[RAISING MONEY TO START A CHURCH](http://www.southcoastal.org/en/resources/raising-money-to-start-a-church.html)

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God has called you to start a church. Read this informative article by Ron Sylvia to learn how to raise money to start a church!

**Ask for help**

Imagine going to your spouse and not only saying, "Honey, God has called us to start a church," but also adding, "By the way, how do you feel about emptying our retirement fund to do it?" I did just that as we faced the challenge of our life – starting a new church. When my wife, Teddi, and I began Church @ The Springs, it never even occurred to me to ask anyone else for financial support. I didn't even know you could ask anyone for money to start a church – and no one bothered to tell me.

There was no available denominational support, so we got money from the only other source we knew – our retirement fund. We emptied out all $30,000 from our retirement to start our new church. For obvious reasons, I do not recommend this!

Our first mistake was not asking anyone for help. Like us, most church planters I know feel they are not good at raising money. However, without adequate funding, a church plant in this millennium is crippled before it has the opportunity to ever get off the ground. In Purpose Driven Church Planting seminars, we teach planters to launch large in order to quickly get a base of attendees. While there are many benefits to launching large, it does require even more money than a typical church plant. Your new church plant will need money for marketing, mailers, equipment, rental facilities, and start-up salaries. For this reason, many churches choose starting smaller by default. Starting smaller is fine, just realize it will be a much longer process to grow a church and that much longer before your church is truly self-sustaining.

**Determine your launch budget**

The question we hear often is, "How much money does it take to start a church?" That is similar to asking, "How much money does it take to open a restaurant?" What kind of restaurant? Is it fast food or fine dining? What city are you opening the restaurant in? What is the seating capacity? What is your marketing plan? A church is our Father's business and requires a business plan. And since it is the Father's business, we should employ the best God-honoring business practices.

Starting a church is similar to building a facility for an established church. At The Springs, we are designing our first building since we started 12 years ago. We get three choices: size, quality, and cost. However, we can only choose two of the three. The two we choose determines the third. For example, if we choose to build a 1,500-seat worship center and the most expensive materials, that determines the cost. On the other hand, if we decide our construction budget is $8 million and we want to build a 1,500-seat worship center, which determines the quality of the building.

The same is true for a new church start. If, for instance, you want to launch large in a large city, then that decision determines your cost will be high. The three choices for a church planter are church launch size, city, and cost. You get to choose two, and the third will be determined by the choices. If you only have $50,000 and you want to start in Phoenix, Ariz., that will impact the size of the start. For more resources on launching large and to find sample budgets go to: www.pdplanting.com

It costs less to start in a small town than a large city. I believe it was one of the reasons The Springs took off with a $30,000 investment. We are in Ocala, Fla. Our city was under 50,000 people when we started, and our county, 200,000. It was financially easier to capture the attention of a small city with a new church. Conversely, I have watched someone with more than $500,000 not be able to capture the attention of a large city like Orlando with more than 3 million people in it.

Once you have determined the size of your launch budget, the hard work of raising the money begins. If God has called you to a location, he will provide the resources for the journey. All church starts are founded and grounded in a calling from God. Starting churches is still his idea, and Jesus is still the only one who builds the church. I have heard Rick Warren say numerous times, "Where God guides, God provides!" Now you have to find the provision. Where I fell short in my lack of fund raising at The Springs was I didn't realize that while God was calling me to start a church, he was also tapping others to financially support his church.

**Build a prayer team for the new church**

Begin by building a prayer team of supporters. Your prayer team needs to be anyone you have ever touched in ministry or friendship: including family, friends, past churches, seminary friends, professors, previous pastors, and even co-workers. You will need prayer support before you need financial support. In the meantime, build an Excel spreadsheet with all the necessary contact information: name, address, e-mail address, and phone numbers.

Once your list is complete, it is time to compose your first e-mail letter. You could simply send out an e-mail from Outlook, but I would encourage you to go a step further and use [Constant Contact](http://www.constantcontact.com/index.jsp), an effective tool to keep up with and to build your support team. For example, it tracks how many of your e-mails were actually opened, by whom they were opened, and how many were forwarded. Constant Contact also gives you the opportunity to put pictures and graphics into the letter. Obviously, there is a monthly charge for the service, but the cost-benefit is well worth it for the long-term.

Use this first letter you compose to share what God is stirring in your heart. This letter is not necessarily a fund-raising letter, but an "awareness-raising" letter. Concisely share your calling and passion to begin a new church in the city in which God has called you.  Further use Constant Contact to link to your church Web site. If you have not started a Web site, do it ASAP. Finish the letter by asking people for three things:

1. Commit to pray for you and the new church.  
2. Commit to financially support the church.  
3. Commit to be on the launch team for the new church.

You can find a sample letter under free resources on [www.pdplanting.com](http://www.pdplanting.com/).

**Partner with your denomination**

Once you have sent the first communication, it is time to approach your denomination (if you are affiliated with one) and build a sponsoring church list. Many denominations are investing heavily in church planting today. There were more than 5,000 churches started in the United States in 2005. Go first to your denominational leaders and see what resources are available to a new church.

**Strategic partnerships with churches**

Build a potential sponsoring church list of all the churches that you have been associated with through the years. Add to your list churches that have a heart for church planting and churches that have a heart for the city you are trying to reach. We have found that it is best to approach churches that are averaging 2,000 to 3,000 in attendance. They have been around long enough to have a healthy financial base and a heart for reproducing healthy churches.

We have discovered it is best to build a group of partner churches. This is similar to building a mall. Choose the right anchor stores first and you will fill the rest of the mall. Find one or two churches that are church planting churches and ask them to be part of your partner network. Locate influencers who can enlist others to your partnership. Partner churches are churches who are investing a sizeable amount in the new church with a three-year commitment. You'll need to have a complete master plan before inviting other churches to partner with you. 

It is best to spend time recruiting churches who will invest heavily, rather than spending your time going after churches that only commit small monthly amounts. Most of the time, churches who commit to sizeable monthly contributions require the most work and have the longest decision making processes.

Consider hosting a partner's meeting in your city as well, inviting all your partners to be present. In this meeting you can include an update on your church – where you share the church's vision. Then give your partners a tour of your facility and the city itself. Make sure to give everyone plenty of time to get to know one another during this time. As you do, you'll be building a network of people who are passionate about starting churches.

Raising adequate funds to start the church will require countless hours of praying, sharing the dream, and casting a vision. Leave no one out of hearing the dream God has placed within you. Remember that since God has called you to start a church, he has also tapped people to financially support his dream. It is time to find them.