to the people for the progress and growth of the church into a healthy and reproducing mission-minded church.

DEVELOP THE CHURCH

The Filipino church should develop its own plans for healthy growth. A budget within the economic ability of the church should be planned and approved by vote of its members. The new congregation should develop a building plan, including raising funds for purchasing its own building. The partnering church may: (1) provide a grant for the property, or (2) deed the property being used to the Filipino congregation. (3) Encourage the Baptist association and state convention to provide a grant and low interest loan to the Filipino congregation. The church may need to secure a loan from another business source, such as a bank, to purchase its needed property. The ownership should meet the guidelines of the local government and community.



PHASE FOUR

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FORMER PARTNER CHURCH

Partnership comes with the new relationship between the partnering church, partnering Baptist organizations, and the Filipino church. The constituted Filipino local congregation needs to be a part of the Baptist association and state convention. Each exists to meet specific and organizational unique needs. Both should pray for and continue to have inter-fellowship with one another. This includes helping one another, even financially, to start and develop more new Filipino and other new works among other people groups in the area covered by the local association and state conventions.

A culturally grateful people, guided to maturity by a partnering church and partnering Baptist organizations will sincerely reciprocate the love and blessings of their benefactors in doing God's work. To encourage growth within and without its building, the Filipino church should concentrate on the following areas.

Relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is primary, but members should also endeavor to have healthy Christian relationships with one another. The church should relate to its community as salt and light for Christ and His kingdom.

Fellowship within the church should continually be cultivated. Healthy fellowship programs foster and facilitate church growth.

Partnership among its members, with its Baptist association, and with other ethnic congregations should be fostered for mutual involvement in fulfilling the Great Commission. The Filipino church should financially support evangelistic and missionary works of its partners. When the Filipino church plans to start or partner mission congregations, its partners will be available to share in the needs and programs of the new work.



Stewardship should be emphasized in the life of every congregation. This involves training for the most effective use of time, talents, and money of every church member. Likewise, the church should be seen as a contributing member to its Baptist association, ethnic fellowship, and other denominational agencies.

Leadership should be encouraged through training of its members. Church leaders should be encouraged to participate in the Baptist association, state convention, and other areas of denominational life.

Churchmanship should be emphasized to the Filipino congregation. Every member should be encouraged to discover and use his or her God-given talents and skills.

Strategies for quality and quantity growth that result in the reproduction process both for the leaders and the church itself should be implemented.



CONCLUSION

God has brought the Filipino people to North America. Their population keeps growing. Evangelistic and church planting strategies must be intentionally planned for both first generation—monocultural and monolingual Filipinos, as well as contextualized strategies for the second and subsequent generations, that are assimilated into the Western culture. Common sense will tell the church planters and their partners that “Birds of the same feathers flock together” and “Water seeks its own level.” Imbedded in these truths are the needs to indigenize evangelism and church planting strategies to reach Filipinos with the gospel. This will encourage church plants so that they can have ownership to bring their own people where they can experience a sense of identity and belonging. The growing populations of various ethnic groups in our communities challenges Southern Baptists to faithfully implement the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to effectively minister and witness among them. Planting healthy reproducing Filipino churches in North America is the most effective way of reaching this people group for Jesus Christ.



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