



FOUR KINDS OF CHURCHES

By Pastor James L. Johnson, Director
AFLC Home Missions

HOW DO YOU GROW new congregations? That's what members of the Home Missions Committee have been talking about this year. I began my new work as director of Home Missions in September, and our focus has slowly been sharpening. Our primary discussion has been these two topics: How can we help churches start new churches? And how can we help them take the spiritual steps from church starts to new plants to free and living congregations?

We're finding an unusual peace from God as a committee. The Lord is causing us to look ahead. We are moving forward. Our call is to find missionary pastors and to call churches and districts to plant churches—not to do all the work ourselves.

I remember the prayer meeting in a cabin when the Lord brought us that first peace. Our committee was discussing how we could invite AFLC churches to partner with us. We talked about what it would look like if we stopped using the designation of "Home Mission churches" and opened up the process. "So what would we call the new churches?" one of our committee members asked. "And when would we have them 'graduate.' When would we start calling them mature congregations?"

Starting that day, an unusual peace overcame us. The Spirit's presence



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Starting that day, an unusual peace overcame us. The Spirit's presence

was obvious. We stopped looking back and started looking forward. We began designating our church families in four ways:

- **Church starts:** new gatherings of believers where true fellowship in the gospel grows.
- **Church plants:** when a group begin to grow in numbers, agrees on a legal constitution, applies to join the AFLC, and calls a pastor to lead them.
- **New churches:** when the leadership team matures, believers multiply, spiritual gifts begin to flourish, and new ministries sprout.
- **Established churches:** when a congregation takes on a history of spiritual life, up to a maximum of 10 years, and a gospel-centered focus grows them into a free and living church.

Instead of fencing off 15 of our 250 congregations and calling them Home Mission churches, we are taking down the fences and looking for partners. We believe it's a new era. We want to help churches plant churches. Remember: we are not a synod; we are an association of free churches. Will you join us in that work? We need missionaries, friends, prayers, and partners.



Home Missions staff and committee members include (front row, from left) Kenn Graham, Dale Finstrom, and Jerry Peterson. (Back row, from left) Ron Jorgenson, Joe Ocker, Loren Tungseth, Tom Caouette, Jim Johnson, Glenn Mork, and Kristen Barka.



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